

2017

College Students' Opinions on Parenting

Anne Overton Waller

University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Waller, Anne Overton, "College Students' Opinions on Parenting" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 90.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/90

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College) at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

COLLEGE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON PARENTING

by
Anne Overton Waller

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
April 2017

Approved by

Advisor: Professor Carey B. Dowling

Reader: Professor Stephanie Miller

Reader: Professor Matthew Reysen

© 2017
Anne Overton Waller
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

ANNE OVERTON WALLER: College Student's Opinions on Parenting
(Under the direction of Professor Carey B. Dowling)

There are many potential negative effects of corporal punishment when used to discipline a child (Bell & Romano, 2012; Deater-Deckard, Landsford, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 2003; Straus, 2001) and tendencies to use corporal punishment are passed down through generations (Ben-Arieh & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Ember & Ember, 1994; Muller, 1996). The present study compared changes in beliefs about the appropriateness of corporal punishment in college students who received information on corporal punishment and parenting strategies in a parenting psychology class to students enrolled in non-parenting psychology classes. 116 students from the University of Mississippi participated in the present study, including 96 females and 16 males, whose average age was 20.64 ($SD = 1.842$), 62.1% were Caucasian, 81.9% were upperclassmen and 65.5% were Psychology majors. Each participant completed three measures of beliefs about the appropriateness of parental use of corporal punishment at the beginning and end of the Fall 2016 semester. Results for all three questionnaires showed a significant main effect of time, and two questionnaires showed a significant interaction effect, which confirmed the hypothesis that students presented with both information on the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives, show a larger decrease in their support of corporal punishment than students enrolled in other psychology classes. These results contribute to the understanding of college students' opinions regarding corporal punishment and how they may be changed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METHODS.....	7
RESULTS.....	13
DISCUSSION.....	18
REFERENCES.....	23

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1 Number of Participants Currently and Previously Enrolled in Psychology
Classes.....8

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Major Study Variables by Group and Time...14

Figure 1 Estimated Marginal Means of the PS-S Hostile Factor by Group and
Time.....15

Figure 2 Estimated Marginal Means of the DDI Corporal Punishment Factor by
Group and Time.....16

Figure 3 Estimated Marginal Means of the APQ-S Corporal Punishment Factor by
Group and Time.....17

College Students' Opinions on Parenting

Corporal punishment has been defined as an action by a parent or guardian with the intent of bringing physical pain to a child, not to cause injury, but in order to correct their behavior (Benject & Kazdin, 2003; Straus, 2001). It can range from mild to severe, and includes spanking, hitting with a hand or object, slapping, shoving and pinching (Dietz, 2000; Pepler & Rubin, 1991). Corporal punishment is a very controversial parenting practice as the most extreme version results in child maltreatment (Gershoff, 2002; Muller, 1996). When hearing the word "spanking," which has been defined as hitting a child on the bottom, most middle-class Americans regard the term as hitting the child on any part of the body (Straus, 2001). Because the line between corporal punishment and physical abuse is so blurry and easy to cross, some parents find themselves inflicting injury and, therefore, in their attempt to engage in corporal punishment unintentionally engage in physically abusing their children (Straus, 2001).

In light of the fact that corporal punishment is such a common parenting practice throughout the country, it has been studied extensively over the years. As a result, psychologists have discovered many negative effects corporal punishment can potentially have on children (Bell & Romano, 2012; Deater-Deckard, Landsford, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 2003; Straus, 2001). Unfortunately, the effects of corporal punishment can result in both short- and long-term effects (Straus, 2001). One of the most common negative effect of corporal punishment in children is an increased likelihood of the child engaging in aggression towards others and interpersonal violence in childhood and adulthood

(Lansford and Dogde, 2008; Muller, 1996). This correlation between corporal punishment and the appearance of aggression is caused by direct and indirect effects (Muller, 1996; Pepler & Rubin, 1991). Because aggression is a learned behavior, parents can model inappropriate aggression when engaging in corporal punishment, which can instill patterns of aggression in children as young as age 6 (Pepler & Rubin, 1991). Muller (1996) found that child aggressiveness was an important predictor of corporal punishment used by parents, which shows a cyclical effect of the correlation between corporal punishment and aggression. It has been found that children experience varying levels of aggressive feelings and behavior depending on their age; furthermore, it has been found that the impact of things like psychological and physical violence can have different effects on children at different stages during their childhood (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). For instance, it has been shown that children who experience severe corporal punishment during late childhood are more likely to experience depression in adulthood (Straus, 2001). Thus, it is clear that there are many potential negative effects of corporal punishment.

