

# A Comparison of Parenting Practices between Samoan Parents Living in New Zealand and Samoa

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## Abstract

*This study compares the nurturing and disciplinary practices of Samoan parents living in New Zealand with those of Samoan parents living in Samoa. Mothers and fathers with two-year-old children resident in each country completed a modified version of the Parent Behavior Checklist. Multivariable logistic regression revealed that fathers in NZ were less nurturing and more disciplinarian than fathers in Samoa and mothers in NZ. Older parents were less nurturing but used less harsh discipline than younger parents, more educated parents were more nurturing, and parents on lower incomes were harsher disciplinarians.*

## Introduction

Research has revealed two broad universal dimensions of parenting: parental warmth/acceptance and behavioural control (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parental warmth refers to the provision of a positive, loving atmosphere within parent-child relations through parental expressions of affection and praise and instrumental acts and shared activities. Discipline is one aspect of behavioural control and refers to methods parents use to enforce rules and foster values in their children to encourage successful social integration. A sub-category of discipline is physical punishment, defined as the use of force to cause pain, but not injury, for the purposes of correction or control (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Severe physical punishment and abuse is associated with negative developmental outcomes for children, regardless of culture (Smith, Gollop, Taylor, & Marshall, 2005). Baumrind (1991) developed a typology of four parenting styles based on combinations of the warmth and control dimensions. In the main, research in Western cultures suggests children reared by authoritative parents (high in both warmth and control) experience the most positive child outcomes (e.g. see Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

## Research on Samoan parenting conducted in Samoa

Much of the research on child rearing practices in Samoa has been conducted by Western anthropologists, dominated by the prominent 'debate' arising from Derek Freeman's (1983) critique of Margaret Mead's (1928) influential ethnographic portrait of Samoan society. A great deal has been written about the deficiencies in both accounts (e.g. Gerber, 1985; Shore, 1983). Freeman's (1983) claim that the authoritarian, hierarchical nature of Samoan society and the use of severe punishment in childhood engenders repressed resentment towards authority figures has been rejected by Gerber (1985, p. 157) because her ethnographic research affirmed what is customary to Samoans - that parental and chiefly demands are interpreted as an integral



part of a mutual relationship of *alofa* (love) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and that the performance of obligatory work and service is genuinely expressive of these feelings. Gerber (1985) maintains the feeling of *alofa* is most commonly associated with the concepts of giving and helping; even in the close relationship between parent and child the emphasis is on mutual obligation (e.g. parents providing food for the family, children cooking and serving food to parents) rather than intimacy and physical affection.

In her case study of language development in Samoa, Elinor Ochs (1988) alleges further inadequacies in the accounts of Freeman and Mead. She notes that Freeman “portrayed Samoans as intensely violent and Samoan child rearing as highly repressive and restrictive” and Mead, contrastingly, suggested that “Samoans are relatively carefree and child rearing is rather an easy going affair” (1988, p. 147). Ochs saw neither of these positions as comprehensive, rejecting in particular Freeman’s (1983) implication that harsh physical discipline is the most common form of behavioural control. Rather she concludes that physical punishment is used only as a last resort and caregivers overwhelmingly prefer verbal techniques such as warnings, threats, and shaming.

However, qualitative research on family life and parenting in Samoa has found physical punishment to be common and customary, with its widespread use probably originating from biblical doctrine propagated by Christian missionaries, such as ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’ (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998; Pereira, 2010). Similar findings have emerged from research with Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Marshall, 2005; Schoeffel et al., 1996).

Another aspect of parenting in Samoa is the role of shared parenting and parental distancing in family life. An early period of intense indulgence characterises the infant’s life. The infant is constantly carried about and attended to by many adults. But as early as six months of age, care by siblings begins, becoming pronounced at weaning usually between the first and second year (Mageo, 1991). At this point, “parents suspend most physical and verbal demonstrations of affection...and attachment is displaced onto a wider group of peers” (Mageo, 1991, p. 407). Attachment to individual parents, and the burden of parental duties, is diffused among a wider group of family members, including older siblings (especially sisters) who take on much more of the child care. This ‘multiple parenting’, characteristic of child rearing in Polynesia, acts as a restriction on parental incompetence – which includes severe physical punishment – because it reduces stress on nuclear parents and the collective parents are able to watch each other to see that none go too far (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1983).

