

Child Abuse Related to Where Parents Drink

A recent study shows that whether or not parents physically abuse their children is related to parents' social life, in particular *where* parents go to drink alcohol. The study, carried out by the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation and the University of California, Los Angeles was recently published in the *Journal of Family Violence*. A sample of 103 parents in the Los Angeles area was surveyed and asked how often they had done such things hitting a child on the bottom with something like a hairbrush or belt and pinching him or her. These were characterized as minor abuse. Severe abuse included such things as slapping the child on the face, head, or ears, and throwing or knocking the child down. The parents were also asked about how much and how frequently they drank and how often they drank at home, in bars, in restaurants, at parties in friends' homes, and at parties in their own home.

A considerable portion (about 40%) of the study participants reported in engaging in at least minor physical violence (i.e. corporal punishment) toward their children. People who reported that they drank alcohol, especially those who drank in bars, at parties in friend's homes, and parties in other people's homes were more likely to use physically abusive parenting practices with their children. Parents who reported drinking at multiple locations were also more likely to physically abuse their children. Interestingly, even parents who went to these locations but did not drink there were more likely to report that they abused their children.

As study author, Dr. Bridget Freisthler stated, "Previous research has shown that parents who drink more heavily are more likely to engage in physical abuse of their children. This study shows that *where* they drink is also important. This suggests that even if parents choose not to drink at these locations, spending time in these places and socializing with individuals who may share the same attitudes and norms towards violence may influence them to be more violent towards their children."

The paper is entitled "Alcohol Use, Drinking Venue Utilization, and Child Physical Abuse: Results from a Pilot Study." It appears in *J Fam Viol* (2011) 26:185–193 DOI 10.1007/s10896-010-9352-2