Despite these known negative effects that corporal punishment can have on children, spanking and other methods of corporal punishment are commonly used throughout the US today (Dietz, 2000; Giles-Sims, Straus & Sugarman, 1995; Simons and Wurtele, 2010; Straus, 2001; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff, & Runyan, 2008). In their study of corporal punishment in the collegiate community, Bryan and Freed (1982) discovered that nearly 95% of college students remember being hit by their parent. There are a few potential reasons for these high rates. First, corporal punishment is strongly connected to religious practices. Murray-Swank, Mahoney and Pargament

(2006) discovered that the more biblically conservative views mothers possessed, the higher the rates of corporal punishment found in their parenting practices. This is a result of a certain view of the Bible in which corporal punishment is supported as an important part of parenting (Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2006). Another potential reason for the high rates of corporal punishment usage amongst parents is that parents experience immediate negative reinforcement when disciplining their child in this manner due to a high rate of compliance once the punishment has occurred (Gershoff, 2002). Additionally, there are demographic factors that increase the likelihood of utilizing corporal punishment such as financial stress, parenting stress, lower educational resources, and a lack of outside support, as well as being a young parent who has only received a high school degree or less (Dietz, 2000). Therefore, despite known negative effects of corporal punishment, there are still many people who support this practice for varying reasons and tend to pass down these views through generations.

There are many factors that come together to create the multi-generational effects of corporal punishment. Research shows that two predictors of corporal punishment within a parent/child relationship are aggression in the child and the parent's history of experiencing corporal punishment as a child (Muller, 1996). Thus, people who were corporally punished as a child are more likely to use corporal punishment to discipline their children, as well as accept other people's use of it (Ben-Arieh & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Ember & Ember, 1994; Muller, 1996). This acceptance begins even while children are being exposed to corporal punishment (Simons & Wurtele, 2010). For instance, Simons and Wurtele (2010) found that children who have experienced spanking in their own homes are more likely to suggest spanking as a form of discipline for other children. In a

study on the multi-generational effects of corporal punishment on a four-generation Jewish family, it was found that participants who were currently in parenting roles were more likely to be supportive of using higher amounts of corporal punishment than those who had not yet assumed the role of a parent (i.e. children) (Ben-Arieh & Haj-Yahia, 2008). In addition, it was found that the severity of punishment lessened through the generations (Ben-Arieh & Haj-Yahia, 2008). Furthermore, the effects of corporal punishment are not limited to just members within the nuclear family. According to the findings of a study by Ember and Ember (1994), there is a spillover effect of corporal punishment on society, which is due to children modeling the behavior of their parents; as a result, a harsher society is created. In a study on college students' experiences of corporal punishment, students who were disciplined as a child by spanking and similar methods were more accepting and reported a less harsh view of methods such as parents hitting their child with a belt or strap (Bower-Russa, Knutson & Winebarger, 2001). In the same study, Bower-Russa, Knutson and Winebarger (2001) discovered that people who have experienced harmful abuse but have not labeled it as physical abuse were more likely to use physical punishment to correct the behavior of a child. This hesitation to label the inflicted punishment as abuse could be one of the biggest reasons why we are seeing multi-generational effects of corporal punishment throughout our country (Bower-Russa, Knutson & Winebarger, 2001).

With the apparent negative and multigenerational effects that corporal punishment can have on families, it is important to examine alternative actions in order to decrease the effects in society. Many families find themselves in need of therapy in order to restore the damage done due to child maltreatment (Sanders, Cann, & Markie-Dadds, 2003).

However, there are many alternatives to corporal punishment that can help to avoid these negative effects. Some examples of positive parenting methods according to Webster-Stratton (1992) include praise, tangible rewards, limit-setting, ignoring and attending, timeout, natural and logical consequences, and teaching children to problem-solve.

Research has examined attitudes towards corporal punishment amongst adults who may or may not be parents. For instance, a study on the opinion of a criminal code in Canada, which says that parents can discipline their children with reasonable physical punishment, found that 21.1% - 31.1% of the population in the study had no opinion on the code (Romano, Bell, & Norian, 2013). Given that the majority of participants were young and non-parents, the results imply a need for an increase of information given to the public on parenting, even to people who are not yet parents so that individuals can form educated opinions on the way they think people should parent, as well as decide how they choose to parent their own children (Romano, Bell, & Norian, 2013).

Prevention efforts can begin before individuals are even parents themselves. It is generally understood that beliefs about a certain topic usually result in behavior that reflects or supports that belief (Bell & Romano, 2012). Therefore, Romano, Bell, and Norian (2013) suggest that, beginning in undergraduate education, students should be exposed to parenting practices in order to help them form opinions regarding the way they will participate in parenting one day (Bell & Romano, 2012; Romano, Bell & Norian 2013). Also, they discovered that with the information on the negative effects of corporal punishment and alternative methods of positive parenting, most of the participants (63.8 - 70.5%) said they would be in favor of changing the criminal code allowing corporal punishment in Canada (Romano, Bell & Norian, 2013). In a study on changing the

attitudes of medical students on corporal punishment, it was confirmed that when given an educational intervention on the negative effects of corporal punishment, the students showed less support of its use in comparison to a control group, who received no educational intervention (Rabin, 1997).

