Major findings from the 1999 and 2004 cycles of the Quebec Family Violence Surveys
PART I
Methodological issues
Survey’s objectives

- To establish Quebec’s annual prevalence rates of psychological and physical violence towards children aged 0 to 17 years old by an adult living in the same house;
- To document the five-year evolution of parental practices and attitudes;
- To identify some associated conditions;
- To offer rigorous information to the general population and to organizations and services;
- To inspire preventive initiatives.
Survey’s methodology

- **Participants:**
  - Representative sample (Random Digit Dial procedure);
  - **One sample in 1999:**
    - N = 2,469 Quebec females, mostly mothers;
  - **Two independent sample in 2004:**
    - N = 3,148 Quebec females, mostly mothers; and
    - N = 953 Quebec males, mostly fathers.
  - Living at least 50% of the time with a child aged 0-17 years old.

- **Procedure:**
  - Telephone survey (computer-assisted) by professional interviewers;
  - Interviews lasted about 15 minutes;
  - Mostly In French (92%), also in English (8%);
  - Ethical concerns and confidentiality.
The questionnaire - 2004
Seven themes covered (71 items)

1. Parental attitudes:
   a) General attitudes regarding discipline and corporal punishment
   b) Violence justification index
   c) Perceived impacts of the use of psychological and physical violence

2. Parental Stress associated with child’s temperament

3. Parental violence:
   a) Psychological aggression
   b) Minor physical violence
   c) Severe physical violence
Psychological aggression:
- Shouted, yelled or screamed at the child
- Threatened to spank or hit the child
- Swore or cursed at the child
- Called the child “stupid” or “dumb” or some other name
- Said to the child that he/she will be send away or be kicked out of the house

Minor physical violence (corporal punishment):
- Shook the child (child age 2 and older)
- Slapped the child on the hand, arm or leg
- Spanked on the bottom with bared hands
- Pinched the child to punish him/her
The Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (PPCTS)

- **Severe physical violence:**
  - Shook the child (child under age 2)
  - Hit the child on the bottom with a belt, a stick or other hard object*
  - Hit the child some part of the body other than the bottom with a belt, a stick or other hard object
  - Punched or kicked the child
  - Beat up the child, that is hit him/her over and over as hard as an adult could
  - Grabbed around the neck and choked
  - Slapped the child in the face, or on the head or ears*
The questionnaire - 2004
Seven themes covered (71 items)

4. Recollection of childhood violence
   a) Psychological aggression
   b) Corporal punishment
   c) Severe physical violence
   d) Witness of domestic violence (psychological and physical)

5. Domestic violence
   a) Psychological
   b) Physical

3. Social support

4. Socio-demographic informations
PART I
Prevalence and five-year trends of parental violence
The 2004 Survey
Annual prevalence rates on PCCTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At least once (%)</th>
<th>Three times or more (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological aggression</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor physical violence</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe physical violence</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>
Co-occurrence of psychological and physical violence, 2004

Psychological aggression: 39%
Minor physical violence: 35%
Severe physical violence: 3%
No violence: 17%

Co-occurrence of psychological and physical violence, 2004
Five-year evolution of parental practices (1999-2004)

Psychological aggression (1 +) 79% 80%
Psychological aggression (3 +) 48% 52%
Minor physical violence 48% 43%
Severe physical violence 7% 6%

1999 2004
## Five-year evolution of parental attitudes (1999-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1999 (%)</th>
<th>2004 (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children can be physically injured as a result of corporal punishment</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children can develop psychological problem when parents repeatedly yell or swear at them</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Note: The p-values indicate statistical significance.*
Five-year evolution of parental attitudes (1999-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1999 (%)</th>
<th>2004 (%)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In general, Quebec’s parents are too soft on their children”</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It's wrong for parents to slap their children”</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some children need to be slapped so that they will learn a lesson”</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<tr>
<td>“There should be a law allowing parents to use force to discipline their children”</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Spanking is an effective way of disciplining children”</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
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</table>
PART I
Discussion on prevalence and trends
Annual prevalence rates – 2004
Alarming results?

Repeated use of violence
- 1 out of 2 children experienced repeated psychological aggression
- 1 out of 6 children experienced repeated corporal punishment

Combined use of violence
- 41% experienced some combination of psychological aggression and physical violence

Severity of violence
- 2 children out of 100 are victims of three or more incidents of severe physical violence in past year.
Five-year evolution of minor physical violence
A real decrease?

