

## **Rearing violence in Bahamian homes**

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This paper draws upon several Bahamian datasets to describe the violence to which children are exposed, particularly at home, and often as a result of adult behaviour. The linkages between abuse and selected household behaviours indicate that violence within the home does not arise spontaneously but co-occurs with other deviant behaviours. Actions within the household and economic challenges can have important impacts on the child. Abused children are at greater risk of carrying weapons, and the association with underachievement at school and being armed and possibly learnt behaviours at home are highlighted. The consequences of these actions with homes, which are the domain of parents, are discussed.

*What we must remember is that the evil we see all around us today is from seeds sown by this society many years ago. They have now come to full and revengeful fruition (Bahamians have to solve crime problem, 2010, p. 4).*

*Both the government and civic organizations conducted public education programs aimed at child abuse and appropriate parenting behavior; however, child abuse and neglect remained serious problems (U.S. Department of State, 2010, para. 2).*

*A 34-year-old man [Wallace] was arraigned in Magistrate's Court yesterday charged with two counts of rape... He indicated that he wanted to plead guilty... Wallace claimed that he had been molested as a child by a now deceased relative... (Man accused of rape claims he was molested as a child, 2011, paras. 2 & 3).*

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Although crimes have occurred throughout Bahamian history (Lofquist, 2010), the general opinion is that they have become “rampant” (Nunez, 2010, para. 5). Crime statistics, particularly for the most extreme offences, such as murder and homicide, continue to increase. In 1991, there were 28 homicides and by 2007 the figure had moved to 79 (Royal Bahamas Police Force Research and Planning Unit, 2008). As of October 2011, the homicide count stood at over 100 (Strachan, 2011). The majority of both victims and suspects of violent crime are in the 16-24 year age group (Hanna, 2005). Statistics on reported abuse of children have shown rises in physical, emotional and sexual abuse during the period 1990-2008 (Plumridge & Fielding, 2009). These official statistics document the rapid rise in violence against persons, including children, even if

they under-report the real number of incidences. However, it should be noted that these statistics merely document the outcome of violence, not its cause.

Jamaica has a history of violence which has been well documented and much studied, for example, by Harriott in 2003. While the causes and patterns of violence in Jamaica may or may not reflect those in The Bahamas, the disruption to the wellbeing of society may be similar. A study on violence in Jamaica by Smith and Mosby (2003) found that poor parenting practices were an important contribution to the violence seen in Jamaican society stating “that the harsh physical punishment meted out to children is partially responsible for the current social problems of the island nation” (p. 369). Reviews by Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008), and Maas, Herrenkohl and Sousa (2008) both provide ample evidence of the longer-term consequences of child abuse/maltreatment. This suggests that it would be instructive to look at the way children are treated in The Bahamas to assess if their treatment, particularly in the home, may be nurturing future violence.

The home has been romanticized as a place of love and safety, particularly in children’s books as Anne MacLeod states, "there was almost always the assurance that somewhere in a child's life there was safety, security, and stability available from adults," (cited by Gilman, 2005, para 6). The realization that the home is a place of violence and the forms of violence it can contain has required a reassessment as to what actions are normal within a home (Gelles & Straus, 1988). Children and adult females are generally the most vulnerable members of a household and so they are at risk of being victims of harm (Hanson & Patel, 2010). The need for children to be nurtured with care is well known and an objective of both responsible parents and political leaders and was codified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. When children are inappropriately treated, the repercussions are far reaching, and can lead to further in violence, particularly when the children become adults. As stated by Maas, et al. (2008), “child maltreatment poses clear risks to those who are victimized” (p. 56) and can be associated with long term affects which last into adulthood. Consequently, it is no surprise that it is now appreciated that The Bahamas, in common with other countries, has “serious problems” when it comes to child abuse (U.S. Department of State, 2009, Section 5, para. 8).

Blank's 2005 report *The Situation of Youth in The Bahamas* prepared for the Government of The Bahamas revisited secondary data sources and examined the lessons from overseas which could be appropriately adapted to the Bahamian context to protect children from harm as well as making recommendations for improving child and youth welfare in The Bahamas. She identified six "main risks" (p. 34) to Bahamian youth, namely:

- Poor education outcomes and early school leaving
- Early initiation of sexual activity with high rates of pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS
- High rates of unemployment, especially among girls and young teens
- Crime and violence, a propensity to carry weapons and associations with gangs
- Substance abuse
- Sexual and physical abuse – primarily of girls but also of boys.

While the importance of youth violence has been appreciated by the police (Bell, 2006) and politicians in The Bahamas (Turnquest addresses, 2010) such discussions within the country seem to have occurred with little reference to Bahamian data (despite Blank's report) and have depended on overseas sources and rhetoric. In 2009, a new Child Protection Act came into force (Child Care Protection Act No. 1 of 2007)<sup>1</sup> which harmonized previous laws and increased penalties regarding child abuse. These changes acknowledged the need to increase the legal protection offered children.

Brennen et al. (2010) provide a useful Bahamian view of corporal punishment on children and the associated activities which co-occur in homes where children are subjected to violence. Their paper indicated that physical punishment of children was common and appeared to be part of the Bahamian way of training a child which may have its roots in religious belief and also in tradition. In the West Indies, where corporal punishment is common, Arnold (1982) has stated that "beating... can be severe and bears no relevance to the age of the child nor the stage of its development" (p. 141). Hahnen, Rosado, Capozzi, and Hamon (1997) have highlighted the stresses of mothering in The Bahamas, which can result in mothers being violent towards their children. Other forms of violence, anger, fear etc., have also been identified as being important

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<sup>1</sup>For a summary of laws governing children in The Bahamas see *Overview of the Regulation of Family and Minors in the Bahamas* (2010) and those regarding sexual abuse "Protection against abuse, including sexual abuse, of minors in The Bahamas" (Anon, n.d,b)

determinants of crime in The Bahamas and were repeated by Allen in 2010 (Nunez, 2010). Rolle (n.d.) in a review of student studies at The College of The Bahamas found many that indicated that abuse of Bahamian children had a detrimental effect on their achievement at school.

Therefore, it is necessary to look at activities beyond corporal punishment which may negatively impact the development of children which combined with public and private initiatives attempts to give further protection to children.

This paper brings together data from seven studies in an attempt to highlight the violence which occurs in Bahamian homes and so give some idea of the range and scope of violence to which children are exposed. Together, these studies help to paint a picture of activities in children's homes, and beyond, all of which shed on light on the tangled web of violence and highlight links between childhood violence and the associated actions of children both in childhood and adulthood. As such this paper does not attempt to address all the "main risks" identified by Blank which children face, but rather we focus on factors which can heighten the risk of children being subject to harm, and so consequently, their long-term ability to make a positive contribution to society. This approach is attended to allow the reader to appreciate the factors which underlie the "main risks" which she notes.

### *The child population in The Bahamas*

In 2000, there were 88,107 households and 105,342 children (under 18) in The Bahamas (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2002), so children represented 35% of the population. In 2000, 46,928 homes (53.3% of all households) included at least one child living with at least one adult and 45.5% of all homes included at least one child living in a home with at least two adults (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2010). In 2006/2007, 72,500 children were enrolled in school (Bahamas Ministry of Education, 2006). Based on a 2005 Bahamian Ministry of Education study (Bain, 2005) we estimate that 84.2% of school children are Bahamian citizens.

