Children’s Insights into Family Discipline

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Abstract
This qualitative research project explored the views of 80 children, aged between 5 and 14 years from 5 locations in New Zealand about the parental use of family discipline, and examined whether age and gender influenced their views. Focus group discussions were used to elicit the children’s views. This research project is placed within the sociology of childhood paradigm where children are viewed as social actors in their own right. Significantly, the study demonstrated that all the children, irrespective of age or gender, had considerable understanding and insight into their own and other people’s behaviour and feelings when family discipline occurred. Children’s reports indicated that the parental disciplinary message is often not understood, is delivered in an inconsistent manner and without implicit instructions to children. Children reported that disciplinary messages would be better understood and internalised, by them, if parents used a more inductive style of parenting. Age and gender differences emerged when children discussed the use of physical punishment as a means of family discipline. Children’s reports on physical punishment were at odds with published adult assumptions on the effects of its use. The children reported greater severity and frequency of the use of physical punishment than that of adult reports on its use. Children's support for the use of physical punishment increased as their age increased. The older boys were more likely to support parental use of physical punishment. The children’s reports showed that fathers’ disciplinary practices had consequences in the disciplining of children. Children began to rationalise parental use of physical punishment in terms of children’s status in society and the perceived inevitability of physical punishment in their lives. The older children’s views began to mirror those of commonly held adult views on the justification for its use. However, children who were trying to link their own views on physical punishment to those of their parents experienced high levels of confusion, leading to diminished internalisation of disciplinary messages.
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This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Joan Dobbs, who was the wind under mine and many other children’s wings.
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**UNCROC**: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**UN Committee**: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

**B.O.T.**: Board of Trustees

**CYF**: The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services

**CYPF Act 1989**: Children, Young Peoples and Their Families Act 1989

**N.G.O**: Non Government Organisation

**SES**: Socio- economic status

**D**: Dunedin

**Ka**: Kaikohe

**Ke**: KeriKeri

**H**: Hawkes Bay

**A**: Auckland

**M**: Male

**F**: Female

**UNICEF**: United Nations International Children’s Fund

**CFCYL**: Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and Law

**EPOCH**: End Physical Punishment of Children

**O.E.C.D.**: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**ISPCAN**: International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

_In the final analysis, a culture is defined by the manner in which its children are reared._ (Prusank, 1995, p. 249)

The aim of this research is to look at the perspectives of children and young people on family discipline, and to examine whether age and gender influences their views. While there is a substantial body of research focusing on family discipline from adults’ perspectives there are few published studies on children's perspectives on the use of family discipline. Such studies are, however highly relevant to changes in social attitudes towards the disciplining of children. Our understanding of how adults feel about different methods of family discipline reveals little about how children feel about them. It is important to therefore ask children directly for their views.

A number of research studies have explored the effects of parental discipline on children (Gershoff, 2002; Smith, Gollop, Taylor & Marshall, 2004), but children’s own perspectives on this issue have been largely ignored by researchers. Studies that have used research instruments, such as hypothetical vignettes with predetermined rating scales, may reveal little about how parents actually discipline their own children. Holden (2002) argues that:

_Investigating discipline through the eyes of children rather than adults is needed. To better explain how discipline affects children now and in the future it is important to understand how children react to the disciplinary incident_ (Holden, 2002, p. 593).

How children feel about family discipline is an important issue for family relationships. The manner in which parents’ discipline their children has been shown to be an important factor in family functioning (Fisher & Fagot, 1993). Any disciplinary action includes two sets of behaviours, the child’s misdeed and the parent’s response. Effective discipline is based on the child’s accurate perception of the parental message and the acceptance or rejection of it (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Thus gaining knowledge of children’s views on family discipline
is important to promote effective discipline practices. While adults debate the best methods of disciplining children, children’s voices are not heard. Without children’s acceptance and understanding, the debates and solutions are incomplete and render children invisible.

There has been a preoccupation with the parental viewpoint when examining physical punishment; however a child welfare vantage point has recently become more salient. Whilst parents are the source of research data in traditional socialisation studies, in the child abuse literature it is evident that children’s viewpoints should be sought, since children are the recipients of this maltreatment (Konstantreas & Desbois, 2001; Straus, 1998). While child abuse literature is discussing the higher end of the physical punishment continuum, this rationale can be applied to studies on all forms of family discipline.

The debate about family discipline, especially the use of physical punishment of children by parents, has been a public one since the 1970’s. This issue generates passionately expressed viewpoints either for or against the use of particular disciplinary methods. The use of physical punishment as a form of family discipline is of particular interest in this study, since it is a commonly used but contentious, form of family discipline.

In New Zealand presently there is much debate about the way we discipline our children and how we can better protect them from harm. A wide variety of discipline methods are used by parents and many methods involve the use of physical punishment which is strongly supported by a large percent of the adult population (Carswell, 2001; Maxwell, 1993; Ritchie, 2004). This support has lead to public debates over the attempts to repeal section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961, which provides a legal defence for parents who use physical force to discipline their children as long as the force used is deemed reasonable in the circumstances (EPOCH, 2001).
These debates continue as the status of children’s wellbeing in New Zealand is being reported by both national and international organisations. A growing number of child abuse notifications are being made to our statutory agency responsible for the protection of children, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF). A 2003 UNICEF report showed that New Zealand has high rates of child maltreatment (UNICEF, 2003). The United Nations Committee Report on the Rights of the Child (2003) (UN Committee) criticised the New Zealand Government for failing to comply with Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). This states that state parties must take all measures to ensure that children be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment. An increase in child deaths has been associated with discipline that went too far (Dobbs, 2002) and this has renewed interest in the issue of family discipline. A country’s mortality rate is indicative of the general well being of its children:

The mortality rate of children represents a country’s level of child well being and serves to link to the prevalence of child abuse and neglect. These deaths also reflect societal neglect and the failure of governments to place a sufficient priority on insuring adequate health care for children and support for parents. As such, an increased emphasis on child maltreatment and its prevention might be expected to result in a reduction in early childhood mortality and morbidity (ISPCAN, 2004, p. 35)

This research will seek from children their views and understandings of parental disciplinary practices and their influence on them. This study is primarily framed by the sociology of childhood theory, in which children are viewed as social actors in their own right and their perspectives on, and participation in, the social world are validated. By ascertaining children’s own perspectives on family discipline this information can contribute to Government and non-Government (NGO) organisations’ consultations on law, policy and practices surrounding the use of family discipline.
Definitions
For the purpose of this study it is important to distinguish between discipline and punishment because the terms are often used interchangeably and yet have quite different connotations.

**Discipline**
Discipline is not synonymous with punishment:

- Discipline means to train, instruct, or educate. Training cannot be accomplished simply by suppressing undesired behaviours though punishment. If the goal of discipline is to promote the child's obedience and internalisation of the parent's message (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994), then effective instruction must be a foremost consideration. (Holden, 2002, p. 592)

  Discipline is defined as the guidance of children’s moral, emotional and physical development, enabling them to take responsibility for themselves when they are older (Holden, 2002; Wissow, 2003). It also is a process of teaching children the values and normative behaviours of their society, making them aware of the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Smith et al., 2004). Discipline can be positive or negative in orientation, for example, praising children who stop doing something inappropriate is positive discipline while smacking a child for doing something wrong is negative discipline. Negative discipline encourages children to comply to avoid being hurt or punished.