For the present study, we examined the presence of change in opinions regarding the use of corporal punishment and hostile parenting behaviors in undergraduate college students enrolled in psychology classes. We hypothesized that students currently enrolled in non-parenting psychology courses would show less change in their attitudes towards corporal punishment and hostile parenting from the start to the end of the semester than students enrolled in a parenting psychology course who received both information on the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students of the University of Mississippi enrolled in four psychology courses for the Fall 2016 semester. At the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester, students were recruited from the Psychology of Parenting, Developmental Psychology, Learning Psychology, and Social Psychology. 116 students consented to participate: 68 students from Developmental, Social, and Learning classes and 48 students from the Parenting class participated in the pre-assessment at the beginning of the semester.

See Table 1 for the percentages of people who were currently enrolled in classes that may cover material related to corporal punishment or had taken them in the past. The participants included 16 males and 96 females. The majority of participants were upper classmen, 36.2% were juniors and 45.7% were seniors or fifth year students. Also, the majority of participants were Psychology majors (65.5%), while 20.4% were Psychology minors. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 30 ($M = 20.64$, $SD = 1.84$), with 31% African American, 62.1% Caucasian, and 4.4% of the participants identified as either Asian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and Nigerian-American. 94% of participants were single and 2.6% married.

Table 1. Number of Participants Currently and Previously Enrolled in Psychology Classes

Courses	Currently Enrolled	Took in Past
Psychology of Parenting	48	2
Children and Families: Community Service	0	3
Learning Psychology	39	34
Developmental Psychology	21	53
Applied Behavior Analysis	0	3
Social Psychology	18	14

Note. Some students were enrolled in multiple classes.

The majority of participants' biological parents were living together or married (58.6%), while 24.1% were divorced or separated, 6% never lived together, and 2.6% were not married but were currently together. In addition, 5.2% of participants had one or both biological parents who have died. Also, 12.1% of parents completed high school, 37.1% of mothers and 25.9% of fathers earned a 4 -year college degree and 19.8% of mothers and 25% of fathers completed some kind of post-graduate degree. When reporting on the total household income before taxes for the last year the participant was living with their parents, the majority of participants (64.6%) reported that they lived on a yearly income of \$50,000 or higher. In addition, the majority (76.7%) said they lived in a house owned by their parents the last year they lived with them, while 8.6% said they lived in a house rented by their parents, and 4.3% said they lived in a trailer on property owned by their parents. Six participants noted that they have at least one child, all children of the participants were under the age of 5.

Questionnaires

Demographics. A demographic questionnaire was created for this study with questions including information on age, year in school, major/minor, and previous psychology courses completed. The demographics section of the Dimensions of Discipline Inventory (DDI, Straus & Fauchier, 2011) requested information on sex, marital status, children (if any) and their ages, siblings, racial/ ethnic identity, parents' marital status, mother and father-figure roles, education of parents, parents' income, and the type of home they lived in for the last year they lived with their parents.

Dimensions of Discipline Inventory Corporal Punishment Approval Factor (DDI; Straus & Fauchier, 2011). The Adult Recall Form of the DDI was used, which utilizes 26 common forms of parental discipline in order to measure participants' opinions on the different forms (DDI; Straus & Fauchier, 2011). For this study participants completed the demographics section and the last section of the DDI, which included items about their current opinions on child discipline, using a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*never OK*) to 4 (*always or almost always OK*). The corporal punishment factor was utilized for this study, which includes four items such as "I think it is ___ OK to use an object such as a paddle, hairbrush, belt, etc. on children that age." Scores ranged from 4 to 16 with higher scores indicating higher agreement that the behaviors are acceptable. The DDI has sufficient reliability within its scale, as well as adequate validity (Van Leeuwen, Fauchier, & Straus, 2012).

Alabama Parenting Questionnaire-Should Corporal Punishment Factor. The APQ-S is a modification of the original APQ (APQ; Frick, 1991). The original APQ was modified so that each of the 42 items ask what they believe parents of a 12-year-old child

"should" ideally do in different situations. Participants respond using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*). Along with an overall test score, the APQ-S also measures 5 subscales, which include involvement, positive parenting, poor monitoring/supervision, inconsistent discipline, and corporal punishment. The corporal punishment factor was utilized for this study, with scores ranging from 3 (*parents never should engage in the behaviors*) – 15 (*parents should always engage in the behaviors*). The psychometric properties of this modified scale are uncertain because the original APQ was modified to become a should scale. The APQ scale has been supported as having good validity and reliability (Essau, Sasagawa & Frick, 2006).

Parenting Scale – Should Hostile Factor. Similar to the APQ-S, the PS-S is a 30-item questionnaire that measures what the participant thinks parents of a child 2- to 6-years-old "should" do in certain situations (PS-S; Rhoades & O’Leary, 2007). The PS-S questionnaire includes a 7-point scale from left to right with two different ways parents could respond to a particular situation. The scale allows for the participant to choose one of the two ways, or any of the five points in between, depending on how much they agree with each option. The point on the scale chosen reflects the extent to which the participants believes parents should discipline their children with either Overreactive, Lax or Hostile discipline. The Hostile factor was utilized for the present study because the three items on this factor include corporal punishment, swearing, and insulting children when the child misbehaves. Participant scores on the three items were averaged to create the factor score which ranges from 1 – 7 with higher scores indicating higher agreement with the hostile parenting behaviors. The PS-S’s sufficient validity and reliability have been supported by research (Rhoades & O’Leary, 2007).