Therefore, the study of children in The Bahamas and how they are exposed to any form of violence is to study a large segment of the population, as well as that part of society which will produce the leaders of the nation in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and also be responsible for the future economic and social wellbeing of the country. While the data below concentrate on

Bahamian citizens, in some studies participants could have been citizens from other countries who were living in The Bahamas.

## **Sources of data**

Typically, a child lives his/her life in two locations, home and school. We have drawn data from a number of studies which included questions about the use of violence to discipline children and had questions concerning violence in the home and at school.

In presenting the results from these seven studies we refer to them as:

- Study 1: Results from Hutcheson, Brennen, Bethel & Carroll (2011)
- Study 2: Results from Fielding et al. (2011)
- Study 3: Results from Brennen et al. (2010)
- Study 4: Results from Fielding and Farmer (2010)
- Study 5: Results from a Bahamas Ministry of Education/College of The Bahamas study (2009)
- Study 6: Results from a Ministry of Health study (Ministry of Health, 2001)
- Study 7: Results from Plumridge and Fielding (2009)
- Study 8: Results from Fielding and Taylor (2011)

While some of the data included from these studies has already been published, others are presented for the first time. For the convenience of the reader, we précis the methodology of each study below:

Study1: This was a study designed to look at gun ownership in The Bahamas. It collected information about the household, the guns kept by household members, information about a gun and the information about the person who controlled the gun. Information on selected activities within the home which included domestic violence, sexual abuse and abuse of animals was also collected. College of The Bahamas students sent out a link to a Survey Monkey© questionnaire to members of their email address books. This resulted in 1,813 responses. Not all responses were completed and not all respondents were Bahamian citizens living within The Bahamas. After cleaning the data 1,281 responses were retained for analysis. Firearms were reported in

23.0% of homes. In order to assess the reliability of an internet survey, 413 College of the Bahamas students were asked if there was a firearm in their home and 29.7% definitely knew that there was a firearm in the home.

Study 2: This study was designed to look at childhood acts of animal cruelty and to collect information on the home in which the child was brought up (including the presence of domestic violence, other uses of violence within the home). College of The Bahamas students sent out a Survey Monkey© internet survey to members of their email address books. Two-thousand two hundred and eleven responses were logged. After cleaning the data, 1,881 responses were retained which related to Bahamian citizens living in The Bahamas.

Study 3: This is explained in Brennenet al. (2010). College of The Bahamas students acting as data collectors obtained responses from 1,037 people throughout New Providence, from a convenience sample; of which 933 lived in their own home or with relations. Of this group, 69.4% were females, and 62.5% were aged over 21 years. Children lived in 570 homes. This study concentrated on the links between the corporal punishment of children and selected co-occurring behaviours within the household, including domestic violence, physical and sexual violence, substance abuse and violence towards pets.

Study 4: This study was designed to investigate how children are disciplined and pets are trained. It also sought to determine which acts of discipline might be associated with the abuse of a child. These included, corporal punishment, shouting, insulting, threatening, setting extra tasking, denying the children activities such as play, videogames, use of the internet etc. College of The Bahamas students sent out a Survey Monkey© internet survey to members of their email address books. Three hundred and eighty-eight responses were logged. After cleaning the data, 337 almost complete responses were retained from Bahamian citizens living in The Bahamas. Here we focus on the results relating to the methods used to discipline children.

Study 5: This study was designed to examine how children are taught in Junior High and High Schools (Grades 8 and 11) in The Bahamas. However, the survey included a question on taking a weapon to school as well as support for the child at home. A random sample of students was

selected using probability proportional to the size of the school from across New Providence and Grand Bahama. Eighteen schools were included in the sample of 1,018 respondents.

Study 6: This study was part of a Caribbean-wide project on adolescent health, funded by the Pan American Health Organization and executed in The Bahamas by The Ministry of Health. The study was designed to examine the health of students (in grades 7, 9 and 11) throughout seven islands of The Bahamas. The survey included questions on carrying weapons to school, activities of members of their household, which included abuse towards parents and children. Students were randomly chosen and resulted in 1,007 participants.

Study 7: This is explained in full by Plumridge and Fielding (2009). The purpose of the study was to assess the links between domestic violence and other behaviours of household members in homes of college students. These behaviours included domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse and the treatment of pets. The authors reported data on 612 students who were recruited by student enumerators visiting classes at The College of The Bahamas.

Study 8: Administrators of public schools attending the Educational Leadership Institute in 2011 completed a short survey which gathered information which included the violence in the homes of the administrators and the majority of the student homes in their schools; replies were obtained from 37 administrators from New Providence and the Family Islands (excluding Grand Bahama.)

We recognise that cultural differences influence what people understand violence and abuse to be. As indicated by Brennen et al. (2010) physical abuse in The Bahamas is associated with grievous physical harm. Similarly, Brennen and her colleagues show that what respondents understand by the word violence needs to be interpreted with care. Its understanding by respondents probably relates to severe acts. Further, the situation under which an act is perpetrated (self defence compared to the same act as a result of anger) causes some people to classify an act of violence as not violent if they feel that the circumstances might justify the act.

## Results

The studies provide a range of estimates for the percentage of homes with domestic violence: 26.7% of 1,243 homes<sup>2</sup>, 39.4% of 1,383 homes<sup>3</sup>, 23.2% of 889 homes<sup>4</sup>, and 21.3% of homes<sup>5</sup>. Wives appeared to be at higher risk of being sexually abused (11.8%) than girl friends (4.8%) by their intimate partners,  $OR^6 = 2.63$ , 95% CI[0.77, 8.91]<sup>7</sup>. However, this result is not formally significant ( $p = .117$ ) probably as a result of the small sample size ( $N = 241$ )<sup>8</sup>.

Sexual abuse definitely occurred in 7.6% and probably in an additional 3.4% (1,274 responses) homes<sup>9</sup>. Firearms were reported in between 23.0% (of 1,281)<sup>10</sup> and 26.0% (of 1,308)<sup>11</sup> of homes.

Three studies gave a consistent estimate for the percentage of children physically abused through corporal punishment. Children were considered abused through corporal punishment in 4.3% of 878 homes<sup>12</sup>. Of 1,434 respondents, 4.4% of respondents thought that they had been abused as a child as a result of corporal punishment and only 7.3% had not been subjected to corporal punishment as a child<sup>13</sup>. In almost 10% of households children were spanked “often” as a form of punishment and in case of 4.1% (418 homes), the spanking was considered abuse<sup>14</sup>.

### *Economic aspects of violence in the home* (Table 1)

Violence occurred in homes at all socioeconomic levels. The most notable aspect of this uniformity was the use of violence to discipline children and the consequent abuse of children as a result of punishment (see below). Children were equally exposed to corporal punishment

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<sup>2</sup> Study 1.

<sup>3</sup> Study 2.

<sup>4</sup> Study 3.

<sup>5</sup> Study 7.

<sup>6</sup> Odds ratios allow us to assess the risk of a behavior occurring in two groups. If the 95% confidence limits include 1.00, then the risk of the behaviour occurring the two groups would be regarded as being statistically similar (i.e. the probability of seeing this outcome could be due to chance).

<sup>7</sup> Study 1.

<sup>8</sup> Study 7.

<sup>9</sup> Study 1.

<sup>10</sup> Study 1.

<sup>11</sup> Study 2.

<sup>12</sup> Study 1.

<sup>13</sup> Study 2.