### *Research on Samoan parenting conducted in New Zealand*

There is a scarcity of research into the parenting practices and attitudes of Pacific peoples who live in NZ, and very little specifically on Samoan parents. Physical punishment of children has been a topical issue in NZ causing much emotive debate prior to and since the *Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007* was passed into law, which abolished the use of force for the purpose of correcting children. Research in NZ has shown that smacking is a common method of discipline administered by parents and is endorsed by a large majority of the population, as in many other Western countries (Carswell, 2001; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997; Maxwell, 1995; Millichamp, Martin, & Langley, 2006; Ritchie, 2002; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). A Ministry of Health (2008) survey of 17,000 New Zealanders found that about one-fifth of parents had used physical punishment in the past four weeks, with Pacific parents having the highest rate of physical punishment and Pacific boys nearly twice as likely to have been physically punished compared to other boys. Given that Pacific peoples are three-and-a-half times as likely to live in an extended family arrangement



compared to other New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), shared parenting is likely to be relatively common amongst Samoan families in New Zealand (though less so than in Samoa), bringing the benefits of shared living costs and childcare duties, but often problems as well, particularly overcrowding and inter-generational conflicts over values and parenting approaches (Stewart-Withers, Scheyvens, & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010).

Tensions surrounding the transferral of *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) to the NZ context have led to changes in how Samoan family life is practised, and how Samoan identity is construed, in NZ. McCallin, Paterson, Butler and Cowley (2001) and Cowley-Malcolm (2005) found in their qualitative studies that Samoan parents strive to maintain a balance between their traditional customs and values (including parenting practices) and New Zealand cultural mores. In both studies there was a tendency for parents to report a move away from the corporal punishment of their own childhoods towards alternative, non-physical strategies.

Other studies in NZ suggest Samoan children are discouraged from questioning their elders because of the strong cultural emphasis on obedience to, and respect for, those in authority. As a result, Samoan parents prefer a more passive, unquestioning, rote-learning pedagogical style that conflicts to some extent with the New Zealand schooling environment which encourages interactive dialogue and critical understanding (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1981; Jones, 1991; Nicol, 1985; Ochs, 1988; Schoeffel et al., 1996).

In the Pacific Islands Families Study, prevalence rates of smacking (at least monthly) by mothers when children were one, two, and four years of age were 22 per cent, 52 per cent, and 77 per cent respectively. Rates for fathers were 24 per cent and 78 per cent at one and two years respectively (Schluter, Sundborn, Abbott, & Paterson, 2007). An analysis of parenting practices among mothers at the one-year follow-up found that Samoan mothers were significantly less likely to use harsh discipline with their child compared to mothers from other Pacific ethnic groups (Cowley-Malcolm, Fairbairn-Dunlop, Paterson, Gao, & Williams, 2009).

The present study compares the parenting practices of Samoan parents with two-year-old children between those that live in NZ and those that live in Samoa. Other covariates associated with parenting practices are also explored. We hypothesise that, compared to Samoan parents living in Samoa, Samoan parents living in NZ will have higher frequencies of nurturing and disciplinary practices because of reduced opportunities for shared parenting due to reduced extended family support.

## Method

### *Participants*

This paper makes use of data from the Pacific Islands Families Study (PIFS), an ongoing cohort study of 1,398 Pacific children born in Auckland in 2000 and their parents. Further information about the PIFS is available elsewhere, including demographic details and descriptions of procedures for informed consent and interviews (Paterson et al., 2006). Only parents who self-reported as being of Samoan ethnicity and participated at the two-year data collection point were included in the present parenting research. At the baseline data collection point (6 weeks postpartum), 650 (47.2%) mothers self-identified as Samoan, decreasing via attrition to 545 (47.8%) by the two-year follow-up. When fathers were first interviewed at the one-year follow-up, 440 (53.3%) self-identified as Samoan, decreasing to 383 (52.6%) at the two-year follow-up.



The Samoan Parenting Study was carried out by researchers from the PIFS in association with researchers from the National University of Samoa. In 2006, Samoan interviewers conducted face-to-face interviews with 200 mother and 200 father participants from 25 villages across Samoa. The mothers and fathers were not parental dyads; that is, they were unrelated parents (conversely, PIFS parents were predominantly mother-father couples). Participants were recruited through women's committees of the Ministry of Women Affairs and represented rural, peri-urban, and urban villages. Participants were eligible to take part in the survey if they had a two-year-old child who had Samoan ethnicity from either parent, and had resided in Samoa for at least the past 12 months.