  From a biblical point of view; discipline is positive, encouraging and even proof of love (Hebrew 12:6). The definition of discipline in both the Old Testament and New Testament includes instruction and training, as well as correction (Thakur, 2004). Discipline emphasises what a child should do, sets an example to follow, is an on-going process and fosters children’s ability to think. It accepts children’s developmental need to assert themselves.

**Punishment**
A parental disciplinary act has a different connotation or purpose than a parental act of punishment and both have different outcomes for children. Punishment is
an act which emphasises what children should not do, insists on obedience, thinks for children, is often an adult release, and can be used as a penalty for an offence or a pay back for wrong doings.

Physical punishment is defined as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child’s behaviour” (Straus, 1994, p. 4). Examples are smacking, hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing and/or physically restraining a child for the supposed purpose of correction, teaching and punishment of that child (Maxwell, 1993). Smacking, hitting and slapping can be by way of a parent’s hand or assisted by an instrument (Dobbs, 2002).

**Parents and Family**

Broad definitions of parents and family are used in this study because of the diverse range of family living situations in New Zealand. Cohabitation rather than legal marriages have become a major trend in New Zealand with a large number of children residing in these homes (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Legal marriages are often left until couples are older, and a higher proportion of marriages are second marriages (Thomson, 1999). Children being brought up by a parent and step-parent are also not uncommon (Smith, 1997). There has been an increase in single parent families, 18.9 percent in 2001 up from 17.2 percent in 1991 (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). More children are being cared for by extended family or family friends whilst parents work (Cram & Pitama, 1998). Similarly, children are often cared for within more than one household (Kiro, 2000) and within these households more than one generation may reside. These family structures have implications for children when discussing the use of family discipline. It is possible for children to be disciplined by other adults as well as parents and to be disciplined in more than one household. This is especially relevant for those children who have parents that are separated and who have more than one generation residing in their home. Family discipline is not a single variable, but in reality is situated in the context of other practices (Parkes, 2002).
For the purpose of this study, a ‘parent’ refers to the adult or adults who care for the child whilst the child is residing in their household. ‘Family’ refers to all the people residing within the child’s household.

Organisation of the thesis

Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. The conceptual framework draws on the fields of social learning, moral internalisation and attachment as well as sociocultural, ecological and sociology of childhood theories. These theories are discussed and applied in the context of family discipline. Changing views of children and childhood are discussed in relation to the emergence of children’s rights through UNCROC and other research and policy innovations.

Research literature on children’s perspectives of family discipline are reviewed and discussed in Chapter Three. This literature review also canvases children’s judgements on the appropriateness of parental disciplinary techniques in relationship to the child’s transgressions. Literature on the use of physical punishment will be highlighted in the context of other discipline methods employed within the family.

The issues surrounding the use of physical punishment on children are explored in Chapter Four. The social and legal mechanisms that sanction its use will be discussed in addition to the prevalence and effects of its use in New Zealand and in other countries.

Chapter Five provides the rationale for the use of the qualitative research and focus group methodology employed in this study. Also described are the research aims, method and data analysis. Chapter Six presents the findings from this study grouped into seven themes. The themes presented are: the scope of family discipline, children’s perceptions of the parental message, parental consistency, fairness and conflict, children’s views on physical
punishment, time out, withdrawal of privileges and grounding, and children's advice on family discipline.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the study findings. The importance of eliciting children's views on family discipline is discussed in the context of these findings in Chapter Eight. Also discussed in this concluding chapter are the successful elements of this research, along with recommendations for future research, policy and practice.
CHAPTER TWO

Children and childhood

Childhood is a social construction brought about through the influence of cultural mores and practised values experienced by community groupings in which children may find themselves. The socialisation process is the way by which children develop into unique individuals who also feel themselves to be part of a cultural community. (Lloyd- Smith & Tarr, 2000, p. 62)

Introduction

This chapter explores the changing views of children and childhood. Children’s invisibility within their social and physical worlds and the emergence of children’s rights through UNCROC and other research and policy initiatives will be discussed. This chapter also places family discipline practices in a theoretical framework. The conceptual framework draws on the fields of social learning, moral internalisation and attachment, as well as sociocultural, ecological and sociology of childhood theories.

Mapping the historical landscape of childhood

There is an increasing sociological and anthropological interest in the study of childhood as a historical and cultural construct (James & Prout, 1997). This assumes that within particular times and/or places societies perceive the value, the role, and the rearing of children differently (May, 1999).

McDonald (1978) outlines four perspectives on European childhood. In the pre-1900s the child was regarded as a chattel who was owned by the family, and with whom the state had little right to intervene. In the post-1900’s, the child was seen as social capital in which the state invested by providing health and education services to create more useful adult citizens and prevent social disorder. By 1945 the child was considered as a psychological being whose mental health required more intensive support and understanding by parents and institutions, to create a more rational society. In the 1970’s the child came to be regarded as a citizen and there was increasing interest in children’s rights and
the ideals of a fairer society for children. Economic and social reforms in New Zealand in the mid 1980’s were amongst the most sweeping in scope and scale of any industrialised democracy. This era gave emphasis to the devolution – by the state – of the responsibilities from children onto families at the very time as the support and resources available to them were shrinking (Smith & Taylor, 2000). The view that children are entirely the private responsibility of their parents, coupled with the diminution of state responsibility made children and families increasingly vulnerable to the insecurities and inequalities produced by the full force of the market. These reforms slowed in the 1990’s and illustrate the vulnerability of children through periods of social upheaval. The need to have effective mechanisms to monitor, protect and promote the interests of children became more apparent (Blaiklock, Kiro, Belgrave, Low, Davenport & Hassall, 2002). Subsequently the interest in children’s rights has extended to include children’s rights to participation in matters that concern their lives. This has been reinforced by the ratification of UNCROC and other legislative and policy changes.

May (1997) traces new ideas on child rearing and childhood from eighteenth century Europe, which, she believes, spread to New Zealand with colonial immigration. It is suggested that colonisation caused Pakeha to construct views of Maori childhood which may bear little resemblance to the realities for Maori children and/or Maori perceptions of childhood:

Colonial society created both the need and the impetus for charitable and educational services for European children; but for Maori, it brought about the loss of population, land, mana, and language. These factors are at the crux of later early childhood services, as Maori families lost the resources and social structures which provided the traditional contexts for rearing the very young. (May, 1999, p. xiv)

Children’s welfare has been intricately woven into women’s welfare and women’s social condition (Mayall, 2000) and in the twentieth century, children have become the objects of scrutiny, surveillance and intervention by professionals. The ‘century of the child’ has seen ideas on childhood move from
experimental, to be universals for all children under the umbrella of the state. This was not accidental but coincided with the intricate mapping of childhood by a new industry of child professionals (May, 1999). James and Prout (1997) describe how this has taken place:

‘The century of the child’ can be characterised as such precisely because of the massive corpus of knowledge built up by psychologists and other social scientists through the systematic study of children. If the concept of childhood as a distinct stage in the human life cycle crystallised in the nineteenth century western thought, the twentieth century has seen the theoretical space elaborated and filled out with detailed empirical findings which have structured our thinking about childhood. (p. 9)

Burman (1994) regards the twentieth century view of the child as being dominated by explanations of developmental psychology, and a presumption of a universal and naturalistic view of the development of children as separate from, but leading to, adulthood.