<sup>14</sup> Study 3.

irrespective of the household income,  $\chi^2(10, N = 775) = 17.8, p = .059$ . However, lower income homes were at greater risk of being the more violent homes. Domestic violence was associated with household income, with poorer households having a greater chance of domestic violence than richer households,  $\chi^2(5, N = 1,112) = 13.2, p = .022$ . Across all income groups between 1.0%-6.7% of children are abused in homes with domestic violence, overall 3.0% of children were both abused and living in homes with domestic violence. This level of violence was consistent across all economic groups,  $\chi^2(2, N = 245) = 2.90, p = .235$ . Sexual abuse was associated with household income, with poorer households having a higher risk of sexual abuse occurring than richer households,  $\chi^2(25, N = 1,140) = 26.2, p = .036$ . Respondents indicated that richer households were more likely to be “loving” than poorer households,  $\chi^2(10, N = 1,143) = 23.3, p = .010$ <sup>15</sup>. It should be noted that those living in households with an income of \$10,000 or less are probably living in poverty (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2004).

Table 1: Prevalence of selected activities in the home by total household income.

	Total household income per year						Overall
	<\$10,000	\$10,001-20,000	\$20,001-\$40,000	\$40,001-\$60,000	\$60,001-\$80,000	>\$80,001	
Homes with domestic violence	36.7%	30.2%	28.7%	29.1%	21.8%	18.9%	27.2%
Someone anyone in the household been definitely or probably sexually abused	12.5%	14.9%	10.3%	11.9%	10.5%	8.0%	11.2%
Children are hit as a means of discipline	69.4%	65.0%	76.4%	72.2%	64.4%	65.3%	69.8%
Children are hit as a means of discipline and sometimes I would consider this abuse	11.3%	4.3%	4.6%	4.0%	2.9%	5.0%	4.8%
Child abused and domestic violence in home	6.7%	3.5%	2.1%	2.3%	1.0%	5.0%	3.0%
Household is “loving”	76.5%	88.0%	86.4%	86.5%	91.8%	90.7%	87.4%

Source: Study 1

### *Discipline within the home*

Spanking of very young children was ubiquitous and most children even in the 14 -17 age group were spanked (53.8%). Hitting children with an object was also common (41.1%) and occurred even in the 1-2 age group. However, the use of spanking to train children diminished with the age of the child, but other disciplining behaviours increased. Most children (81.1%) were subjected to shouting. Shouting was not only more common than spanking, but it occurred

<sup>15</sup> Study 1.

throughout the entire childhood. While threatening was more common in children over seven, the exposure of children to insulting became more common with age. Abuse as a result of discipline increased with age, particularly in the over seven age group (Table 2).

Table 2: Methods used to discipline children by age of child.

Method of discipline	Age group				Overall
	1-2	3-7	8-13	14-17	
Shouted at	80.0%	82.4%	75.7%	88.5%	81.1%
Spanked	100.0%	94.1%	75.7%	53.8%	75.6%
Insulted	10.0%	35.3%	45.9%	61.5%	44.4%
Threatened	40.0%	35.3%	48.6%	46.2%	44.4%
Hit with an object	20.0%	52.9%	37.8%	46.2%	41.1%
Abused as a result of the discipline	0.0%	5.9%	8.1%	26.9%	12.2%
<i>N</i>	10	17	37	26	90

Source: Study 4

The other forms of discipline used when a child did something wrong show that some parents use a variety of levers to discipline children, including access to modern technology. In some cases other reactions also indicated a lack of parental knowledge of child development (“He gets the slint [silent?] treatment”)in contrast to other parents who attempted to explain and rationalise to the child the unacceptability of the wrong action.

Scoring the results from the 15 methods of discipline included in the study (see Appendix 1), never =3, less than often 2 and more than often 1, a discipline score can be devised. The maximum score was 45 and the minimum score 15. This discipline score indicated that a child who was subjected to many of these disciplinary actions was more associated with respondents’ concept of abuse. A Mann-Whitney test indicated that those children who were reported as being never abused had the higher score (received fewer disciplinary actions) (Mdn=35) than those who were abused (Mdn=30),  $U = 241.5, p=.031, r=.26$ .

A multivariate analysis was used to assess if the classification distinguished between these two groups of children (abused vs. not abused) based on 15 disciplinary actions and Wilks’ Lambda<sup>16</sup> was found to be significant,  $p<.001$ . The canonical discriminant function coefficients indicate

<sup>16</sup>Wilk’s Lamdba tests the hypothesis that the means of the measurements are the same in the two groups. If- this is not significant there would be no point in doing a linear discriminant function analysis.

that being insulted and being spanked contribute most to discriminating between the two groups of children (Appendix 1)<sup>17</sup>.

Only 25.8% of 422 children were rarely spanked, and 9.7% of children were spanked often. Spanking often was associated with abuse, as 25.0% (N=16) of those who were abused were spanked often compared to 9.1% (N= 397) of those who were not abused, *OR* = 3.34, 95% CI[1.02, 10.90], indicating the elevated risk of abuse once the child was subjected to spanking often.

When spanking was considered abuse, this was associated with the home being less likely to be considered as loving and an increased chance that a number of undesirable activities occurred within the home, such as sexual abuse, substance abuse and domestic violence. Homes in which abuse through spanking occurred were also more likely to include a household member with a criminal record (Table 3)<sup>18</sup>.

Table 3: Association between spanking as abuse and other household activities.

	Spanking is abuse		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Domestic violence in the home	68.8%	26.6%	6.06	2.05	17.86
Someone uses illegal drugs	41.2%	7.4%	8.81	3.12	24.86
Someone drinks alcohol in excess	33.3%	13.3%	3.25	1.07	9.89
Has anyone been sexually abuse in the household	29.4%	4.3%	8.77	2.79	27.58
Someone has a criminal record	23.1%	6.3%	4.49	1.16	17.39
I would leave the household because of the way I am treated	58.8%	20.8%	5.43	2.01	14.71
I live in a loving household	41.2%	90.9%	0.07	0.03	0.20

Source: Study 3

Children who lived in homes with domestic violence were more likely to be considered abused through the use of corporal punishment (8.9%, N = 270) than when domestic violence was absent (2%, N = 586), *OR* = 4.67, 95% CI[2.30, 9.48]<sup>19</sup>.

### *Harm of towards children*

Overall, 31.6% (N = 887) of students had ever suffered emotional or verbal abuse, 22.2% (N = 862) had ever been physically abused and 17.0% (N = 843) had been both physically and

<sup>17</sup>Study 4.

<sup>18</sup>Study 3.

<sup>19</sup>Study 1.

emotionally or verbally abused. These two forms of abuse were linked. Children who had ever been physically abused were 11.3 times more likely to be emotionally or verbally abused than those who had not ever been physically abused,  $OR = 11.3$ , 95% CI[7.6, 16.8]. An adult in the home was the most likely person to inflict emotional or verbal abuse on the child (65.1%,  $N = 284$  reports) and was also almost the most likely person to inflict the physical abuse (71.3%,  $N = 178$  reports) but 17.7% of physically abused children claimed to have been abused by teachers<sup>20</sup>.

Deviant behaviours of parents and family members were associated with a higher risk of physical abuse (Table 4).

Table 4: Prevalence and Odds Ratios of physical abuse of children associated with problems in the home

Problem in the home	Ever been physically abused		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Parents' violent behaviour	30.8%	9.0%	4.51	2.95	6.89
Parents' drug problems	13.2%	4.0%	3.64	1.99	6.63
Family problems from drinking/drugs	10.4%	3.3%	3.43	1.78	6.59
Parent's drinking problem	28.5%	14.9%	2.28	1.54	3.37
Parents' mental problems	11.4%	5.9%	2.03	1.13	3.63

Source: Study 6

Deviant behaviours of parents and family members were also consistently associated with a higher risk of emotional abuse (Table 5).