1) Possible explanations
   - Decrease in parental beliefs about the virtue of hitting children for educational purpose
   - Result of social debates, public pressure and awareness
   - Result of other structural factors

2) Alternative explanation
   - Social desirability
Five-year evolution of psychological aggression
It is bad news or good news?

More parents report three or more incident of psychological aggression

First hypothesis:
Does the use of psychological aggression compensate physical violence practices?

Second hypothesis:
Does it reflect higher capacity of recognition of psychological aggression in the population?
PART II
Correlates of parental violence
## Summary of bivariate analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RISK FACTORS</th>
<th>Psychological aggression (3 +)</th>
<th>Corporal punishment</th>
<th>Severe physical violence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's gender (male)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement with CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother’s childhood violence</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>High parental stress</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family type (single-mother)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in household</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low social support</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annual prevalence and children’s age

- Psychological aggression (3+)
  - 0-2 years old: 29%
  - 3-6 years old: 58%
  - 7-10 years old: 61%
  - 11-14 years old: 56%
  - 15-17 years old: 47%
- Minor physical violence
  - 0-2 years old: 44%
  - 3-6 years old: 52%
  - 7-10 years old: 30%
  - 11-14 years old: 19%
- Severe physical violence
  - 0-2 years old: 4%
  - 3-6 years old: 4%
  - 7-10 years old: 8%
  - 11-14 years old: 8%
  - 15-17 years old: 7%
Annual prevalence and parental stress

- Psychological aggression (3+): 72%
- Minor physical violence: 60%
- Severe physical violence: 11%

High level of parental stress
Low level of parental stress
Annual prevalence and mother’s childhood experience of minor physical violence

- Psychological aggression (3+): 57% (presence), 44% (absence)
- Minor physical violence: 48% (presence), 33% (absence)
- Severe physical violence: 8% (presence), 4% (absence)

[Bar chart showing prevalence rates]
Annual prevalence and physical domestic violence

- Psychological aggression (3+)
  - Presence: 78%
  - Absence: 51%

- Minor physical violence
  - Presence: 74%
  - Absence: 43%

- Severe physical violence
  - Presence: 25%
  - Absence: 6%
Annual prevalence and mother’s education and employment

- Psychological aggression (3+)
  - High School or less: 49%
  - College/University: 54%

- Minor physical violence
  - High School or less: 40%
  - College/University: 44%

- Severe physical violence
  - High School or less: 7%
  - College/University: 6%

- Psychological aggression (3+)
  - Unemployed: 51%
  - Employed: 53%

- Minor physical violence
  - Unemployed: 44%
  - Employed: 43%

- Severe physical violence
  - Unemployed: 8%
  - Employed: 5%
Repeated psychological aggression
Logistic regression model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s gender:</th>
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<td>11-14 years old</td>
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<td>Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children</td>
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<td>Parental attribution</td>
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<td>Perceived consequences of physical and psychological violence:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very often/often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
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<td>1,87</td>
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<td>Rarely/never</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother’s childhood violence:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
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*p < .05
### Minor Physical Violence

**Logistic regression model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children</th>
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<td>Very often/often</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic violence:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence Live alone (n. a.)</td>
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<td>Absence</td>
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*p < .05*
## Severe Physical Violence

Logistic regression model

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Children’s age:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-6 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-10 years old</td>
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<td>11-14 years old</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15-17 years old</td>
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| Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children | 2,69 |

<table>
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<table>
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<th>Domestic violence:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live alone (n. a.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence</td>
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*p < .05
PART II
Discussion on correlates
Parental violence
Discussion on correlates

- **Parental stress** (*child demandingness*)
  - Linked to parental attitudes towards violence in disciplining children: *what comes first?*
  - Linked to childhood violence or domestic violence

- **Socio-economics conditions**
  - Differential effects of stress:
    - Chronic stress associated with more severe violence
    - Transitory stress associated with less severe forms of violence
Transmission of parental violence
Discussion on correlates

- Transmission of a parental conflict tactics mode
  - Clearly established in both surveys
  - Predominance of psychological aggression?

- Mediating role of parental attitudes
  - Perceived impact of violence on children
  - Agreement with violence in disciplining children

- Finally: what exactly is transmitted?
Practices implications

- Universal approaches:
  - Promoting positive discipline strategies
  - Public awareness and attitudes modification:
    - on the negative impact of violence in disciplining children
    - on the perceive effectiveness of corporal punishment
  - Public and family policy

- Specific approaches:
  - Screening for childhood abuse and attitudes
  - Ecological approaches

- Funding for the coordination and evaluation of violence prevention efforts