Procedure

Approval for this study was given by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Mississippi. Data for this study was collected in four different classes at the University of Mississippi: Developmental Psychology, Learning Psychology, Social Psychology, and the Psychology of Parenting. Students in Parenting were verbally given information on participating in the study at the end of the second class, as well as through an information sheet that was given to them during class. After receiving information about the study, they were given the information sheet and packet of questionnaires and asked to complete the demographics questionnaire and place it in a manila envelope during class in order to signify their consent to participate in the study. All students completed the parenting questionnaires as an out-of-class assignment and only the data for those who had completed the demographics questionnaire was utilized for this study. Students in the other classes, Developmental, Learning, and Social, were given information about the study via announcement on Blackboard during the first week of classes and were told to follow a link to the Qualtrics website to give consent and complete the questionnaires online in order to participate in the study and receive credit. During the last week of classes, students who participated in the pre-assessment via Qualtrics were sent an e-mail requesting their participation in the post-assessment. Students in Parenting were given a hard copy of the questionnaires to complete at home during the last week of classes and return during the next class with the only the data for students who had consented being utilized for this study. Students received points that went towards the final grade average in the course(s) they were enrolled in for their participation in the study.

Students enrolled in Social received no information on the negative effects of corporal punishment and served as a control group. Students enrolled in Developmental and Learning received information on the negative effects of corporal punishment as part of one class session during the semester. Students enrolled in Parenting received information on the negative effects of corporal punishment, which an entire class session was devoted to, as well as information on alternative methods of positive parenting. Students enrolled in the Psychology of Parenting course were considered participants in the Parenting group even if they were enrolled in one or more of the other courses. Students enrolled in the other courses were considered participants in the non-Parenting group as long as they were not currently enrolled in Parenting. Two students in the non-Parenting group had taken the Psychology of Parenting class in the past.

Results

Prior to data analysis we examined how many participants who took the measures online passed embedded attention checks. In the pre-assessment, 30 participants passed one of the two attention checks and 21 passed both attention checks; in the post-assessment, 21 participants passed one of the two attention checks and 25 passed both attention checks. We chose to analyze all participants' data despite this with an understanding that it may make the results less reliable and valid. Next data were evaluated to determine if the assumptions of the mixed model ANOVA were violated for each of the major study variables. A mixed model ANOVA was conducted to examine the interaction between group (Parenting student and non-Parenting student) and time (pre- and post-assessment) for each of the three measures.

Parenting Scale-Should Hostile Factor

The assumptions of the mixed model ANOVA were not violated when examining the PS-S Hostile factor. There was a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 81) = 23.35, p = .000$, partial eta squared = .22. Thus, there was a statistically significant large effect on PS-S Hostile factor scores from pre- to post- assessment for all participants combined; mean at pre was 1.72 ($SE = .10$) and mean at post was 1.37 ($SE = .09$). There was not a significant main effect of group, $F(1, 81) = 0.10, p = .75$, partial eta squared = .001. There was a significant interaction effect between time and group, $F(1, 81) = 4.81, p = .03$, partial eta squared = .06 (please see Table 2 for means and standard errors by group and Figure 1). Thus, there was a small interaction effect on opinions of hostile parenting

behaviors over the course of the semester such that on average the parenting students showed a greater decrease in their belief that parents should engage in the three hostile parenting behaviors measured by the PS-S Hostile factor than the non-parenting students.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Major Study Variables by Group and Time

	Pre-assessment		Post-assessment	
	Non-		Non-	
	Parenting	parenting	Parenting	parenting
	<i>M (SE)</i>	<i>M (SE)</i>	<i>M (SE)</i>	<i>M (SE)</i>
PS-S Hostile Factor	1.77 (.14)	1.67 (.13)	1.27 (.13)	1.48 (.12)
DDI Corporal Punishment Factor	5.88 (.34)	6.04 (.32)	4.58 (.23)	5.31 (.21)
APQ-S Corporal Punishment Factor	5.40 (.29)	5.07 (.27)	3.93 (.28)	5.11 (.26)