Table 5: Prevalence and Odds Ratios of emotional or verbal abuse of children associated with problems in the home

Problem in the home	Ever been emotionally or verbally abuse		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Family problems from drinking/drugs	9.0%	2.7%	3.49	1.82	6.71
Parents' violent behaviour	22.2%	8.3%	3.17	2.09	4.80
Parents' drug problems	9.5%	3.4%	3.01	1.63	5.57
Parents' mental problems	11.1%	4.5%	2.64	1.52	4.60
Parents' drinking problem	24.9%	13.9%	2.06	1.44	2.94

Source: Study 6

Physical abuse of the child was also associated with a heightened level of “worry” about violence and parental substance abuse (Table 6).

<sup>20</sup>Study 6.

Table 6: Prevalence and Odds Ratios of children's worries associated with their physical abuse.

Worry	Ever been physically abused		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Do not worry about being physically abused	49.7%	80.6%	0.24	0.16	0.34
Do not worry about parents drinking/drug use	69.9%	80.6%	0.56	0.38	0.82
Do not worry about being sexually abused	73.2%	79.4%	0.71	0.47	1.05
Do not worry about violence in home	64.1%	78.6%	0.48	0.33	0.70
Do not worry about parents leaving	62.0%	69.2%	0.90	0.68	1.18
Do not worry about violence in school	37.8%	46.3%	0.70	0.50	1.00

Source: Study 6

Physical abuse of the child was linked to a number of aspects of emotional abuse, including substance abuse and emotional abuse at home and by school teachers (Table 7).

Table 7: Prevalence and Odds Ratios of physical abuse of children associated with emotional abuse

	Ever been physically abused		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Emotional or verbal abuse	78.6%	24.5%	11.29	7.60	16.78
Emotional problems from drugs/drinking	14.1%	3.6%	4.42	2.44	8.00
Emotional abuse-adult in household	72.3%	58.6%	1.85	1.11	3.08
Emotional abuse-teacher	32.5%	20.8%	1.84	1.04	3.24
Emotional abuse-adult not in household	35.7%	25.2%	1.65	0.97	2.80
Emotional abuse-sibling or teen in house	39.4%	35.9%	1.16	0.70	1.92
Emotional abuse-boy/girl friend not in house	22.3%	25.8%	0.83	0.46	1.48

Source: Study 6

Sexual abuse was also associated with physical abuse, with 37.0% of physically abused children also sexually abused, as opposed to only 5.5% of not physically abused children being sexually abused,  $OR = 10.1$ , 95% CI[6.4, 15.9], <sup>21</sup>.

Of 166 children who were abused, 10.2% were abused by adults within the household and also at school by teachers.

The excessive alcohol use in the home, as indicated by a parental drinking problem, is associated with students being more at risk of drinking alcohol; for example, when children never drank, the parent(s) had no drinking problem in 85.2% (of 568) homes, whereas when the child had six or more drinks this fell to 55.6% ( $N = 18$  homes),  $\chi^2(4, N = 940) = 17.2, p = .002$ <sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup>Study 6.<sup>22</sup>Study 6.

When commenting on the abuse in the majority of student homes, 8.1% of school administrators reported that hitting never occurred, 10.8% reported that threatening never occurred, 22.2% reported that insulting never occurred, 27.8% reported that swearing never occurred and 30.6% reported that sexual abuse never occurred<sup>23</sup>.

### *Links between sexual abuse and other behaviours in the home*

The presence of a household member who had been sexually abused (at sometime, somewhere) was associated with a higher risk of a number of deviant household behaviours also being present in the home as well as the respondent being less likely to consider that the home was loving. It should be noted that this study did not ask where or when the sexual abuse occurred, only that a member of the household had been sexually abused (Table 8)<sup>24</sup>. Substance abuse also raised the risk of females being abused<sup>25</sup>.

Table 8: Odds ratio of child being sexually abused and selected behaviours in the household.

	Any one sexually abused		OR	95% CIs	
	Yes	No		Lower	Upper
Anyone in the home					
Abuses alcohol	44.4%	17.8%	3.69	1.85	7.36
Uses illegal drugs	22.2%	9.1%	2.84	1.23	6.55
A household member has a criminal record	21.9%	5.6%	4.74	1.89	11.87
Respondent considered the home to be "loving"	61.8%	86.8%	0.25	0.12	0.51

Source: Study 7

### *Violence towards human and non-human animals*

Elevated levels of violence in the home, either towards people or pets, were associated with children being hit frequently or abused, and hitting the child frequently or abusing him/her was also associated with the perception that the home was not a loving one (Table 9).

Table 9: Odds ratio of a child being physically hit often and other aspects of the home.

	Respondent when a child:		OR	95% CIs	
	Hit less than often	Hit frequently or abused		Lower	Upper
Domestic violence	33.2%	60.2%	0.33	0.25	0.42
Mother hit	18.9%	33.6%	0.46	0.35	0.60
Animals abused	17.1%	30.2%	0.48	0.34	0.67
Animals hit	12.2%	22.0%	0.49	0.36	0.68
Live in a loving home	88.7%	70.9%	3.22	2.39	4.35

Source: Study 2

<sup>23</sup> Study 8.

<sup>24</sup> Study 7.

<sup>25</sup> Study 7.

Respondents who were hit frequently or abused as a child had a higher Childhood Animal Index<sup>26</sup>, 20.8 (SE= 0.39) as opposed to 19.7 (SE=0.27),  $t(593) = 2.34, p = .020$ <sup>27</sup>.

*Violence at school*

Between 4%-5% of children thought some children faced no consequences for breaking school rules. Older children were less likely to be held accountable for breaking school rules than younger children (Table 10).

Table 10 Children's perceptions of enforcement of school rules.

<b>Students who break school rules are punished</b>	Primary school %	Junior High and Senior High school %
Always	76.7%	52.5%
Often	5.9%	17.4%
Sometimes	8.6%	17.6%
Rarely	3.9%	8.4%
Never	4.9%	4.1%
<i>N</i>	511	983

Source: Study 5

Even at Primary school, many children agreed that safety was a big problem, although this fear diminished in the older children at Junior High, Senior High schools (Table 11).

Table 11: Students feeling that safety was a "problem".

	Safety is a big problem at primary school	I feel safe at Junior High, Senior High
Strongly Agree	41.7%	15.0%
Agree	14.5%	18.0%
Neutral	11.5%	26.3%
Disagree	9.4%	17.6%
Strongly Disagree	22.9%	23.1%
<i>N</i>	489	960

Source: Study 5

Gang membership was associated with students arming themselves. Less than 1% of all students who were not gang members always came to school armed, as opposed to 17.6% of members of gangs. However, it should be noted that more students armed themselves (always or sometimes) when not at school, 24.2%, than when at school, 12.7%<sup>28</sup>. Students who armed themselves

<sup>26</sup>The Childhood Animal Index assesses cruelty towards animals in childhood through a self-reporting of childhood harm towards animals (Dadds, 2008).

<sup>27</sup>Study 2.

<sup>28</sup>Study 6

outside of school tended to be the same students who were also armed at school (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, 0.51,  $p < .001$ ).