### *Measures*

**Parenting practices:** The Parent Behavior Checklist (PBC: Fox, 1994) is a 100-item measure of parenting with three subscales: discipline, nurturance, and expectations. To reduce the burden on participants, shortened versions of two subscales were used, namely discipline and nurturance. The former assesses parental responses to children's challenging behaviours with verbal and corporal punishment; the latter measures specific behaviour that promotes a child's psychological growth. The items for the shortened scales were chosen on the basis of high item factor loadings and this resulted in five discipline items (e.g. 'I smack my child') and 10 nurturing items (e.g. 'My child and I play together'). Consequently, our modified discipline scale incorporated original items that correlated more strongly with the 'discipline' factor and were accordingly 'harsher' in nature. Thus the modified discipline scale used in this study can be said to measure *harsh* disciplinary practices, as compared to Fox's (1994) broader measure of discipline. Items are answered on a five point frequency scale and scores are summed. Higher scores in each scale are indicative of greater nurturance and greater use of harsh discipline practices. The exact same shortened scales were used in the Samoan Parenting Study. The PBC is psychometrically robust (Brenner & Fox, 1999; Fox & Bentley, 1992).

**Subgroup:** The explanatory variable of most interest to us, which we have called 'subgroup', combines two variables - gender of parent (mother or father) and country of residence (NZ or Samoa) - into *one* variable with four categories: Mother in NZ, Father in NZ, Mother in Samoa, Father in Samoa. These two variables were combined in order to examine each of these four groups separately, given that our main aim was to compare the parenting practices of mothers and fathers between countries.

**Income range:** Annual personal income was measured using different income bands between the PIFS and Samoan Parenting studies. These categories were dichotomised into relatively 'high incomes' and 'low incomes' such that each captured approximately half the participants.

**Family type:** This variable was classified into two categories: 'nuclear', defined as households comprising parent(s) and children only, and 'extended', defined as nuclear families living with additional members of the *aiga* (extended family).

Other variables incorporated into the analysis included sex of child and parent's age, their highest educational qualification, and their religious affiliation.



## Analysis

Chi-squared tests were used to compare the distribution of socio-demographic factors between Samoan parents residing in NZ and Samoan parents residing in Samoa. Given the study's aim of identifying the frequencies of low nurturance and high harsh discipline, the scores were dichotomised at the lowest quartile for nurturance and at the upper quartile for harsh discipline. Univariable analyses were used to examine the association between low nurturance and the socio-demographic factors discussed above. This procedure was repeated to examine the association between high harsh discipline and the same socio-demographic factors. Akaike's information criterion was employed to select a multivariable logistic regression model that best assessed the independent effects of these variables after adjusting for confounding factors.

## Results

A comparison of socio-demographic factors between the parents living in NZ and those living in Samoa revealed significant differences in their distributions of family type, education, and age. Compared to parents residing in NZ, parents in Samoa were older, more likely to live with extended family members, and have secondary qualifications as their highest educational qualification (see Table 1). Whilst the distributions of gender of parent, income, and religion were also different between the two cohorts, these differences are mainly due to differences in methodology and measurement. In the Samoan Parenting Study, we deliberately sampled equal numbers of mothers and fathers, whereas the PIFS recruited via mothers who consented for the father of the child to be contacted. Income categories cannot be directly compared between the two studies because of differences in measurement as noted in the Measures section. The significant recruitment in the Samoan Parenting Study of parents who belong to the *Ekalesia Fa'alapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, or CCCS) was due to strong CCCS links with the women's committees in the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Samoan Government generally. Table 1 presents the distributions of the socio-demographic factors of the New Zealand-resident and Samoa-resident parents.



**Table 1.** Numbers (Column Percentages) of Socio-demographic Factors of Samoan Parents with Two-Year-Old Children Residing in NZ and in Samoa