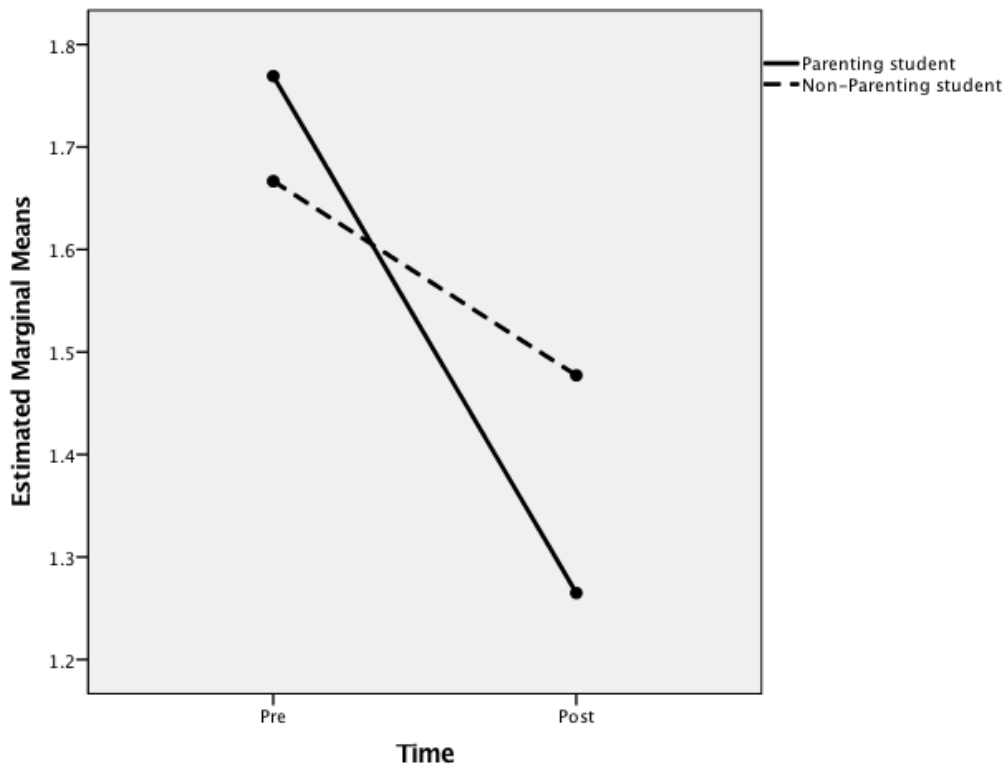


Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means of the PS-S Hostile Factor by Group and Time

Dimensions of Discipline Inventory Corporal Punishment Factor

The assumptions of the mixed model ANOVA were not violated when examining the DDI Corporal Punishment factor. There was a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 83) = 26.03, p = .000$, partial eta squared = .24. Thus, there was a statistically significant large effect on DDI Corporal Punishment factor scores from pre- to post- assessment for all participants combined; mean at pre was 5.96 ($SE = .23$) and mean at post was 4.94 ($SE = .16$). There was not a significant main effect of group, $F(1, 83) = 1.74, p = .19$, partial eta squared = .02. There was not a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 83) = 2.02, p = .16$, partial eta squared = .02. Please see Table 2 for means and standard errors by group and Figure 2.

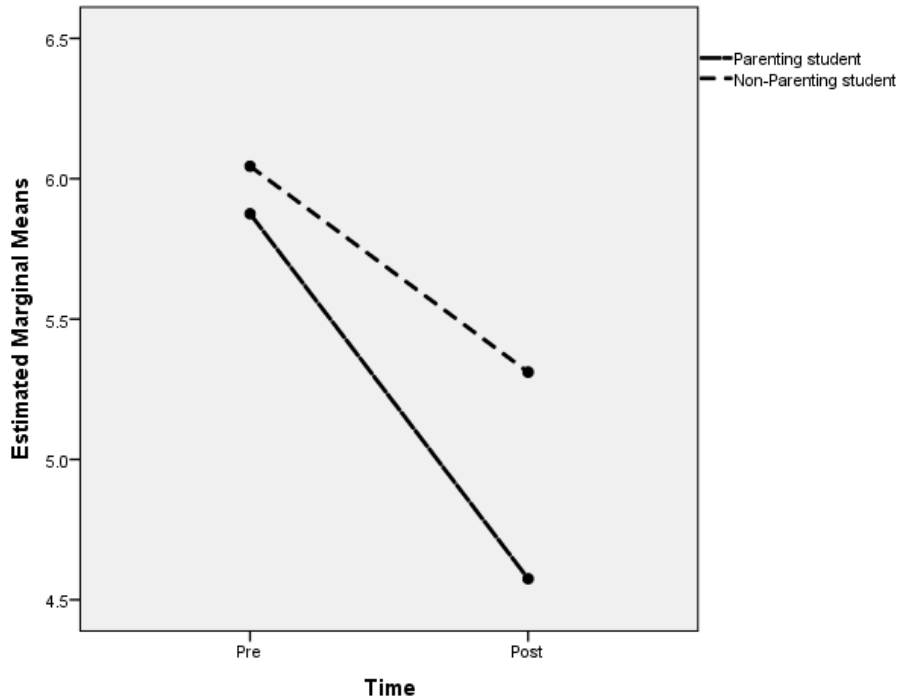


Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means of the DDI Corporal Punishment Factor by Group and Time

Alabama Parenting Questionnaire-Should Corporal Punishment Factor

The assumptions of the mixed model ANOVA were not violated when examining the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor. There was a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 83) = 17.47, p = .000$, partial eta squared = .17. Thus, there was a statistically significant large effect on APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor scores from pre- to post- assessment for all participants combined; mean at pre was 5.23 ($SE = .20$) and mean at post was 4.52 ($SE = .19$). There was not a significant main effect of group, $F(1, 83) = 1.47, p = .23$, partial eta squared = .02. There was a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 83) = 19.71, p = .000$, partial eta squared = .19 (please see Table 2 for means and standard errors by group and Figure 3). Thus, there was a large interaction effect on opinions of corporal punishment as measured by the APQ-S over the course of the semester such that on

average the parenting students showed a greater decrease in their belief that parents should engage in the three corporal punishment behaviors measured by the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor than the non-parenting students.