In Junior High and Senior High schools, 7.4% of students claimed that they always took a weapon to school, while 74.7% of children never took a weapon to school. Many, but not most (46.2%) of those who always brought a weapon to school ( $n = 65$ ) strongly disagreed to feeling safe at school.

Even children who felt safe at school brought weapons to school. The fear which may drive students to carry a weapon to school did not appear to emanate from the classmates, as both the students who did and did both always carry a weapon were equally likely to like their classmates (Table 13). Children who felt unsafe at school were those who were more likely to always bring a weapon to school<sup>29</sup>, so their behaviour could be considered rational. However, the results suggest that children who go to school armed do not do so due to fear of their classmates. The data did not support the idea that the threat of feeling unsafe at school was associated with liking class mates for those children who always carried a weapon to school, Fisher's Exact test,  $n=42$ ,  $p=.16$ <sup>30</sup>. In the case of students in New Providence, 91.6% of children who travelled to school by private motor vehicle never carried a weapon to school, as opposed to 83.4% of students who went to school by foot or on the jitney,  $OR = 2.23$ , 95% CI[1.34, 3.72]<sup>31</sup>.

Actions of parents/guardians towards the child's performance at school were linked to the child always taking a weapon to school. The greater the involvement of parents in the child's school work, the less risk there was of the child always taking a weapon to school. However, it should also be noted that children who always carried a weapon to school were less likely to admit that they always tried their best compared to children who carried a weapon to school less than always<sup>32</sup> (Table 12). This result was in agreement another study which found that children who carried weapons to work tried less hard than those who never took weapons to school,  $\chi^2(4, N=968) = 25.5, p < .001$ <sup>33</sup> (Table 13).

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<sup>29</sup>Study 5.

<sup>30</sup>Study 5.

<sup>31</sup>Study 6.

<sup>32</sup>Study 5.

<sup>33</sup>Study 6.

Table 12: Odds Ratios of child carrying a weapon to school and factors associated with school

	I carry a weapon to school		OR	95% CIs	
	Less than always	Always		Lower	Upper
I feel safe at school	45.8%	27.3%	2.25	1.22	4.15
I like my class mates	78.3%	69.2%	1.61	0.87	2.98

My parents/guardian care about my grades	98.1%	91.9%	4.43	1.58	12.45
My parents/guardian ensure I study at home	91.8%	75.0%	3.75	1.94	7.25
My parents provide a quiet place to study	82.6%	67.8%	2.25	1.26	4.02
My parents never help me with my homework*	14.9%	24.6%	0.54	0.30	0.96
I try to do my best	96.5%	90.2%	3.00	1.19	7.56

Strongly agree or agree responses except for \*

Source: Study 5

Table 13: Association of a child carrying a weapon to school and effort associated with school work.

How hard I try on school work	Past month-carry weapon to school			<i>n</i>
	Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost all of the time	
I don't try very hard	3.0%	9.1%	0.0%	34
I try hard, but not as hard as I could	46.2%	62.6%	59.1%	466
I always try very hard to do my best	50.9%	28.3%	40.9%	468
N	847	99	22	968

Source: Study 6

Further, children who took weapons to school had a lower grade point average (GPA) than those who did not. A Median test indicated that the GPAs were different ( $p=.003$ ), with the children who never carried weapons to school having the higher GPAs. Therefore, this indicates that children who went to school prepared for violence did less well than other children (Table 14)<sup>34</sup>.

Table 14: Association of a child carrying a weapon to school and GPA.

Carry a weapon to school	Mean GPA	SE	<i>n</i>
Always	2.29	.08	66
Often	2.36	.10	43
Sometimes	2.20	.07	51
Rarely	2.36	.07	56
Never	2.46	.03	646
N	2.42	.02	862

Source: Study 5

<sup>34</sup>Study 5.

Children who carried weapons, both to school and at other times, were most likely to have suffered emotional abuse and/or physical abuse and children who never carried weapons were least likely. The behaviour of parents (violence and drugs, and some extent alcohol) was linked to children carrying weapons to school, and to some extent, carrying weapons on the street. Children who had been physically or emotionally abused were more likely to carry weapons, both to school and other places, than other children. The higher percentage of children who carried weapons all the time did not appear to be worrying about violence at school, at home or in the community, and this could be due to the fact they that they are armed and feel able to defend themselves.

It would appear that violence, perceived (worry) or emotional, as much as physical within the home, or violence on the street (not in the home or at school) could be the reason why children carry weapons. Clearly, the reasons why children arm themselves could be a response to a number of possible threats, real or imagined, Table 15<sup>35</sup>. Children who had been physically abused were more likely to take weapons to school than those who had not been abused, 20.8% of children who had been physically abused took weapons to school (sometimes or always), compared to 10.2% of children who had not been physically abused,  $OR = 2.25$ , 95% CI[1.46, 3.48]. No such link was noted for children who had been subject to emotional or sexual abuse<sup>36</sup>. However, physically abused as well as emotionally abused children were more likely to carry weapons on the street (sometimes or always), than those children who had not been abused; physical abuse,  $OR = 1.53$ , 95% CI[1.05, 2.24], and emotional abuse,  $OR = 1.51$ , 95% CI[1.08, 2.12].

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<sup>35</sup>Study 6.

<sup>36</sup>Study 6.

Table 15: Association of a child carrying a weapon and behaviours inside and outside the home.

	Past month-carried weapon to school?					Weapons carried at other times?				
	Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost all of the time	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>	Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost all of the time	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>
Emotional or verbal abuse	34.0%	44.4%	52.6%	.043	867	32.2%	43.3%	63.3%	<.001	870
Ever been physical abused	19.6%	30.7%	57.9%	<.001	845	18.9%	28.1%	48.4%	<.001	848
Emotional abuse-adult in household	65.7%	52.8%	66.7%	.322	275	66.3%	58.1%	66.7%	.450	276
Emotional abuse, adult not in household	28.8%	32.4%	33.3%	.876	268	30.0%	22.5%	55.6%	.023	269
Emotional abuse-teacher	20.3%	51.5%	77.8%	<.001	259	20.0%	34.8%	56.3%	.001	260
Physical abuse-adult in household	72.7%	65.2%	54.5%	.374	173	73.9%	64.4%	64.3%	.427	174
Physical abuse-teacher	14.6%	31.8%	27.3%	.104	163	16.7%	21.4%	14.3%	.744	164
Sexual abuse-adult in household	23.5%	33.3%	20.0%	.738	98	25.0%	22.2%	25.0%	.970	98
Parents' drinking problem	15.7%	21.3%	30.0%	.102	936	15.9%	16.3%	31.3%	.73	939
Parents' violent behaviour	11.3%	18.7%	47.6%	<.001	906	11.4%	15.2%	28.1%	.012	907
Parents' drug problems	4.4%	6.7%	25.0%	<.001	899	4.8%	5.4%	6.3%	.895	900
Do not worry about violence in the community	37.0%	31.1%	52.6%	.102	888	37.1%	31.4%	61.3%	.021	889
Do not worry about violence at school	43.8%	35.8%	47.8%	.503	899	43.3%	39.6%	61.3%	.009	900
Do not worry about violence in the home	75.8%	64.7%	80.8%	.078	860	75.9%	70.0%	77.3%	.146	861

Source: Study 6

Students who took weapons to school were no more worried about violence at school than those who did not,  $\chi^2(4, N=899) = 3.53, p=.50$  (Table 16).