Taylor (1998) describes the history of children and childhood in respect of the law. Until the mid-nineteenth century women and children had no legal status at all with fathers holding complete authority over their children. Initially the courts were only concerned with the enforcement of paternal rights; however these gradually waned in recognition of mother’s rights, and the introduction of the ‘welfare of the child’ principle.

Early legislation did not promote the ascertaining of children’s wishes or views. Instead it emphasised their interests and welfare. The emergence of listening to children’s wishes and views is recent in New Zealand and coincides with the ‘child as citizen’ era delineated by McDonald (1978). The new sociology of childhood, together with UNCROC, suggests the need for further law reform. Tapp & Henaghan (2000) suggest that:

… all too often New Zealand’s family law system fails to regard children as individuals with rights who are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to be provided with an environment which will give them the best opportunity of developing into healthy, autonomous citizens able to participate fully in a democracy. This failure is the result both of conceptions of childhood held by our lawmakers, and system constraints. (p. 92)
Taylor (1997) believes that the emerging sociology of childhood supports further enhancements of the voice of children in family law. The voice of children must temper the paternalistic, protective and primarily adult-focused perspectives of past and current practice: "Voice implies participation and a sense that others value one’s opinions and sentiments" (Taylor, 1997, p.12).

Adult conceptions of children and childhood will result in different opinions about the rights of children to express a view and the relevance of such views (Tapp & Henaghan, 2001). How parents view children and childhood may impact on how parents view their practices of delivering family discipline.

**Children’s rights**

The notion that children have participative rights is controversial. Children’s rights more generally have been argued about for centuries (Smith, 2001), because recognising children as participants in society with civil and human rights is seen by many as a threat to the traditional boundaries of power between children and adults, and the state and the family. “Rights are entitlements, valuable commodities” for which we need not “grovel or beg” (Freeman, 1996, p. 70). The concept of children having rights tends to be interpreted as permissiveness which removes power and control away from parents or others in authority over children (Smith, 2000). Henaghan (1996) asserts:

Analysis of children’s rights and their implementation requires keeping three potentially conflicting concepts in mind at the same time. First, there is the concept of the child’s autonomy to express views and make decisions; second there is the concept of the family’s responsibility to nurture and bring up children, and finally, there is the concept of the state’s responsibility to provide services which protect and enhance lives of children. Each one of these concepts raises value choices of its own... Overriding these value choices, is the decision as to whom determines them (Henaghan, 1996, p. 165)

The limitations on parental rights exist only, in so far as this is necessary for the protection, welfare and promotion of children’s rights (Lansdown, 1995). When the child acquires the capacity to exercise those rights independently, the right of parents to exercise their responsibility recedes. Where there is conflict, it
is not actually conflict between the rights of the parent and the rights of children. Rather there may be conflict between the adult’s responsibility for the protection of the child, and the child’s pursuit of the right to participation and to self-determination, and to be listened to and taken seriously:

In other words it is a conflict between, on the one hand, the child’s right to be protected and, on the other, the child’s right to have a voice. Such a construction does not remove the dilemmas and difficulties inherent in resolving conflict ... but it provides a more valid framework within which to understand conflict. It also locates the resolution of the conflict within the need to find a solution best for that child. (Lansdown, 1995, p. 43)

Common arguments are used to avoid involving children in making decisions that affect them (Tapp, 1997). These include protecting children from the burden of responsibility; children’s immaturity and inability to consider the long term consequences of their decisions; children’s egotism and the inability to accept responsibility, which may cause them to ignore the rights and needs of others. Research suggests, however, that these assumptions are incorrect. Children are competent social agents who value rights once they become aware that such rights exist:

Children who learned about their rights under the Convention understood and valued rights to equality. In the words of one child, “I learned that respect and equality are important for everyone”. In the words of one of the teachers, “I have experienced the benefit of the 3Rs – rights, respect and responsibility”. (Covell & Howe, 2000, p. 45)

Cowell & Howe’s (2000) pilot study indicated positive effects on child wellbeing, teacher and peer relationships, and the promotion of positive attitudes towards ethnic minority children upon exposure to rights education. The studies undertaken by Decoene and De Cook (1996) had similar findings, and reported a linkage between exposure of children to children’s rights education and increased support for the general values of rights, tolerance and multiculturalism. Alderson (2000) argues that children having ‘rights’ does not endorse selfish individualism, but increases mutual respect for everyone’s equal claim, to dignity and worth. Rights are collective not individual, ‘ours’ not ‘mine’.
Almost one-quarter of New Zealanders (847,740 people) were under the age of 15 at the time of the 2001 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). As a social group, children have no political status and little say in the decisions that impact on their lives. Children often believe they are not listened to, and not taken seriously (Alderson, 1999; 2000; Atwool, 2000; Gollop, Taylor & Smith, 2000; Taylor, Gollop & Smith, 2000).

Lansdown (1994) believes “we do not have a culture of listening to children” (p. 38). Children’s invisibility as a social group is emphasised by the family focussed nature of New Zealand statistics, making it difficult to highlight the position of children as a distinct group. Until recently New Zealand has not had a public policy for children (Hassall, 2001), but this has evolved over the past five years as work has been undertaken to consult children and young people about their lives. For example:

- Global Voice - a conference for young people held in Christchurch (Le Lievre, 1999).
- The Government’s “Agenda for Children” - young people’s views were sought on being a child in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2002).
- Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa - Focus groups were convened and contributed to a youth video called “Whakarongo Mai – Listen Up” which formed part of the NGO report to the UN Committee in 2003 (ACYA, 2003)
- The Human Rights Commission in conjunction with the Children’s Issues Centre - sought the views of young people on how children viewed their rights in a number of aspects of their life (Biddulph, 2004).
- The Office of the Children’s Commissioner - held a two day Children’s Call Symposium in February 2004. 150 children identified the issues that were most important to them and discussed these issues with 150 adults in key policy development positions in Government and NGOs (OCC, 2004).
These initiatives illustrate significant steps in New Zealand towards viewing children as a separate social group by recognising the balance between children’s agency and dependency. Children’s capabilities are influenced by the expectations and opportunities for shared participation offered by their culture. The ability to participate will have major effects on the skills and abilities children develop (Smith & Taylor, 2000). Only when children’s experiences are listened to seriously will they begin to have a greater say in both family life and government policies.