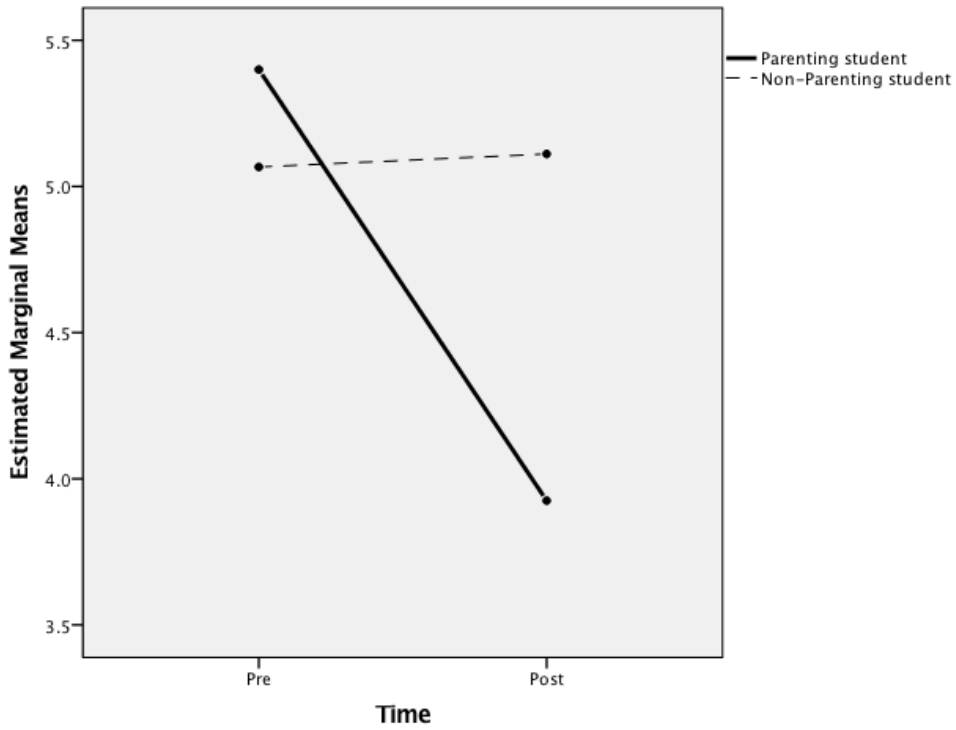


Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means of the APQ-S Corporal Punishment Factor by Group and Time

Discussion

Results showed significant main effects of time across all three questionnaires, as well as significant interaction effects for two measures. For each questionnaire, there was a large effect size for the main effect of time. Thus, combining the data from parenting and non-parenting students there were large and statistically significant changes in opinions about how parents should parent their children with respect to corporal punishment and hostile parenting behaviors across the semester for students enrolled in psychology courses. However, there were no main effects for group on any measure.

The hypothesis that students currently enrolled in non-parenting psychology courses would show less change in their attitudes towards corporal punishment and hostile parenting from the start to the end of the semester than students enrolled in a parenting psychology course was confirmed. There was a large effect size for the interaction of time and group on the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor, such that across the semester students enrolled in the parenting class showed a larger change in opinions regarding corporal punishment as measured by the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor than students enrolled in non-parenting psychology classes. There was a small effect size for the interaction between time and group on the DDI Corporal Punishment factor, as well as a small effect size for the interaction of time and group of the PS-S Hostile factor. Thus, students in the parenting psychology class showed a slightly larger change in opinions regarding corporal punishment and hostile parenting practices as measured by the DDI Corporal Punishment factor and PS-S Hostile factor than participants in the non-

parenting classes. These results are consistent with previous research (Bell & Romano, 2012; Rabin, 1997; Romano et al, 2013).

A possible reason why the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor showed the largest interaction effect size could be that the answers to the items were not as obvious as those in the other measures (APQ; Frick, 1991). The items in the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor focus on potential methods of disciplining a child that are widely accepted within our country (e.g., spanking and yelling in response to misbehavior), while the items in the DDI Corporal Punishment factor and PS-S Hostile factor included parenting practices that are more controversial in our country (e.g., using an object and cursing at the child) and it is possible that most people are aware that they should not parent in that manner (DDI; Straus & Fauchier, 2011; PS-S; Rhoades & O'Leary, 2007). Differences in results from these three questionnaires and why the APQ-S Corporal Punishment factor showed larger effect sizes should be analyzed in future research in order to discover the best method of measuring attitudes towards corporal punishment and hostile parenting and potential changes in attitudes across time. This is important to further the research of corporal punishment and prevention efforts.