Table 16 Association of a child carrying a weapon to school and concern about violence in school.

0.16		Past month-carry weapon to school			<i>n</i>
		Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost all of the time	
Worry about violence in school	Not at all	43.8%	35.8%	47.6%	387
	Sometimes	33.7%	42.1%	28.6%	310
	A lot	22.5%	22.1%	23.8%	202
<i>n</i>		783	95	21	899

Source: Study 6

Students who were not worried about violence at school were more likely to take weapons to school,  $\chi^2(4, N=900) = 13.5, p=.009$  (Table 17).

Table 17: Association of a child carrying a weapon, other than to school, and concern about violence in school.

Worry about violence in school	Weapons carried at other times?			n
	Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, Almost all of the time	
Not at all	43.3%	39.6%	61.3%	388
Sometimes	32.5%	43.2%	19.4%	309
A lot	24.2%	17.2%	19.4%	203
N	677	192	31	900

Source: Study 6

Students who drank were more likely to carry a weapon, which indicates an association between two undesirable behaviours in school children, only 13.4% of children who never drank took a weapon to school compared to 44.5% who had six or more drinks (Bahamas Ministry of Health, Bahamas Youth Health Survey, Pan Health Organization 1998 reproduced in Blank, 2005)<sup>37</sup>.

*Links between physical violence as a child and characteristics of that person as an adult* (Table 18)

The study on gun ownership allowed information to be gathered about the person who controls a gun and how that person was treated as a child and his/her current activities. Persons who were not hit often or physically abused as a child, were at less risk than those who were in engaged or possibly being engaged in criminal activity. They were also more likely to sexually abuse a household member than someone who was only hit sometimes or less. The risk of harming a household member, participating in gambling, using the gun to threaten a household member, use alcohol in excess or use illegal drugs etc., was always elevated when the adult was abused as a child; this consistency in direction is unlikely to have been a chance event, if both groups were at equal risk,  $p=.031$ <sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup>Study 6

<sup>38</sup>Study 1.

Table 18: Odds ratio of a child being physically hit more than sometimes and aspects of his/her adult activities.

Person who controls a firearm:	As a child, the person who controls a firearm:		OR	95% CIs	
	Hit, less than sometimes	Hit often or abused		Lower	Upper
Charged in custody	0.5%	7.7%	0.06	0.01	0.68
Member of a gang	0.5%	7.4%	0.06	0.01	0.70
Sexually abuses a household member	0.5%	7.4%	0.06	0.01	0.71
Charged on bail	1.0%	11.2%	0.08	0.01	0.48
Committed a crime	1.0%	7.4%	0.12	0.02	0.92
Participates in drug trafficking	1.0%	7.4%	0.12	0.02	0.92
Harmed a household member	5.4%	14.8%	0.33	0.10	1.12
Used the gun to threaten a household member	3.1%	8.0%	0.37	0.07	1.93
Drinks alcohol in excess	7.4%	11.5%	0.61	0.17	2.27
Participates in gambling	12.3%	18.5%	0.62	0.22	1.78
Uses illegal drugs	5.4%	7.4%	0.71	0.15	3.38

Source: Study 1

Parents can repeat the parenting patterns which they learnt as a child. Parents who were never hit as a child were least likely to hit their children when a parent,  $\chi^2(4, N=371) = 29.43$ ,  $p < .001$  (Table 19)<sup>39</sup>.

Table 19: Relationship between being hit as a child and the use of hitting to discipline children when an adult.

As a child were you ever hit as a form of discipline?	As a parent do you hit your children?		n
	No, I never hit my children	Yes, I hit my children	
No, never	64.3%	35.7%	28
Yes, and I would consider the beating abuse	21.7%	78.3%	23
Yes, but only when very naughty	19.5%	80.5%	128
Yes, often	19.5%	80.5%	82
Yes, sometimes	19.1%	80.9%	110
<i>N</i>	85	286	371

Source: Study 2

## Discussion

When drawing together data from different studies one must be mindful that the data were collected using different methodologies and involved different target groups. Further, while the studies may have asked similar questions, the nuances of the questions can be important when interpreting the data. For example, the circumstances under which the reported abuse may have occurred are not always clear; was it as a result of discipline or some other motive? We also note that several estimates, for say, child abuse, are similar, but even when there is less agreement, the variation allows us to provide a range of values which may be of value for planning purposes.

<sup>39</sup>Study 2.

However, while the numbers from similar questions vary from study to study, as would be expected, what is consistent are the associations between household traits (e.g.: domestic violence) and, usually, undesirable behaviours.

### *Household behaviours*

It is evident that violence occurs in many homes. It is also clear that violence and other undesirable behaviours are co-occurring; that is, the occurrence of one behaviour is associated with an elevated chance that another undesirable behaviour will occur. Consequently, it is clear that the data point to the tangled web of violent behaviours. The behaviours of parents/adults are clearly linked with a number of aspects of concern in the life of the child but we must note that these studies do not allow us to say such behaviours are the cause of the child's harm or anxiety. The data also indicate that exposure to violence in childhood is associated with increased risks of the grown child participating in undesirable activities as an adult, observations noted in previous studies, such as Greenfeld (1996) and, Maas et al.(2008). The observation that parents were not hit as a child were less likely to hit their own children compared with those parents who were hit, or even abused, as a child points to the intergenerational nature of violence within families (Covell, Grusec & King, 1995).

### *Domestic violence*

As noted by Plumridge and Fielding (2009) a number of actions are associated with domestic violence. In The Bahamas the Bahamas Crisis Centre (n.d.) has identified these to include hitting, slapping, pushing, swearing, hurting, threatening and denying freedom as components of domestic violence; several but not all of these components are covered in the studies reported here. The studies indicate that domestic violence occurs in 20%-40% of homes. Burnett-Garraway in her 2001 study of 313 females found that 40.3% had been victims of physical abuse which is consistent with the findings from the studies reported here. These findings indicate that a large number of people, both adults and children are exposed to domestic violence and so may suffer from the behaviours associated victims of this type of violence. The ramifications to children as well as adults of being exposed to domestic violence are well documented. As Holt et al. (2008) state in their review, "children may be significantly affected by the experience of

domestic violence in their lives” (p. 807). Further, its effects go beyond the home and have a negative impact on society and the country’s economy (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002).

Domestic violence was found in homes at all economic levels but it was more common in lower income than higher income homes. This observation is in agreement with Burnett-Garraway (2001) who also found that economic hardship and over-crowding in the home increased the risk of females being a victim of abuse. Children are also vulnerable to economic hardship (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2004), and so domestic violence becomes yet another barrier likely to adversely affect the formation of poor children. These findings reinforce the need to address poverty through improved educational attainment and employment as previously identified by Blank (2005). Plumridge and Fielding (2009) found that domestic violence has been associated with several undesirable behaviours of household members including, substance abuse, sexual abuse and criminality. How domestic violence affects a particular child is complex and depends upon the age and sex of the child, among other factors (Holt et al., 2008). All the studies considered here, make it clear that once domestic violence occurs within a household, the risks of other undesirable behaviours increases. When this violence occurs as a result of dysfunctional adult relationships, the wider issues of poor adult relationships become apparent and extend beyond the principal protagonists.

The reports from school administrators of the widespread occurrence of physical, emotion and sexual violence in the majority of student homes adds to the concern that children are surrounded by violence, even if they are not the focus of it. The long-term implications of this violence for the children is apparent when school administrators consider parental involvement in learning as the single most important factor influencing student performance in national examinations (Fielding & Taylor 2009).