To enhance children’s status in society a change comparable to that previously achieved for women needs to occur (Lansdown, 1994). To afford children the same basic human rights as adults, a major shift in our fundamental attitudes towards children is needed together with reforms in law, policy and practice introduced both in the public and private spheres. Enhancing children’s full potential and fulfilling our obligations to UNCROC will only occur when adults begin to start re-evaluating their attitudes towards children and their understanding of childhood. Children’s perceptions of their own lives and experiences can provide an essential input towards creating better conditions of childhood in the future (Smith & Taylor, 2000).

The first Declaration on the Rights of the Child was drafted and adopted by the fifth Assembly of the League of Nations (renamed the Geneva Declaration) in 1924. This Declaration arose through concerns for children’s material needs after World War One, and was initiated by a non-governmental organisation Save the Children International Union. In 1959, the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which included a set of principles that emphasised duties to children, but did not embrace children’s liberties (Taylor 1997).
Prior to the International Year of the Child 1979, Poland submitted a draft of ten articles and provisions to the United Nations Convention on Human Rights to update the children’s rights charter. Ten years later, following consultation with government and NGO’s, UNCROC 1989 was finally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. New Zealand became a signatory in 1989, and after reviewing existing polices and legislation ratified UNCROC in 1993 with three reservations. Only two countries have not ratified this Convention, the United States of America and Somalia. By ratifying UNCROC State parties are bound to comply with it and are required to report to the UN Committee on their progress, initially within two years, then every five years thereafter.

Freeman (1994) contends that UNCROC is a landmark in the history of childhood, while Lansdown (1994, p. 36) calls it “a turning point in the international movement on behalf of children’s rights”. Smith (2000) asserts that:

UNCROC provides an internationally accepted standard to be applied to basic human rights affecting children. It is a document of reconciliation, which treats parents and children with respect. (p. 4)

UNCROC is an instrument which offers support to the child within the family context and at the same time identifies children as rights-bearers and families as the fundamental group unit of society (Jones & Marks, 1999). It also recommends a partnership between children, families and the institution of the state:

In this way UNCROC can be seen as a document of reconciliation of the perceived conflict between the parent and the child and as a document which transcends the battlefield in order to ensure that there is room for all players to be treated with respect (Jones & Marks, 1999, p. 2)

The four general principles: non discrimination (Article 2), the best interest of the child (Article 3), the rights to life and survival and development (Article 6) and the respect for the views of the child (Article 12) are reflections of the child’s right to have his or her human rights protected (Karp, 1999, p. 61) and direct the way each right is fulfilled and respected.
The Convention consists of 54 Articles, which Lansdown (1994) has divided into 3 main types:

1. Provision Articles, which recognise the social rights of children to minimum standards of health, education, social security, physical care, family life, recreation, culture and leisure.
2. Protection Articles, which identify the rights of children to be safe from discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, injustice and conflict.
3. Participation Articles, civil and political rights, acknowledge children's rights to a name and identity, to be consulted and to be taken account of, to physical integrity, to access to information, to freedom of speech and opinion, and to challenge decisions made on their behalf.

UNCROC recognises children as a group to whom international human rights law applies and provides a framework for the consideration of the position of children in our society.

UNCROC is not part of New Zealand’s domestic law. At present some aspects of UNCROC are incorporated in our law, for example, the Guardianship Act 1968 and the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 (CYPF Act, 1989) utilise the 'best interests of the child' principle found in Article 3. Whilst UNCROC was rarely mentioned in judicial decisions in the New Zealand Family Court (Tapp, Taylor & Henaghan, 2000) it is now much more commonly cited. Smith (2000) notes that the recognition given to the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand legislation (Protection, Partnership and Protection) should also be accorded to UNCROC.

The most controversial Articles in UNCROC are those which pertain to children’s participation rights. Participatory rights require a departure from traditional views on human rights (Woolf, 2000). In practice, participation rights
(Articles 12-15 and 17) have proven to be the most contentious and State parties have been reluctant to implement these rights even though they are central to UNCROC (Woolf, 2000). Franklin (1995) says that, when discussing children’s rights, one should keep two broad distinctions in mind: between legal and moral rights, and between welfare and liberty rights. Moral rights enjoy no legal endorsement, but welfare rights can be claimed (housing, education), and liberty rights (the right to participate in decision-making, to vote) require that the right holder must be capable of making and exercising choices (Archard, 1993 cited in Franklin, 1995).

Prior to UNCROC, children’s rights were concerned mainly with economic and social rights rather than civil and political rights as discussed by McDonald (1978). Articles 12 and 13 seek to give children a more active role in society, which sometimes occasions a backlash against the idea that children have rights to a greater level of participation (Freeman, 2000; Lansdown, 1995). Some educational institutions argue that it is inappropriate to give children rights and the focus should be on teaching them responsibility (Covell & Howe, 1999). This argument stems from children being wrongly portrayed as lacking morality, being out of control and lacking the experience for effective participation (Lansdown, 1995).

UNCROC is about the human dignity of children (Karp, 1999). The value of human dignity is the normative umbrella under which all the rights stated in UNCROC exist:

These rights aim at satisfying the needs of the child for personal and mental integrity. These rights aim also at the harmonious development of the child towards autonomous self realization and the evolution of the child’s identity, self worth, self respect, self assurance and full personhood, which are the core of human dignity. The right to harmonious development … reflects the new image of the child under the Convention, which depicts the child not only as vulnerable subject of protection, but also as an active, developing human being with evolving capacities, who is entitled to respect for his or her human dignity as an autonomous human being. (Karp, 1999, p. 61)
Many of the provisions in UNCROC are relevant when exploring the issue of the disciplining of children. Article 19 is central to this: the right of the child to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment. Signatories to UNCROC have an obligation to provide legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from such violence and maltreatment. Karp (1999) argues that therefore UNCROC serves as a natural normative framework through which to tackle the problem of violence within the family, suggesting that physical punishment is a form of violation of the human dignity of the child, from a rights-based perspective.

The last two Reports to the New Zealand government by the UN Committee have criticised its failure to comply fully with Article 19. The UN Committee has consistently expressed its concern at the state’s legislative sanction of the use of physical force to discipline children (UNCROC, 1997; 2003). The government’s response to the UN Committee reports has been to initiate a $10 million public education campaign on positive parenting. This is being done in the belief that public education needs to precede any legal repeal. Therefore the government is not fully complying with Article 19 of UNCROC.

Children’s participation in research
There has been much research carried out on children. Data on children has been collected from parents, family, teachers and other professionals. What is lacking is research asking children their views and perspectives. This is a consequence of the past social construction of childhood (Solberg, 1996). UNCROC gives children participatory rights, and within the research context, more researchers are recognising that children and young people can be legitimate contributors to the research process, rather than simply being objects of research, to be observed and studied (Hurley, 1998).
Morrow and Richards (1996) believe that children continue to be viewed as the subject of research projects, with many research projects having been carried out on them rather than with them. Adults have established themselves as the "understanders, interpreters and translators of children's behaviours" (Waksler, 1994, p. 62). This has resulted in children being viewed as developing beings less competent than adults. As long as researchers continue to gather data about children from adults, they will reinforce the preconceived notion that children do not have views worthy of consideration (Alderson, 1995).