The results from the present study have several implications. Because participants in the parenting psychology class showed the greatest amount of change in their opinions towards corporal punishment and hostile parenting, the parenting psychology course was more effective at changing opinions towards these specific parenting practices than the comparison psychology classes. However, it is important to note that there were significant changes in attitudes towards corporal punishment and hostile parenting in participants enrolled in non-parenting classes combined across the semester. This

suggests that gaining a college education in psychology for a semester may have an impact, even if only a small amount, on attitudes towards certain parenting practices, and even if the course is not focused on the psychology of parenting. Finally, results from the present study show the potential effect that preventive interventions can have on college students and others who are not yet parents. Thus, these interventions could reduce corporal punishment and hostile parenting throughout the country, which could reduce the frequency of the negative effects of these parenting practices.

There were multiple strengths of the present study. First, all participants completed the exact same combination and sequence of the questionnaires, no matter which group they were in. Also, all classes that received information on negative effects of corporal punishment were taught by the same teacher. Furthermore, all participants were awarded with class credit so they received equal motivation for participating in the study. All of these controls work to limit the amount of variation between the groups aside from what information they were exposed to depending on the class(es) they were enrolled in. In addition, the present study was conducted outside of a laboratory so many things could not be controlled (such as who was enrolled in each class). Thus, while the data from the present study is quasi-experimental, the results can be generalized to similar psychology college students.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some limitations to keep in mind when interpreting the results of the present study. We chose to analyze all participants' data despite the fact that some failed one or both attention checks with an understanding that it may make the results less reliable and valid. This may make it harder to find significant results. However, we were

still able to find significant results, despite choosing to include all participants. In addition, we were unable to control the degree to which participants received the intervention. For example, there were some parenting students who missed the lecture regarding potential negative effects of corporal punishment or the lectures on alternative techniques of parenting, as well as participants who may not have read the assigned material regarding lectures. Also, we could not control the degree to which non-parenting students were previously exposed to the parenting information, such as those who already knew the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives prior to participating in the present study. As a result, their included data may also make the results less reliable and valid. Finally, it should be noted that the psychometric properties of the modified APQ scale are uncertain due to the original APQ being modified to become a should scale.

One important limitation of the present study is that we are unable to validate the long term effects of the opinions, or how the change in opinions will be implemented amongst the participants with current or future children of their own or those they may work with. Research suggests that attitudes will predict certain behaviors at varying levels depending on the attitude held, as well as the behavior (Wallace, Paulson, Lord & Bond, 2005). Therefore, it is important for future research to pursue the impact that these attitude changes may have on certain behavior. Also, it would be important to study the impacts that attitude changes can have on planned behavior since the majority of college students are not yet parents and may not have children for years after receiving an intervention.

Results from the present study can be utilized as support for parenting interventions in college students, which may assist in reducing the amount of negative effects of corporal punishment seen in today's society, such as child aggression, abuse, etc. (Romano et al, 2013; Straus, 2001). The importance of preventive interventions with college students has been supported by previous research (Rabin, 1997; Romano, Bell & Norian, 2013). Thus, it is important in instructing college-age people to remember the ways they were disciplined as a child, then think through ways they may discipline their own children one day. When this practice is paired with information on the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives, there is a change in opinions where people feel less favorable towards corporal punishment and may exclude it from their future plans and methods of parenting. Future research should explore whether this type of intervention could be successfully expanded to different ages and other areas throughout the country.

This study found that a preventive method of presenting people with the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives is a potentially easily disseminated method to change the opinions of college students regarding the use of corporal punishment and hostile parenting behaviors. We believe that this contributes to scientific research regarding the beliefs about corporal punishment among college students, and the ways preventive interventions change current attitudes and therefore potentially may influence future behavior. Interventions such as this may increase general knowledge of the negative effects of corporal punishment and positive parenting alternatives, as well as decrease the frequency of child abuse and aggression within our society.

References

- Bell, T., & Romano, E. (2012). Opinions about child corporal punishment and influencing factors. *Journal Of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(11), 2208-2229. doi:10.1177/0886260511432154
- Ben-Arieh, A., & Haj-Yahia, M. M. (2008). Corporal punishment of children: A multi-generational perspective. *Journal Of Family Violence, 23*(8), 687-695. doi:10.1007/s10896-008-9193-4
- Benjet, C., & Kazdin, A. E. (2003). Spanking children: The controversies, findings and new directions. *Clinical Psychology Review, 23*(2), 197-224. doi:10.1016/S0272-7358(02)00206-4
- Bower-Russa, M. E., Knutson, J. F., & Winebarger, A. (2001). Disciplinary history, adult disciplinary attitudes, and risk for abusive parenting. *Journal Of Community Psychology, 29*(3), 219-240. doi:10.1002/jcop.1015
- Bryan, J. W., & Freed, F. W. (1982). Corporal punishment: Normative data and sociological and psychological correlates in a community college population. *Journal Of Youth And Adolescence, 11*(2), 77-87. doi:10.1007/BF01834705
- Deater-Deckard, K., Lansford, J. E., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (2003). The development of attitudes about physical punishment: An 8-year longitudinal study. *Journal Of Family Psychology, 17*(3), 351-360. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.17.3.351