#### *Other household behaviours*

The behaviours of parents and the worry which they caused children were higher in both the physically abused and emotionally abused groups of children. These included physical violence as well as substance abuse. Again the results from the student survey indicated the association

between physical and emotional abuse and undesirable household behaviours. Again, the actions of the adults within the home can have far reaching effects on the child. While this is made obvious in the case of adults killing a child (McKenzie, 2010), there are other less blatant actions. This can be appreciated by the adult misuse of alcohol and illegal drug use. It should be noted that illegal drug use amongst children is of also concern and may also be a learnt behaviour (National Anti-drug Secretariat, n.d.). The use/abuse of alcohol by parents is not only a cause of worry for children, but can provide learning opportunities for children to drink. Given that children who drink are less likely to like school, drinking may have a negative impact on school performance (BBC News, 2010).

Household pets can encourage children to be empathic towards animals or they can be a means by which children can learn cruelty (Ascione, 2008). Consequently, the link between domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse already noted in The Bahamas (Brennen et al., 2010) is important, particularly in a country where journalists are content to boast in print about how they abuse dogs (Longley, 2007). The link between animal abuse and bullying at school demonstrated by Henry and Sanders (2007) means that schools must be aware of the wide ranging behaviours associated with animal abuse. Therefore, there is a need for a greater appreciation of the link between animal abuse and abuse of humans (Plumridge & Fielding, 2009). Further, the laws regarding animal abuse need to be enforced (Fielding, Mather, & Isaacs, 2005) so that the mistreatment of animals does not become an avenue by which children can learn to be violent towards animals, and possibility ultimately towards humans (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, n.d.). The data clearly indicate that the mistreatment of animals can be an indicator of children being at increased risk of harm. This so-called red flag can be used in cross-reporting to assist social services and animal welfare groups to identify people and pets at risk of harm as has been done in the United States (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009).

### *Training of children*

Historically, violence seems to have been an accepted and acceptable way to train children in The Bahamas (Otterbein & Otterbein, 1973; Hahnlén, Rosado, Capozzi, & Hamon, 1997). It

should be noted that mothers play the dominant role in training children. Both Hahnlen et al. (1997) and Brennen et al. (2010) noted the disciplinarian role of mothers. While females are the key disciplinarians within the home, they are no more likely than males to inflict abuse on the child (Brennen et al., 2010). Consequently, it is to be expected that females (mothers) inflict most of the violence on children; that is, the primary caregiver is also the primary punisher; an observation consistent with Arnold (1982) who noted “the mixture of great love and affection shown to young children, and the frequency with which corporal punishment is administered [by mothers]” (p. 141). Hahnlen et al. (1997) offer explanations why this occurs, and how the pressures that mothers face can result in them being unable to spend as much quality time with their children as they might wish. In many cases, the pressures resulted from absent fathers and the need for the mothers to work. This would suggest that in striving to avoid poverty, or pay bills etc., children fail to get the care which they need to thrive. This conjecture is consistent with data presented by Plumridge and Fielding (2009) that showed that households headed by females had a lower household income than those headed by males. These financial burdens appear to have been compounded in the economic downturn of the late 2000s. As reported in one media article, the hardships, caused by reduced employment opportunities can cause single mothers to contemplate suicide (Rolle, 2010), an action which would have far-reaching implications for dependent children.

Children are raised with violence and they are exposed to physical violence from an early age. While their exposure to corporal punishment at home decreases with age, their chances that their overall treatment will result in abuse increases with age. About 4% of children were spanked to such an extent that the spanking was considered to be abusive. Further, spanking often was associated with an elevated risk of the child being abused, which further indicates the important association between the frequent use of corporal punishment and that punishment leading to abuse, a finding noted by Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Bekoff, and Runyan (2008). The links between physical abuse and other undesirable activities and appear consistent with the statement of Maas et al. (2008) who stated that “physical abuse is probably the most consistent predictor of youth violence” (p. 56). These findings point to the importance of teaching parents the potential dangers of hitting children and the risk of abuse to which this action exposes the child, particularly when the child is hit with an object.

Being shouted at is a ubiquitous part of a child's life. Threatening and insulting were also common, particularly for children aged three and over. Threatening and insulting both tended to increase as the child got older. This gives the impression of a noise-filled home where the shouting also includes a mix of threats and insult. These behaviours seem to supplant physical violence as the child grows up. Again, it should be noted that all these behaviours tended to co-occur and so putting the child at risk from suffering from the longer-term problems of physical and mental abuse. The common occurrence of these behaviours is consistent with the occurrence of domestic violence, as these actions are also components of domestic violence. If shouting is associated with conflict, then it can be appreciated that shouting can escalate to severe conflict which may ultimately result in death. As was reported by Nicholls (2011), in The Bahamas "34 of the 94 murders...resulted from some form of argument, altercation or confrontation" (para. 2). If this is the way children learn to deal with conflict, these statistics may just reflect the logical conclusion of the lack of conflict resolution abilities within society.

While abuse was not typically defined in these studies, and so depended on the respondent's perception, analysis of the replies indicated that respondents did have a consistent idea of actions associated with abuse. Corporal punishment and emotional abuse (insults) were key factors in contributing to what respondents considered as actions which were associated with abuse of the child. Once the child was considered to be abused, there were elevated chances of other undesired behaviours occurring in the home. As Brennen et al. (2010) pointed out; there are important differences between homes where children are spanked as a form of discipline and those where the spanking becomes abuse. Consequently, it can be appreciated that abuse does not arise spontaneously within a home, but may be the manifestation of other issues within the household, such as poor relationships between adults or inappropriate behaviours as well as economic challenges.

### *Sexual abuse*

These studies indicated that sexual abuse of children was less prevalent than other forms of abuse. Convictions for incest, demonstrate that children are indeed subject to sexual abuse by those whom they should be able to trust (McKenzie, 2011). Burnett-Garraway (2001) found as many as 22.4% of adult females in her study had been victims of sexual abuse, but is not clear in

what context this occurred. The sexual abuse of married women is a concern not only for the victim, but to the children who may witness or live in such a home where this violence occurs (Appel & Kim-Appel, 2006). Consequently, the failure of Bahamian community leaders to back legislation to outlaw marital rape (Missick, 2010) appears to have not only overlooked the possible higher risk which married, as opposed to unmarried women, run of being abused, but also at the wider context of the effects of such abuse.

However, sexual abuse is linked with other undesirable behaviours. Children who were victims of physical abuse had an elevated risk of being sexually abused, again, indicating the interconnected nature of these events. In common with other communities, such as in the United States (Child Help, n.d.), abuse of children was most likely to be perpetrated by someone the child knew. These findings indicate that it is important for victimisers to be reported to the authorities as their crimes may be less visible than those committed outside the home. However, for this to happen, people must get over their reluctance to get involved in what they may consider to be other people's business (Brennen et al., 2010).

### *Children and violence at school*

Outside of home, school is probably the next most important part of a child's life. The data available in the studies reviewed on this aspect are more limited, but suggest areas of concern which would merit further research. It is apparent that activities within the home impact the performance of school children as well as activities at school. It should be noted that some children claimed to suffer physical abuse both at home and at school. The conviction of a teacher for sexually abusing students (Maycock, 2011) indicates the reality of the concerns raised by students in these studies. For these children there is little escape from a threatening environment. Violence or the fear of violence either from school officials or school mates can have important effects on the child, including lower grades, and so ultimately putting the child at risk of setting the child up to become a criminal (Ikomi, 2010). Further, when children go to and from school by foot or public transport, the violence or fear of violence to which they may be exposed (on the street) also becomes an important part of their life. This may account for the fact these children are more likely to be armed than those who go to school by private motor vehicle.