The invisibility of children is perpetuated and their basic human right to be heard is undermined when their voices are unheard in research. The emerging sociology of childhood is providing a different view of children. Children are not viewed as simply the passive recipients of socialisation. Children's perspectives are now starting to be explored in the areas of health (Alderson, 2000), separation and divorce (Gollop et al., 2000), living in foster care (Smith et al., 2000) and in children's legal representations (Taylor et al., 2000). Research is emerging on children's views on physical punishment (Cutting, 2001; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Dobbs, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998) but little is reported in the literature on physical punishment in the context of family discipline. It is essential that children's voices be heard in the debate on how best to discipline children. Since physical punishment is related to physical abuse (Gershoff, 2002) it is especially important, to listen to children's views on this issue. Atwool (2000) highlights that, "when children are exposed to risk and trauma their voices are frequently not heard" (p. 57).

**Family Discipline from a Theoretical Framework**

From the beginning of recorded history, there has been a substantial interest in how societal values are transmitted from one generation to the next (Grusec, 1997). Speculation about morality and values are seen in writers from both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Attempting to understand the
socialisation process has been a long standing enterprise in both social and developmental psychology (Maccoby, 1992).

The study of familial socialisation is concerned with how children acquire the motives, values, and behaviour patterns that allow them to function within the larger society (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997, p. 135).

Interestingly, the starting point for speculation about how morality and values developed is phrased in terms of the questioning of the basic nature of children: are they innately sinful, innately good, or are they neither? (Holden, 1997). Grusec (1997) reports that human nature as inherently depraved is a traditional view of Judeo-Christian theology. Puritan parenting strategies advocated strong punishment as the only antidote for wilful children:

Break their wills betimes; begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain, or perhaps speak at all … Let a child, from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly” (Wesley, 1872, taken from Newson & Newson, 1974, p. 56).

The idea of innate sinfulness is surfacing in current Protestant fundamentalist ideology with the argument that punishment is needed to instil respect and obedience and that smacking and physical coercion are necessary for teaching moral values (Grusec, 1997). This approach is similar to that of the pre-1900 when children were treated as ‘chattels’ (McDonald, 1978).

Psychoanalytic theory presents a less extreme version of the idea of innate depravity. It views the young child as dominated by the id, possessing desires that need immediate gratification, which must therefore be controlled. This view has influenced socialisation theorists who have focused on discipline strategies and techniques for installing pro-social values and inhibiting anti-social ones (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Rousseau has a contrasting view that “the child is inherently good and only contaminated by the clumsy intervention of society: “Everything is well when it leaves the Creator's hands; everything degenerates in the hands of man” (Rousseau, 1762/1974 cited in Grusec, 1997, p. 4).
Early research focused narrowly on the characteristics of the child and the parent (Maccoby, 1984). In regard to parents' characteristics:

Researchers looked at the frequency with which parents rewarded or punished a given behaviour ... at the opposite extreme, such general characteristics such as warmth or permissiveness were assessed. (Maccoby, 1984, p. 185)

Progress occurred when it was recognised that each end of the spectrum could not be studied in isolation from the other and the realisation that discipline is but a part of the interaction that occurs between parent and child (Prusank, 1995). It is assumed that when a child is disciplined at home, that child will be filled with information about socially appropriate behaviours and self control (Prusank, 1995). If the child is not disciplined at home, the child will be seen as a potential danger to all members in the wider culture. At the most basic level, disciplinary interactions teach children which behaviours are appropriate within the context of that child’s family and society. This information is vital for the child and for all of the family. Violations of the rules that call for discipline promote, at best disorder, and at worst chaos in family interactions. Disciplinary interactions are expected to impact on the child’s knowledge and behaviour with regard to the family rules.

There are varied approaches to understanding how children acquire values and what role parents play in this process. There is strong evidence showing that parents play a central role in the socialisation of children (Kuczynski & Grusec, 1997). Researchers need to address questions about parenting and children’s internalisation of values (Grusec, 1997). The conditions that influence the extent to which an older and a younger generation share the same ideas, or “cultural reproduction” is a major issue for researchers (Goodnow, 1992, p. 293). The process of internalisation in children is one vehicle for the intergenerational continuity of values, culture, and social order in families and societies (Kochanska, 1994).
Kochanska and Thompson (1997) discuss the development of conscience. In order to function successfully in society, children need to be inducted into the social system of rules, values, norms and standards of conduct. They must develop internal regulators of behaviour - psychological mechanisms that can reliably guide their actions not only when they are supervised and externally controlled, but also when they are on their own, without surveillance and not accountable to any authority. The study of socialisation in the context of the family entails assumptions about conformity, resistance, and authority in parent-child interactions (Kuczynski & Hilderbrandt, 1997). Children develop capacities for self-regulation, orientation towards authority, and an initial set of values during interactions with parents (Kochanska, 1991; Kuczynski & Hildebrant, 1997).

A theoretical framework explaining how family discipline influences children's well-being and development has been developed by Smith et al. (2004). This framework includes: Social learning theory, moral internalisation and attachment, as well as sociocultural, ecological and sociology of childhood theories.

**Social Learning Theory** - Parental discipline practices are an integral part in theories of children's socialisation. Social learning theory suggests that the consequences of behaviour strengthens or weakens the behaviour. Punishment which is defined as the presentation of an aversive stimulus or the removal of a reinforcing stimulus, following the behaviour weakens the behaviour. Using punishment as a primary method of controlling behaviour is not likely to suppress undesirable behaviour permanently unless the punishment is very severe. (Smith et al., 2004). To effectively suppress behaviour, punishment should occur immediately, after every transgression and be intense. Parents are unlikely to fulfil these conditions and they could have undesirable effects, such as physical injury, if utilised (Smith et al., 2004).
Social learning theorists have proposed that there is a causal link between parental use of harsh punishment and subsequent child aggression (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992). In terms of social learning theory, punishment can be used to suppress undesirable behaviour but cannot teach desirable behaviour (Gershoff, 2002) and this characteristic implies that it will be differentially effective even in the short term (Parkes, 2002). Maccoby (1992) suggests that because parents are both nurturant and powerful, children are more likely to learn by observing them than by observing strangers. If family members control children’s behaviour through negative means then children are likely to learn to influence others behaviours by using similar means (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993; Smith et al., 2004).

Hops, Davis, Leve & Sheeber (2003) suggest that the intergenerational transmission of disciplinary practices, such as the use of violence and aggression, can be explained through children learning these behaviours within the social context of their families which they then call on later in life. A number of studies support the theory of intergenerational use of violence (Egeland, 1993; Gershoff, 2002; Hemenway, et al., 1994; Hunter & Stollak, 1995; Newall, 1998; O’Keefe, 1994; Straus, 1999).