Variable and category		Pacific Islands Families Study (New Zealand) (N = 928)		Samoan Parenting Study (Samoa) (N = 400)		p-value
		n	(%)	n	(%)	
<b>Parent</b>						
	Mother	545	(59%)	200	(50%)	
	Father	383	(41%)	200	(50%)	
<b>Sex of child</b>						0.23
	Female	454	(49%)	176	(44%)	
	Male	474	(51%)	214	(54%)	
	Missing	0	(0%)	10	(3%)	
<b>Family type</b>						<0.001
	Extended	382	(41%)	251	(63%)	
	Nuclear	546	(59%)	139	(35%)	
	Missing	0	(0%)	10	(3%)	
<b>Highest education</b>						<0.001
	No formal qualifications	388	(42%)	91	(23%)	
	Secondary school qualification	296	(32%)	233	(58%)	
	Post-school qualification	209	(23%)	74	(19%)	
	Missing	35	(4%)	2	(1%)	
<b>Income category</b>						
	High	279	(30%)	159	(40%)	
	Low	649	(70%)	219	(55%)	
	Missing	0	(0%)	22	(6%)	
<b>Religion</b>						<0.001
	7th Day Adventist	28	(3%)	20	(5%)	
	Assembly of God	117	(13%)	0	(0%)	
	Catholic	199	(21%)	31	(8%)	
	Congregational Church	133	(14%)	193	(48%)	
	Methodist	94	(10%)	31	(8%)	
	Mormon	112	(12%)	73	(18%)	
	No religion	27	(3%)	0	(0%)	
	Other	136	(15%)	43	(11%)	
	Presbyterian	49	(5%)	8	(2%)	
	Missing	33	(4%)	1	(0%)	
<b>Age category<sup>1</sup></b>						<0.001
	Under 25	121	(13%)	42	(11%)	
	25 – 29	234	(25%)	74	(19%)	
	30 – 34	251	(27%)	60	(15%)	
	35 – 39	173	(19%)	57	(14%)	
	40 and over	114	(12%)	148	(37%)	
	Missing	35	(4%)	19	(5%)	

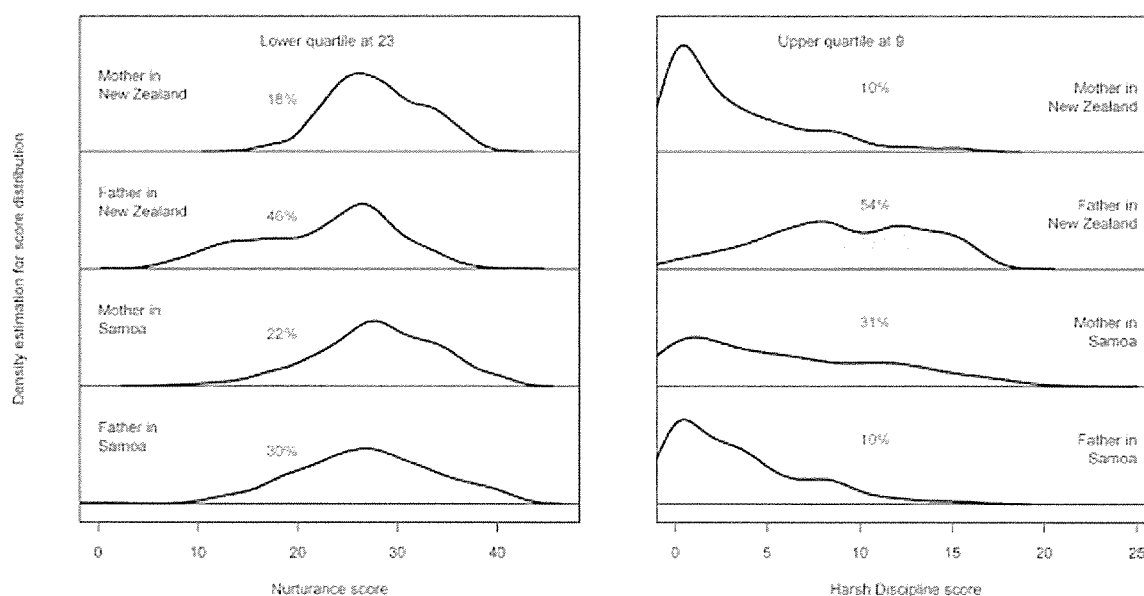
<sup>1</sup> Mean ages for each subgroup were: Mother in NZ 30.9 years, Fathers in NZ 34.7 years, Mothers in Samoa 35.3 years, Fathers in Samoa 40.8 years.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of scores for the nurturance scale (on the left) and the harsh discipline scale (on the right) for each of the four subgroups. Missing responses were imputed. On the nurturance scale, the lower quartile for the entire data set fell at a score of 23. The overall upper quartile on the harsh discipline scale was at a score of nine. The areas shaded grey under the density curves represent the proportion of



parents who scored within those ranges. Focusing on the nurturance scores, the standout subgroup is that of fathers in NZ, of whom 46 per cent scored in the lower quartile range. Turning to the harsh discipline scores, a clear distinction arises. Among mothers in NZ and fathers in Samoa, relatively low usage of harsh discipline was seen, with only 10 per cent in each group scoring in the upper quartile range. In contrast, more than half (54 per cent) of fathers in NZ and nearly a third (31 per cent) of mothers in Samoa scored in the upper quartile.