Firearms appear to be kept in about 25% of homes so many children can be expected to be exposed to firearms. Depending on how adults keep and treat the firearm, children may not or may not learn to treat firearms with respect (Carroll, Brennen & Hutcheson (2011). The presence of weapons in the home may then influence their view of the acceptability of carrying weapons outside the home. Clearly, the carrying of weapons escalates the possible harm that can occur at school and/or on the way to or from school, so it is instructive to focus on those children who carry weapons<sup>40</sup>.

It was noted that while safety at school was a problem for many students, not all students who broke school rules were punished, which suggests that monitoring of student behaviour may be lacking. When rules are not enforced, this can provide an opportunity for children to learn to disregard rules, and so ultimately laws. This lack of enforcement may also encourage children to feel that they need to protect themselves. If indeed 7.4% of Junior High and Senior High School students always take weapons to school this could mean that around 2,500 students attend school armed on a daily basis. The child who carries a weapon is more likely to come from a troubled home than a child who never takes a weapon to school. This child is less likely to be given parental support to do well at school and this translates into a lower GPA, which is also a result of the child not trying as hard as children who never take a weapon to school. These observations point to insufficient concern from the parents to motivate their children to do their best at school, and this lack of interest in the child may result from the myriad of difficulties which parents, and in particular mothers face (Hahnlén et al., 1997).

Although the motor car is the most common way by which children travel to school, overall, in 15-17 years age group, 14.6% of students walk, and 28.2% take a bus; in New Providence, 8.9% of these school children walk and 33.4% take a bus to school (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2000). This would translate to about 3,900 children who either walk or take the bus in this age group, nationwide. As might be expected, children from lower quintile expenditure groups (quintiles 1 and 2) had the highest percentages of children who walked to school (23.1% and 16.7% respectively) or who used the jitney/bus (29.6% and 21.7% respectively) and so the children from poorer homes would be most exposed to possible violence on the streets (Bahamas

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<sup>40</sup> Blank (2005) gives an overview of violence and other related behaviours which expands on the concern of children carrying weapons noted here.

Department of Statistics, 2004). The children who come from poorer homes are at greater risk of physical abuse and children who are physically abused are the ones who are at greater risk of arming themselves.

The data suggest that children may be carrying weapons to protect themselves from violence on the street, rather than to protect themselves at school. This interpretation is consistent with the fact that poorer children have to go to school by bus/foot (on the street) and so are more likely to be abused and this group is also more likely to carry a weapon. Once weapons are brought to school, there is the possibility that the weapons might also be used on the school grounds. This finding suggests that putting police into schools (McCartney, 2007) may have been to have deployed officers in the wrong place in order to protect children. However, more research would be required to assess the effect of using police officers to decrease violence in schools.

### *The abused child as an adult*

When the child, who has been hit often or abused becomes an adult, that child has an elevated risk of participating in undesirable behaviours, including criminal activity, harming members of the household and substance abuse etc. Although the longer-term associations of child abuse and behaviour as an adult reported here related to persons who control a weapon, the associations may be of even greater concern because these persons control a weapon and so have a very evident means by which they can harm people. The longer-term effects of child abuse have also been noted in the United States (Child Help, n.d.). Consequently, it can be seen that the abuse of a child may result in violent adults who can then repeat the cycle of violence on children in the home. This is clearly one of the most important, if not key aspects, of the issues associated with child abuse, many of which are noted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau (2008). Also intergenerational violence (highlighted by parents who were beaten as a child also beating their children), noted by Brennen et al. (2010) and Covell et al. (1995), was again found here. The underlying linkages of violent behaviours towards children and their increased risk of repetition in adulthood shows the importance of breaking the cycle of violence through changing parenting practices. Unless this is done, there is no apparent reason why the level of violence in society should decrease. As Blank (2005) has already noted, there is

the need for “programs to address shortcomings in parenting skills, including childrearing practices that emphasize hard physical punishment and widespread abuse” (p. 35).

Since 1994 there has been a government run parenting programme. The main clients of this programme have been referrals from the Department of Social Services and the courts. Some people attend voluntarily. While such a programme can be affective in correcting parenting practices after children have been put at risk, it does not have the ability to prevent bad parenting from occurring through teaching prospective parents how to raise children. To be effective such programmes need to be included in the school curriculum and encouraged by church and social groups for those who have left school.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations of Blank (2005) are still valid today. However, as she points out, while many interventions will be costly, the cost of not funding the interventions will be even more expensive. It is clear that current parenting practices result in children, even from a young age, being exposed to potentially abusive actions. It is also clear that the consequences of childhood abuse can have lifelong consequences. Although relatively few children may be abused, we estimate of about 4,500 abused children. These people may be at particular risk of perpetuating this abuse when an adult and so in a position be the victimiser, rather than the victim. Parenting practices need to be taught to everyone, either at school or as part as some other mandatory process as a preventative intervention so that abuse does not occur so frequently.

It is clear that the authorities, the police, social services, teachers and members of society, must be alert to abuse in homes in order to not only protect present members of the home, but also members of future households when children become adults. Abuse towards, animals and any member of the household must be investigated. Children who carry weapons either to school or on the street will need to be supervised and monitored and mentored if they are to become an asset, rather than a threat to society. Substance abuse can also be used as a warning sign of other types of abuse. Therefore, it is necessary that the laws regarding substance abuse are enforced with the help of society. Further, criminals and the accused, need to be monitored from being charged onwards, as these events put the home at an elevated risk of being the site of abusive

behaviours, until such time as longitudinal studies are undertaken to monitor behaviour of at risk children into adulthood.

### **Limitations of the studies**

All research methodologies have limitations. The studies included in this review can be split into two groups, those which obtained information from school children and those in which the respondents were adults. Many of the questions included subject concepts such as worry, problem, abuse and these probably have been interpreted differently, not only by individual respondents, but also by participants of different ages. Further, the answers from adults concerning their childhood will be influenced by the respondent recall and events between being a child and adult. Some of the studies were non-probabilistic. Therefore, extrapolation of the results to the wider Bahamian population should be made with caution, if at all. However, the consistency of some of the key results and relationships across the different datasets suggests that notwithstanding these limitations, policy makers should be able to utilise these findings for informing their decisions. We hope that at some stage prospective studies can be undertaken of the type reviewed by Maas et al. (2008) to provide further clarity of the linkages described here.

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Appendix 1:

From the data in Study 4, the Canonical discriminant function coefficients were derived. The two largest coefficients are for “Insulted” and “Spanked” which indicates that these are the two most important aspects which distinguished an “abused” from unabused child in the view of the respondents.

Table A1: Canonical discriminant function coefficients.

Canonical discriminant function coefficients	
Insulted	0.713
Hit with an object	0.444
Denied a meal	0.433
Shouted at	0.380
Forbidden to play with friends	0.204
Threaten	0.196
Denied TV	0.132
Forbidden to attend parties	0.113
Sent to bed	0.088
Given extra chores	0.063
Denied videogames	0.035
Denied access to the Internet	-0.029
Given extra homework	-0.047
Denied access to the computer	-0.120
Spanked	-0.740

Source: Study 4