It has been suggested that New Zealand parents hit their children because they think every-one else does. “With the smack bottom, you join the club of responsible parenthood, fulfilling your duty to God and society” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993, p. 10). The ideology of punishment has to exist to provide support for the punisher:

We know that patterns of violent behaviour are learnt and transmitted and that they can therefore be replaced by other behaviour or never learnt in the first place. (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993, p. 9)

Intergenerational transmission of violence is not a certainty and the process is not clear (Fry, 1993). Non-violent conflict resolution and constructive parenting can also be transmitted intergenerationally (Chen & Kaplan, 2001).
**Moral Internalisation and Attachment** – Moral internalisation is defined by Grusec and Goodnow (1994) as:

Taking over values and attitudes of society as one’s own so that socially acceptable behaviour is motivated not by anticipation of external consequences but by intrinsic or internal factors. (Grusec & Goddnow, 1994, p. 4)

Moral internalisation underlies the development of children’s social and emotional competence. It is a multifaceted process that integrates contributions from many developmental domains, including parent-child interactions, the child’s information-processing skills, his or her individuality and temperament. (Kochanska, 1994; Kochanska & Thompson, 1997). Moral internalisation promotes autonomy and choice for children when minimal parental power is used (Gershoff, 2002). Optimal internalisation occurs when the process of integrating aspects of the social world becomes intrinsic to one-self – a process that can be facilitated or forestalled by parental practices. This provides a basis for explaining why different types of socialisation are associated with different psychological developments (Grolnick, et al., 1997). Children’s internalisation of morals is enhanced by parental discipline that uses minimal parental power, promotes choices for children and provides explanations for desirable behaviour (Kuczynski & Hilderbrandt, 1997).

Ainsworth (1979) describes attachment as the affectional tie which binds the child to the parent/caregiver across space and time. It is central to learning and development and most significantly in the formation of identity (an internal working model of self). Close and reciprocal relationships between caregivers and children in the first year of life are central to a child’s learning and development (Smith et al., 2004). The attachment system develops alongside other behavioural systems including the exploratory systems, the fear systems and the sociable systems (Cassidy, 1999; Marvin & Britner, 1999) and a balance must be maintained between them. Once established, secure attachments provide children with a base from which to explore the world (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Attachment is important to the development of conscience.
and the internalisation of rules and moral values (Laible & Thompson, 2000) and is therefore an important concept when theorising on appropriate methods of family discipline (Smith et al., 2004). Attachment has an important influence on a variety of child outcomes, and on children’s moral internalisation of disciplinary rules and social competence (Coyl, Roggman & Newland, 2002; Kochanska, Coy & Murray, 2001). Therefore the methods by which parents discipline their children have the potential to either damage or enhance the quality of parent/child attachments (Lopez, Bonenberger & Schneider, 2001).

Internalisation, as a result of discipline, is based on the child’s accurate perception of the parental message and the subsequent acceptance or rejection of this message (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Examining the nature of the misdeed, and the connection between the misdeed and the disciplinary technique is part of the answer to differential effectiveness.

Clear limits that are firmly enforced during the early years and that occur within the context of a rational-authoritative relationship minimise the need for punishment by mid-adolescence, at which time the rights and responsibilities of parent and children become more symmetrical and less complimentary, finally approaching the egalitarian relationship characteristic of peer adults. (Baumrind, 1996, p. 413)

Children’s judgement of appropriateness of the discipline alters the effectiveness of the disciplinary technique and the messages the child may be internalising. A child may be responsive to complying with parental preferences, but not appear to have internalised parental values because the parent’s position was poorly understood. The consistency and frequency of the messages that fit the child’s existing level of cognitive development (e.g. understanding the impact of their behaviour on others) will support attachment with parents and moral internalisation (Grusec, 1997). When children are physically punished and the motivation for this act is anger by the parent, internalisation is less likely to occur:

The best socialised children … had parents who were warm, who established guidelines for behaviour while allowing the child some degree of autonomy, and who clearly communicated expectations and gave reasons for them. (Grusec, 1997, p. 12)
Power assertion methods, including physical punishment, are thought by many authors to be less successful in promoting long term moral internalisation than the use of induction or reasoning (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). However, Larzelere (1996) and Hoffman (1994) argue that a combination of power assertion and inductive disciplinary techniques can encourage moral internalisation:

Most parental interventions, including those that are predominately inductions, have power-assertive and love withdrawal properties. These comprise the motive-arousal component needed to get the child to pay attention to the message contained in the inductive component. This message concerns the consequences of the child’s behaviour for someone else, hence it is central to the moral norm. Too little arousal the child may ignore the parent; too much and the resulting fear, anxiety or resentment may direct the child’s attention to the consequences of the child’s behaviour for himself or herself and prevent the effective processing of the message. Appropriate arousal, together with a salient inductive component, should ordinarily direct the child’s attention to the consequences of the child’s behaviour for the victim and enable the child to process the message. (Hoffman, 1994, p. 27)

Smith et al. (2004), however argue that physical punishment is inappropriate because it is usually associated with high, rather than moderate, levels of arousal. Gershoff (2002) agrees that physical punishment may not facilitate moral internalisation as it does not teach children the reasons for behaving correctly and may instead teach children the desirability of not getting caught. Parents, as socialisation agents, have an important job to facilitate and support a child’s natural tendency to internalise cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours. Promoting socially sanctioned behaviours without inhibiting the spirit of the child and diminishing their natural curiosity, vitality, and excitement is a key challenge (Grolnick, et al., 1997).

**Sociocultural theory** – A sociocultural approach to learning argues that children gradually come to know and understand the world through their own activities in communication with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Goodnow (1997) and Goodnow & Bugental (1998) suggest that a sociocultural perspective for the analysis of interactions within families is relevant because children’s cognitive development emerges out of social interactions:
The greater the richness of the activities and interactions in which children participate, the greater their understanding and knowledge will be. This is not a one-way process from adult to child, but a reciprocal partnership where adults and children jointly construct understanding and knowledge. (Smith, 1998, p. 2)

Children become more competent with the help of more skilled others. Guidance can be gradually withdrawn as the child becomes able to act independently. There is an important role for scaffolding and guidance by adults in helping children develop appropriate behaviours (Smith et al., 2004). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that children perform much more skilfully together with others. His concept of the zone of proximal development is a key to understanding his theory:

An essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with the people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalised, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievements. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90)

It is important to focus on the activities of individual development and social interaction as well as the cultural activity in which interaction takes place as each requires the involvement of the other (Rogoff, 1995). Ideally families provide responsive learning contexts which allow children to gradually take more and more responsibility for their own behaviour as the parents judge the level of support and guidance that their children need. The key elements of responsive learning contexts are dialogue, social interaction and graduated assistance (Smith, et al., 2004). Children come to internalise the modes of social interaction they experience. In this context family discipline is a social interaction and children will internalise the modes of the adult/child disciplinary interaction. When children are physically punished the physical pain and negativity they experience from their parents will be internalised as models of interaction. This means children will be more likely to use them later in their own interactions with others.

