Author's response to reviews

Title: Spanking vs. Alternative Disciplinary Tactics: A Re-Analysis and Extension of the Strongest Causal Evidence Against Customary Parental Spanking

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Version: 4 Date: 6 January 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
September 9, 2009

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Dear Natalie:

We again thank both reviewers for suggesting additional ways to improve our manuscript.

The following summarizes our responses to Drs. Capaldi and Lombard.

*Responses to Comments by Dr. Deborah Capaldi*

1. *The study should be described as a re-analysis and extension, not a replication.*

We have changed our label from “replication” to “re-analysis” in the title and elsewhere, as recommended. Occasionally we use the synonym “duplication.” Thank you.

2. *Problems in interpreting the four disciplinary tactics as independent approaches, when the same parents are often using two or more disciplinary tactics. This needs to be clarified.*

To make the overlapping usage more clear, we added the correlations of all the variables included in the structural equation models (the analyses summarized in the bottom two rows of Tables 5, 6, & 7), which includes the correlations of all of the disciplinary tactic frequencies with each other, with and without the 27% who reported no use of any of the four tactics during the referent week.

3. *An ideal analysis would estimate the effect of each disciplinary tactic while controlling for the frequency of the others.*

We did two additional types of analyses to deal with the covariation in usage of multiple disciplinary tactics. First, we repeated all the analyses for the 73% whose mothers perceived a need to use at least one of these disciplinary tactics during the week (Table 6). Second, we repeated all the analyses in the manner you suggested by including all disciplinary tactics and psychotherapy in the analyses at the same time, so that they controlled statistically for each other. Although both of these new analyses differed from those done by Straus et al. (1997), they were informative in identifying differential results for the two mildest disciplinary tactics compared to grounding, spanking, and psychotherapy, although the results were similar when using the best controls for initial externalizing behavior problems. These new results both illustrate a major point of the paper (that frequency of all disciplinary tactics is confounded with the level of oppositional behavior leading to those disciplinary corrections) and suggest differential selection biases that are stronger for the two more forceful disciplinary tactics and for psychotherapy than for milder disciplinary tactics. By adding the new table of correlations, means, and *SD*s, we make it possible for others to analyze our data in other ways also.
4. Clarify whether dropping poor Whites from the NLSY sample referred only to the oversampling.

Done. Thank you.

5. Add the limitation that paternal disciplinary tactics were not included at all.

Added. Thank you.

6. Clarify the direction of the significant association of SES and emotional support with subsequent antisocial behavior.

Done. Thank you. The new table of correlations is at least suggestive of the direction of other influences whether they are significant or not. Moreover, others can use those correlations to re-analyze the best of our analyses, if they are interested in the direction of any other associations between the other covariates and subsequent antisocial behavior.

7. Say “none of the corrective actions” rather than “no corrective action,” because the latter implies an effect of no discipline.

Our revision makes this clarification in a different way, saying that “the apparently adverse effects of all disciplinary tactics and psychotherapy became non-significant as the covariate measure of antisocial behavior became more comprehensive and reliable.”

8. Say “the current and similar studies,” which might be more clear than “this type study.”

We have tried to clarify this by now saying, “In addition to residual confounding, three other methodological aspects of this type of longitudinal analysis may suppress the detection of effective corrective actions.”

Responses to Dr. Carl Lombard’s comments:

1. Issues concerning the multiplicity of tactics: No information on their order of use. The most important effect might be use vs. non-use of each tactic. The multiplicity of use might account for the similarity of results.

Dr. Lombard is correct that the data do not indicate the order in which parents use these tactics when they use more than one tactic. The distinction between use vs. non-use is reflected in how we calculated effect sizes from the ANOVAs and ANCOVAs in Tables 5, 6, & 7. In addition, the new analyses summarized in Table 6 investigate whether the results differ after dropping 27% of the sample who experienced none of the four disciplinary tactics during the referent week. Finally, the new analyses in Table 7, which were specifically recommended by Dr. Capaldi, estimate the effect of the frequency of each tactic while controlling statistically for the other tactics and psychotherapy.
2. A reference to Figure 1 should refer to Figure 2.

We checked that all references to Figures and Tables were referring to the correct Figure or Table. Thank you.

3. Missing superscript “a” in Table 4.

This superscript is included in the table, which is now Table 5.

Sincerely,

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