Figure 1: Distributions of Nurturance and Harsh Discipline scores, by subgroup



## Nurturance

Invariable analyses revealed significant associations between scoring in the lower quartile for nurturance and parent's subgroup, family type, education, religion, and age. Compared with mothers in NZ, fathers in NZ were significantly more likely to have scored in the lower quartile for nurturance. Parents living in nuclear families were significantly more likely to score low on nurturance compared with parents living in extended families. Education was also significantly related to levels of nurturance: Compared to parents with no formal qualifications, parents with secondary school and post-school qualifications were significantly less likely to be low nurturers. Those from 'other' religions and those with 'no religion' were significantly more likely to be low nurturers compared with those affiliated with the CCCS. Finally, age (treated as a continuous variable) was significantly associated with nurturance scores such that the older parents were, the more likely they were to score in the lower quartile for nurturance. Table 2 presents the unadjusted odds ratios for the nurturance scale.

After adjusting for confounding factors, the significant predictors associated with low nurturance were parent's subgroup, education, and age. Compared to mothers in NZ, fathers in NZ had an adjusted odds ratio (AOR) of scoring in the lower quartile for nurturance of 3.65 (95% CI 2.70, 5.00;  $p < 0.0001$ ). Compared to fathers in Samoa, fathers in NZ had an AOR of 2.33 (95% CI 1.6, 3.5;  $p < 0.0001$ ). Secondary- and post-school-qualified parents had AORs of 0.74 (95% CI 0.55, 1.00;  $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.60 (95% CI 0.41, 0.87;  $p < 0.01$ ) respectively. For parent's age, the odds of scoring in the lower quartile for nurturance increased by a factor of 1.18 (95%



CI 1.0, 1.4;  $p < 0.05$ ) for each decade increase in age. The AORs are also presented in Table 2. Hosmer and Lemeshow's goodness-of-fit test produced  $\chi^2(8, N = 1,255) = 4.11$ ,  $p = 0.8469$ , providing no evidence of a poor fit.

## Harsh Discipline

Invariable analyses revealed significant associations between harsh discipline scores and parent's subgroup, income range, religion, and age. Compared to mothers in NZ, both fathers in NZ and mothers in Samoa were significantly more likely to fall in the upper quartile for harsh discipline scores. Parents on relatively low incomes were significantly more likely to use harsh discipline than those on relatively high incomes. Compared to those identifying with the CCCS, nearly all other religious denominations were significantly more likely to have high harsh discipline scores, excepting Presbyterians and the non-religious. Table 3 presents the unadjusted odds ratios for the harsh discipline scale.

After adjusting for confounding factors, the multivariable regression model included the following three factors: Parent's subgroup, income range, and age. Fathers in NZ had an AOR of 11.15 (95% CI 7.8, 16;  $p < 0.001$ ) compared with mothers in NZ, and fathers in Samoa had an AOR of 0.26 (95% CI 0.14, 0.48;  $p < 0.001$ ) compared with mothers in Samoa. Mothers in Samoa had an AOR of 4.53 (95% CI 2.9, 7.0;  $p < 0.001$ ) compared with mothers in NZ, and fathers in NZ had an AOR of 9.46 (95% CI 5.5, 16;  $p < 0.001$ ) compared with fathers in Samoa.

Parents with relatively low incomes had an AOR of 1.47 (95% CI 1.1, 2.0;  $p < 0.05$ ) compared with those on relatively high incomes. The final harsh discipline model also retained parent's age as an explanatory variable, showing a per-decade increase in the AOR of 0.85 (95% CI 0.71, 1.0;  $p = 0.06$ ). The AORs for harsh discipline are also presented in Table 3. Hosmer and Lemeshow's goodness-of-fit test resulted in  $\chi^2(8, N = 1,237) = 5.3$ ,  $p = 0.7251$ , providing no evidence of a poor fit.