- Dietz, T. L. (2000). Disciplining children: Characteristics associated with the use of corporal punishment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24(12), 1529-1542.
doi:10.1016/S0145-2134(00)00213-1
- Ember, C. R., & Ember, M. (1994). War, socialization, and interpersonal violence: A cross-cultural study. *Journal Of Conflict Resolution*, 38(4), 620-646.
doi:10.1177/0022002794038004002
- Essau, C. A., Sasagawa, S., & Frick, P. J. (2006). Psychometric Properties of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire. *Journal Of Child And Family Studies*, 15(5), 597-616. doi:10.1007/s10826-006-9036-y
- Frick, P. J. (1991). *The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire*. Unpublished instrument, University of Alabama.
- Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128(4), 539-579. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.128.4.539
- Giles-Sims, J., Straus, M. A., & Sugarman, D. B. (1995). Child, maternal, and family characteristics associated with spanking. *Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal Of Applied Family Studies*, 44(2), 170-176. doi:10.2307/584804
- Lansford, J. E., & Dodge, K. A. (2008). Cultural norms for adult corporal punishment of children and societal rates of endorsement and use of violence. *Parenting: Science And Practice*, 8(3), 257-270. doi:10.1080/15295190802204843

- Muller, R. T. (1996). Family aggressiveness factors in the prediction of corporal punishment: Reciprocal effects and the impact of observer perspective. *Journal Of Family Psychology*, 10(4), 474-489. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.10.4.474
- Murray-Swank, A., Mahoney, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2006). Sanctification of parenting: Links to corporal punishment and parental warmth among biblically conservative and liberal mothers. *International Journal For The Psychology Of Religion*, 16(4), 271-287. doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr1604_3
- Pepler, D. J., & Rubin, K. H. (1991). *The development and treatment of childhood aggression*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Rabin, B. E. (1997, December). Changing medical students' attitudes toward corporal punishment and knowledge of alternatives via an educational intervention. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58, 3305.
- Rhoades, K. A., & O'Leary, S. G. (2007). Factor structure and validity of the Parenting Scale. *Journal Of Clinical Child And Adolescent Psychology*, 36(2), 137-146. doi:10.1080/15374410701274157
- Romano, E., Bell, T., & Norian, R. (2013). Corporal punishment: Examining attitudes toward the law and factors influencing attitude change. *Journal Of Family Violence*, 28(3), 265-275. doi:10.1007/s10896-013-9494-0
- Sanders, M. R., Cann, W., & Markie-Dadds, C. (2003). The triple P-positive parenting programme: A universal population-level approach to the prevention of child abuse. *Child Abuse Review*, 12(3), 155-171. doi:10.1002/car.798

- Simons, D. A., & Wurtele, S. K. (2010). Relationships between parents' use of corporal punishment and their children's endorsement of spanking and hitting other children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(9), 639-646.
doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2010.01.012
- Straus, M. A. (2001). *Beating the devil out of them: Corporal punishment in american families and its effects on children* (2nd ed.). New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Straus, Murray A. and Angèle Fauchier. 2011. "Manual for the Dimensions of Discipline Inventory (DDI)." Durham, NH: Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire. <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2/>
- Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Finkelhor, D., Moore, D. W., & Runyan, D. (1998). Identification of child maltreatment with the Parent–Child Conflict Tactics Scales: Development and psychometric data for a national sample of American parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22(4), 249-270.
- Van Leeuwen, K. G., Fauchier, A., & Straus, M. A. (2012). Assessing dimensions of parental discipline. *Journal Of Psychopathology And Behavioral Assessment*, 34(2), 216-231. doi:10.1007/s10862-012-9278-5
- Wallace, D. S., Paulson, R. M., Lord, C. G., & Bond, C. J. (2005). Which Behaviors Do Attitudes Predict? Meta-Analyzing the Effects of Social Pressure and Perceived Difficulty. *Review Of General Psychology*, 9(3), 214-227. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.9.3.214

Webster-Stratton, C. (1992). In Jocelyn Smyth R. R. (Ed.), *The incredible years: A trouble-shooting guide for parents of children aged 3-8*. Toronto, Ontario: Umbrella Press.

Zolotor, A. J., Theodore, A. D., Chang, J. J., Berkoff, M. C., & Runyan, D. K. (2008). Speak softly—and forget the stick corporal punishment and child physical abuse. *American Journal Of Preventive Medicine*, 35(4), 364-369.
doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2008.06.031