Language assists children to understand and relate to others which enable them to reflect on, communicate and represent themselves and others (Laible &
Conversations between children and their caregivers influence children’s learning about moral issues (Smith et al., 2004). Language is the means through which messages are carried from the social world to the individual’s thinking processes. The exchange of messages between parents and children about what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour influences the internalisation of moral values. Laible and Ross (2000) reported that mothers who referred to feelings and moral evaluations when talking with their children, raised children who were more sensitive to the feelings of others, the consequences of their actions, and felt guilty if they had acted inappropriately. Verbal conversations between child and parent, through reasoning, are more likely to provide children with cognitive stimulation than physical punishment without induction (Straus, 2001).

**Ecological theory** – Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) views the individual as a product of his or her environment. The interdependence of the individual, other people and the environment is the central feature of ecological theory (Powell, 1998). The ecological perspective highlights factors that shape developmental processes and the role of social relationships. Ecological perspectives suggest that modes of discipline within the family should be viewed from the wider context of family, culture and society (Smith et al., 2004). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model illustrates the reciprocal nature of the interaction between the child and their environment and conceptualises several levels.

The **macrosystem** relates to the dominant ideologies and cultural patterns of a society. It corresponds to the overriding consistencies in beliefs, values and accepted practices within a culture or subculture (for example, the appropriateness of girls’ and boys’ activities, or what children should be doing at certain ages) (Smith, 1998). The different environments that influence children’s development and individual family are nested within a wider framework of social and economic influences (Smith et al., 2004). These ideologies and cultural
patterns include government support for families, how the legal system is designed, how communities organise themselves and how families bring up children. The sphere of influence is a two way process between the developing child and his or her environment (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992). The child and their environment are viewed as being in a state of perpetual change. In the past, beliefs and cultural patterns influenced our understanding of what a family is. These understandings of families have now changed. The ‘two-way’ influence described by Bronfenbrenner has implications for changing societal views on the use of family discipline. In broad terms, the extent to which a society values its children and feels collective responsibility for their well-being will affect the manner by which they are disciplined:

Such values are reflected in societal intolerance for child poverty and in high infant mortality rates, free medical care for children, public funding for day-care, child protection laws, and provisions of parental support services, public funding...rates of physical punishment follow a corresponding sequence, being least in Sweden and most common in the US (See Durrant, 1995). The idea that physical punishment may be influenced by macrosystem variables suggests that physical punishment can be changed by modifying culturally based attitudes and norms. (Rose-Krasor, Durrant & Brogerg, 2001, p. 9)

Ideological changes, social support and cultural encouragement may be just as important learning alternatives to discipline in helping parents to cease using physical punishment (Davis, 1999). When discussing Gershoff’s (2002) meta-analysis on physical punishment, Holden (2002) suggests that:

The mediational processes in the child could be divided into primary and secondary mediational. Most of the variables listed in the model (i.e. attribution, social information, and social controls) fall in the secondary or cognitive appraisal phase. However, the physical and physiological effects should not be ignored. The social context of the family, the community, and the culture may well influence the cognitive appraisal process. (Holden, 2002, p. 593)

The individual family is a microsystem nested within the wider societal macrosystem. From birth, the child influences his or her parents’ behaviour. Similarly, the baby’s own eating and sleeping habits are influenced by his or her family. As children grow older, their sphere of influence widens to encompass settings beyond the home (for example, playgroups, child care centres and school). The child’s influence is felt in these settings and the settings themselves
have an influence on the child's own development and behaviour (Hutchins & Sims, 1999). Many factors come from within the individual family that will either support or undermine the family's ability to use positive disciplinary techniques, for example, social support, marital discord or harmony, any life stressors like social advantage or disadvantage, educational level and adult mental health as well as past family history, cultural and religious values and beliefs (Smith et al, 2004).

A supportive **microsystem** is one which the children participates in activities, are involved in relationships with others and are expected to fulfil particular roles. There are also feelings of warmth and reciprocity. Children are given opportunities to control situations, and parents interact with children without being dominant. The concept of a shift in the balance of power towards the child is comparable to the shift from external scaffolding to internal regulation in Vygotsky's theory (Smith, 1998). Bronfenbrenner’s view is comparable to Vygotsky’s, in that the individual interactions with a sensitive teacher are a major determinant of his or her developmental progress:

> Learning and developing are facilitated by the participation of the developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with some one with whom that person has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment and when the balance of power gradually shifts in favour of the developing person. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 60)

Children experience different cultures and are subject to different belief systems at the same time (Hutchins & Sims, 1999). These aspects of conflict need to be considered when exploring parent/child interactions within the context of family discipline:

Conflict can be found between the young child’s needs for both attachment and autonomy. There may be conflict between siblings’ needs and even between the needs of the child’s parents. At the level of the exosystem conflict is experienced between different services and sectors as they compete for time and resources. Conflict can exist between the parent’s workplace and the school. Conflict commonly occurs within macrosystems in relation to racial/religious difference, class conflict, or fundamental tensions with individualistic and collectivist values. (Hutchins & Sims, 1999, p. 5)
The **exosystem** is a system which does not contain the child but influences caregivers, for example the parental employment. Belsky (1984) gives less importance to the **exosystem** than the macrosystem and microsystem.

Values come not only from the family, but also from outside sources (Garbarino, Kostelny & Barry, 1997) and suggest that communities can collectively reinforce parental values. Cross cultural studies comparing populations in different countries (Palmerus & Scarr, 1994), have shown variations in disciplinary behaviours and attitudes. Deater-Deaker and Dodge (1997), suggest that within those groups where physical punishment is a predominant and normative form of discipline, parents would find physical punishment acceptable in other adults, but in groups where it is forbidden (for example, Sweden), it would be considered bad parenting. Straus (1996) believes that all types of violence are related to each other and that countries with the highest homicide rates have the highest rates of physical punishment.

**The sociology of childhood**

The sociology of childhood suggests that children are social actors who influence others, whilst being influenced themselves. The key tenet is that children are not simply the passive recipients of socialisation (Mayall, 2000; Prout & James, 1990). Children need to be extracted conceptually from their families and associated professionals and have the right to be viewed as a social group in their own right thus becoming visible (Mayall, 2000):

> The sociology of childhood has helped to put in the foreground of our thinking ideas about childhood as an important part of the social order, children as a social group with their own specific relationships with adults and power structures, and children as people who have their own purpose and meanings. (Smith & Taylor, 2000, p. 202)

Morrow and Richards (1996) describe this contrasting view as moving on from the narrow focus of socialisation and child development (the study of what children will become), to a sociology which attempts to take children seriously as
they experience their lives here and now as children. This study takes the views of children seriously and has consulted children’s on their views on family discipline.

Childhood is a highly contested terrain. Haydon and Scraton (2000) argue that it suggests biological essentialism; that the physical growth of the child to full maturity is mirrored by sequences of intellectual, psychological, social and moral development. Piagetian theory claims that children grow through a fixed sequence of cognitive development from infancy to adulthood (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000), thus assuming a “universality of childhood” (James & Prout, 1990, p. 12). In combination with basic concepts within child psychology, such as socialisation, these theories have resulted in children being seen as developing people who adults must train for membership of the adult world (Mayall, 2000). This traditional approach to child development marginalizes, discourages and inhibits children’s participation and voice.