**Table 2.** Categorical statistics for scores on the Nurture scale, with odds ratios (unadjusted and adjusted) for being in the lower quartile (score  $\leq 23$ ).

Subgroup	Nurture scores mean (SD)	No of valid responses	No in lower quartile	Unadjusted Odds Ratios OR (95% CI)	p-value	Adjusted Odds Ratios AOR (95% CI)	p-value
<b>Subgroup</b>							
Mother in New Zealand	27.8 (4.7)	545	98	1.00	–	1.00	–
Father in New Zealand	22.8 (6.9)	383	178	3.96 (2.9, 5.3)	***	3.65 (2.7, 5.0)	***
Mother in Samoa	27.9 (6.2)	189	41	1.26 (0.84, 1.9)		1.21 (0.77, 1.9)	
Father in Samoa	26.9 (7.0)	196	58	1.92 (1.3, 2.8)	***	1.56 (1.0, 2.4)	*
<b>Sex of child</b>							
Female	26.2 (6.4)	620	187	1.00	–		
Male	26.2 (6.4)	683	183	0.85 (0.67, 1.1)			
<b>Family type</b>							
Extended	26.6 (6.4)	624	161	1.00	–		
Nuclear	25.8 (6.4)	679	212	1.31 (1.0, 1.7)	*		
<b>Highest education</b>							
No formal qualifications	24.6 (6.4)	478	172	1.00	–	1.00	–
Secondary school qualification	26.6 (6.0)	517	135	0.63 (0.48, 0.82)	***	0.74 (0.55, 1.0)	*
Post-school qualification	28.4 (6.4)	281	55	0.43 (0.31, 0.61)	***	0.60 (0.41, 0.87)	**
<b>Income range</b>							
High	26.4 (6.5)	434	126	1.00	–		
Low	26.1 (6.3)	857	243	0.97 (0.75, 1.2)			
<b>Religion</b>							
7th Day Adventist	25.7 (6.2)	48	17	1.72 (0.90, 3.3)			
Assembly of God	25.8 (6.0)	117	34	1.28 (0.80, 2.1)			
Catholic	26.4 (6.2)	230	61	1.13 (0.77, 1.7)			
Congregational Church	27.1 (6.2)	322	78	1.00	–		
Methodist	26.1 (6.8)	116	32	1.19 (0.74, 1.9)			
Mormon	26.3 (6.3)	183	47	1.08 (0.71, 1.6)			
No religion	23.6 (6.6)	27	15	3.91 (1.8, 8.7)	***		
Other	25.3 (7.0)	179	62	1.66 (1.1, 2.5)	*		
Presbyterian	27.0 (6.1)	57	16	1.22 (0.65, 2.3)			
<b>Exact age</b>							
(per decade increase)				1.28 (1.1, 1.5)	0.0002	1.18 (1.0, 1.4)	0.038
<b>Contrasts between subgroups</b>							
Father in NZ vs Father in Samoa						2.33 (1.6, 3.5)	***
Father vs Mother in Samoa						1.29 (0.79, 2.1)	***



**Table 3.** Categorical statistics for scores on the Harsh Discipline scale, with odds ratios (unadjusted and adjusted) for being in the upper quartile (score  $\geq 9$ ).

Subgroup	Harsh Discipline scores		No of valid responses	No in lower quartile	Unadjusted Odds Ratios		Adjusted Odds Ratios	
	mean	(SD)			OR	(95% CI)	AOR	(95% CI)
<b>Subgroup</b>	Mother in New Zealand	3.1 (3.6)	545	55	1.00	–	1.00	–
	Father in New Zealand	9.2 (4.3)	383	208	10.59	(7.5, 15)	11.15	(7.8, 16)
	Mother in Samoa	5.9 (5.3)	185	58	4.07	(2.7, 6.2)	4.53	(2.9, 7.0)
	Father in Samoa	3.3 (3.5)	200	20	0.99	(0.58, 1.7)	1.18	(0.65, 2.1)
<b>Sex of child</b>	Female	5.4 (4.7)	621	165	1.00	–		
	Male	5.3 (4.9)	682	175	0.95	(0.74, 1.2)		
<b>Family type</b>	Extended	5.0 (4.8)	624	153	1.00	–		
	Nuclear	5.6 (4.9)	679	188	1.18	(0.92, 1.5)		
<b>Highest education</b>	No formal qualifications	5.4 (4.8)	479	116	1.00	–		
	Secondary school qualification	5.5 (4.9)	515	143	1.20	(0.91, 1.6)		
	Post-school qualification	4.4 (4.6)	282	60	0.85	(0.59, 1.2)		
<b>Income range</b>	High	5.0 (4.6)	437	95	1.00	–	1.00	–
	Low	5.5 (4.9)	854	238	1.39	(1.1, 1.8)	1.47	(1.1, 2.0)
<b>Religion</b>	7th Day Adventist	6.5 (4.9)	48	17	3.08	(1.6, 6)		
	Assembly of God	6.0 (5.1)	117	34	2.30	(1.4, 3.8)		
	Catholic	5.3 (4.8)	229	61	2.04	(1.3, 3.1)		
	Congregational Church	3.9 (4.2)	324	49	1.00	–		
	Methodist	5.6 (5.0)	117	34	2.30	(1.4, 3.8)		
	Mormon	5.3 (4.7)	183	44	1.78	(1.1, 2.8)		
	No religion	5.5 (5.1)	27	8	2.36	(0.98, 5.7)		
	Other	6.3 (4.8)	177	59	2.81	(1.8, 4.3)		
	Presbyterian	5.2 (5.2)	57	14	1.83	(0.93, 3.6)		
<b>Exact age</b>								
(per decade increase)					0.95	(0.83, 1.1)	0.85	(0.71, 1.0)
<b>Contrasts between subgroups</b>	Father in NZ vs Father in Samoa						9.46	(5.5, 16)
	Father vs Mother in Samoa						0.26	(0.14, 0.48)

**P values:**  
 \*\*\* < 0.001 < \*\* < 0.01 < \* < 0.05



## Discussion

The results show that parents' subgroup – whether they were a mother or father residing in NZ or Samoa – and age, education, and income had a strong association with parenting practices. The nurturance analysis produced the following findings. Firstly, fathers in NZ were less nurturing of their children than mothers in NZ and fathers in Samoa. While the former might be expected as mothers are predominantly the primary caregivers in the PIFS cohort, the reasons for the latter are less obvious. We can speculate that one of the main reasons for this difference is that, compared to fathers in Samoa, fathers in NZ have less free time to spend with their children due to longer working hours (sometimes multiple jobs, often night-shifts) and therefore have fewer opportunities for nurturing interactions. Tanaka and Waldfogel (2007) and Yeung, Sandberg, David-Kean and Hofferth (2001) both found that longer work hours were associated with significant reductions in paternal involvement.

Secondly, the more formal education a parent had, the less likely they were to be classified as low nurturers. This is in line with evidence showing that parents with more education have higher levels of engagement with their children (Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Thirdly, the older parents were, the more likely they were to be low nurturers. The reasons for this are unclear. It may be due to generational differences in parenting styles. Older parents with a more traditional cultural alignment may utilise 'parental distancing' and shared parenting (referred to earlier) more so than younger parents. Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998, p. 164) also note how "status differentiation" between parents and children in Samoa produces relations between them that tend to be "formal and reserved rather than demonstrative, individualistic and personal". However, the finding could also be related to 'cultural capital' – older parents may be less proficient in English and therefore less likely to participate in some of the activities in the nurturance scale, such as obtaining and reading books to children.

The discipline results showed that fathers in NZ were much harsher disciplinarians than both mothers in NZ and fathers in Samoa. The former finding links in with a previously reported PIFS result, which found that a significantly greater proportion of fathers than mothers administered harsh physical punishment at one-year and two-years follow-up (Schluter et al., 2007). In tandem, the findings reveal that more fathers use physical punishment, and they use it more frequently, compared to mothers.

We can only speculate as to why fathers in NZ use harsh discipline more frequently than fathers in Samoa. As previously suggested, the reduction in opportunities for shared parenting among the *aiga* may be a factor. In addition, fathers in NZ may be subject to more work-related stress, which has been identified as a major factor affecting parenting among NZ parents (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). Alternatively, fathers in NZ may experience more acculturative stress leading to more stringent discipline with their children. Based on interviews with Pacific families in Otara, South Auckland, Schoeffel et al. (1996) found that a central concern of Samoan parents was how they could maintain control over their children within the multi-cultural setting of NZ where children's rights of personal choice and freedom are greater. Migration to a new country may give rise to stricter forms of behavioural control as parents endeavour to protect their children from 'the unknown'. Hence a more domineering style of parenting may have emerged among Samoan parents in NZ compared to those in Samoa.

Mothers in Samoa made greater use of harsh discipline methods than both fathers in Samoa and mothers in NZ. The former result may simply be due to mothers more often being the primary caregivers. Again,



the inter-country comparison has less palpable causes. A 'switching' of parental disciplining roles may be occurring between the two countries – mothers are the lead disciplinarians in Samoa while fathers take the lead in NZ (however parents in NZ collectively do more disciplining in absolute terms than parents in Samoa).

Secondly, parents on lower incomes used significantly more punitive discipline compared to parents on higher incomes. It has been conjectured that parents of low socioeconomic status employ harsher disciplinary methods because parental harshness is exacerbated by stressful life circumstances, particularly financial hardship (Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994). Further, a more authoritarian approach may be more adaptive and beneficial in unsafe or dangerous neighbourhoods to prevent children from involvement in anti-social activity (Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992). In NZ, Woodward, Fergusson, Chesney and Horwood (2007) found that, among teenaged and younger parents, the risk of physically punishing or abusing a child was greatest where parents had lower socio-economic status backgrounds, large numbers of children, and socioeconomic and family functioning stressors.

Thirdly, the older a parent was, the less likely they were to be harsh disciplinarians. While research has shown that methods of behavioural control among NZ parents have broadened over the past several decades, and that contemporary parents are less likely to endorse or use physical punishment and more likely to use explanation, reasoning, and positive reinforcement (Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Maxwell, 1995; Ritchie, 2002), the use of minor and severe physical punishment is still relatively common amongst contemporary young parents (Woodward et al., 2007). Teenaged and younger parents are at increased risk of physically punishing or abusing a child; the risk is aggravated if they belong to poorer and larger families (Woodward et al., 2007). Many younger parents in the present study will be coping with these risk factors and this may explain why older parents were less punitive. In Samoa, Fairburn-Dunlop (2001) found that Samoan mothers believed caregivers were hitting more often these days than in earlier times, attributed to the influence of alcohol and drugs, children acting precociously, and socio-economic hardship, among others reasons.

It should be noted that the preponderance of research on parenting has focused on European American families and models of child rearing developed on this basis have been used to evaluate parenting among minority families, frequently finding higher rates of physical discipline which in turn are interpreted as cultural deficits. However, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates and Pettit (1996) point to research suggesting that, in contrast to European American families, a lack of physical discipline among parents from other cultural groups for which physical punishment is normative (e.g. African American and Korean) may be perceived by both parents and children as an abdication of parenting roles. Gerber (1985) contends this is the case in Samoa and both Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001) and Pereira (2010) found that corporal correction is often understood as an act of love by parents and children.

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the cultural appropriateness of the Parent Behavior Checklist (PBC) to Samoan or Pacific peoples has not been established. Some items in our modified version may have limited relevance to parenting in Samoa, or indeed to Samoan parents in NZ. Furthermore, the PBC primarily measures the quantity of parent-child interactions, rather than the quality of them, yet positive child outcomes arise principally from the emotional quality and closeness of the parent-child relationship rather than temporal involvement per se (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). The PBC was also normed on a representative sample of U.S. mothers and so may not incorporate nurturing behaviours more typical of fathers such as rough-and-tumble play (Fox & Solís-Cámara, 1997).



The use of self-reports of parenting practices is subject to recall and social desirability biases. Participants may have been reluctant to admit to practices which are regarded as less socially acceptable. Furthermore, there were a number of relevant socio-demographic variables that were not taken into account in this analysis, many having been collected in the PIFS but not in the significantly smaller Samoan Parenting Study.

This study may be the first to directly compare parenting practices between NZ and a Pacific nation and as such is breaking new ground. It shows that the parenting practices of a Samoan mother or father are likely to differ depending on whether they live in NZ or Samoa. It offers insights into how migration and acculturation may affect parenting among Samoan parents living in NZ. It suggests that in Samoa mothers take the lead in terms of discipline, while fathers take the lead in NZ. And it provides many opportunities and avenues for further research. There is a particular need to further investigate why the parenting practices of fathers in NZ differ markedly from fathers in Samoa; the former are less nurturing and use more harsh discipline than the latter. The findings that mothers in Samoa use harsh discipline more frequently than mothers in NZ, and that older parents use less harsh discipline than younger parents, both run counter to the authors' hypotheses and require further exploration.

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