In recent times the sociology of childhood has challenged the traditional view describing children as “human beings” rather than as “human-becomings” (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 4). Thus children are not pathological, incomplete or incompetent (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998). A greater emphasis needs to be given to children as social actors:

Respect for children’s status as social actors does not diminish adult responsibility. It places new responsibility on the adult community to structure children’s environment, guide their behaviour and enable their social participation in ways consistent with their understanding, interests and ways of communicating, especially the issues that most directly affect their lives. (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000, p. 31)

Children have inherent vulnerabilities and structural vulnerabilities and there is a tendency to place emphasis on their biological and psychological vulnerability in developing, law, policy and practice (Lansdown, 1994). There is an inadequate focus on the extent to which children’s lack of civil status creates that vulnerability.
Further, there is a commonly held assumption that adults know what is best for children. This creates an attitude that adults make decisions in the ‘best interests of children’, often without them. Melton (1987) argues there are inherent risks in adopting the ‘the best interest of children’ principle without making children partners in the decision-making process. Adults can be driven by their own political, social and religious views, albeit with noble intentions, and can end up promoting their own rather than children’s interests. This is a major issue when discussing the best methods of disciplining children.

White (1997) discusses children’s positions in schools but his view is pertinent when discussing the parental use of family discipline:

The social definitions of children as immature and irrational, as potential persons rather than persons, legitimates differential treatment of children and justifies the view they should be ineligible to give consent. The ineligibility to consent to rules to which they are nevertheless required to conform places children in an iniquitous position. (White, 1997, p. 204)

Children’s perceptions of their own lives and experiences will ultimately create better conditions of childhood in the future (Smith & Taylor, 2000). This will help to better fulfill our UNCROC obligations and support children to reach their full potential through participation as family members and citizens.

Summary
This chapter has provided a theoretical framework to explain how family discipline influences children’s wellbeing and development. Social learning theory suggests that children learn by modeling. Parental discipline practices therefore will have a significant influence on children’s concepts of behaviour. Children’s moral internalisation is enhanced by parental discipline that ensures that the disciplinary message is clearly understood, provides children with explanations and uses minimal parental power. Positive attachments with parents are important to the development of children’s internalisation of rules and moral values and to their social competence. Sociocultural theory suggests that
children come to internalise the modes of social interaction which they experience. Children gradually come to know and understand the world through their activities with others. Ecological theory suggests that modes of discipline are influenced not only by the family but also by the culture and society in which the family lives.

UNCROC gives recognition to children as a group in society to whom human rights law applies. Articles 12–14 highlight the rights of children to have a voice and deem children’s subjective experiences as valid and important. In the past children have been regarded as incompetent and incomplete, working through various stages to become properly functioning adult human beings. This view has been challenged by the development of sociology of childhood which sees children as social actors in their own right now and promotes their agency. Adult perspectives have dominated research on the impact of family discipline on the lives of children. In accordance with Article 12 of UNCROC, this study supplements the small body of research now reporting on children’s views on the use of family discipline practices. This study seeks and values children’s own views. Children are not the ‘subjects’ of this research, but rather are active participants, worthy of being listened to and having their views respected.
CHAPTER THREE

Review of the Literature

Giving more prominence to children’s voices is one way to ensure that child advocacy is well founded and that decision making is guided by a more complete picture of all the key issues. (Smith & Taylor, 2000, p. x)

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on children’s perspectives on the use of family discipline. Parental physical punishment is highlighted in particular as this form of family discipline is the most commonly used in many families outside Scandinavia. Children’s judgements on the appropriateness of the parental disciplinary techniques in relationship to the child’s transgression will also be reviewed. In this context, children’s judgements on the use of physical punishment are important in determining its effectiveness and in understanding the messages children may internalise from their parents.

Children’s transgressions and parental discipline

There is currently an increased interest in children’s perceptions, attitudes and thoughts about their upbringing (Oppenheimer, Emde & Warren, 1997) which emphasises the importance of children’s evaluations of what parents do and say (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Wolfe, Katell & Drabman (1982) suggest that children’s perceptions of parental discipline influence the disciplinary methods children will use with their own children. Parent-child discipline situations are important contexts for children’s cognitive and social development (Sears & Sears, 1995). Through discipline, children learn right from wrong and distinguish appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Horton, Ray & Cohen, 2001). Discipline provides a vehicle by which children internalise parental values and goals (Hoffman, 1983).

Most of the literature eliciting children’s views of family discipline focuses on children’s evaluations of different parental methods, and on children’s
judgements of transgressions. Within these studies, researchers have looked at the influence of age and gender of the child, as well as parental characteristics such as marital status, socioeconomic status (SES), marital discord and family type. Children, and sometimes their parents (usually mothers), have been asked about their different perceptions of parenting methods related to transgressions, rating various actions along a number of different domains. Studies have used a wide variety of age groups from preschoolers to first year college students.

Studies that have elicited children’s perceptions of different transgressions have found that children differentiate between moral, social-conventional and prudential transgressions (Bear & Fink, 1990; Bear & Stewart, 1990; Catron & Masters, 1993; Chilamkuri & Milner, 1993; Dunn, Brown & Maguire, 1995; Nicci, 1981; Seigel & Cowen, 1984; Seigal & Barclay, 1985; Smetana & Braeges, 1990; Stern & Peterson, 1999). Moral transgressions have been described by Nucci and Turiel (1978) as lying, stealing and hitting, acts that have specific consequences for others. Social-conventional transgressions include yelling or belching in public, acts that violate societal norms which are more or less wrong depending on social context (Stern & Peterson, 1999). Prudential transgressions involve judgements about personal harm and safety, such as not looking both ways when crossing the road, and are more broadly seen by Nucci and Smetana (1996) as wrongdoings related to personal comfort and health.

Young children generally believe that moral transgressions are more deserving of punishment than social-conventional transgressions (Chilamuki & Milner, 1993; Milner, 1983; Smetana, 1981). Catron and Masters (1993) looked at children’s evaluations of the appropriateness of parental use of physical punishment in relation to types of transgressions. They found that younger children (4 to 5 year olds) saw more severe types of physical punishment as appropriate, regardless of what kind of transgressions the child had made. The older children (11 to 12 year olds) saw physical punishment as being more appropriate for prudential and moral transgressions.
A small number of studies have examined children’s perceptions of parental fairness (Evan, Galyer & Smith, 2001; Horton et al., 2001; Mikula, Scherer & Athenstaedt, 1998). Fairness concerns subjective judgements about receiving just treatment, as opposed to reasoning about dispensing justice. Subjective experience of how one is treated is associated with emotional components (Evans et al., 2001). Research focusing on children’s affective responses to unfair experiences has predominately found that children usually react negatively. Mikula et al. (1998) showed that negative emotions elicited in situations involving unfair practices were more intense and longer lasting than situations without this element.

Smetana, Toth, Cicchetti, Bruce, Kane & Daddis (1999) observed that children judged victims of unfairness as more likely to feel sad, scared or angry, and that the unfairness would cause more sadness than other types of harm. Another affective outcome for children occurs when they are the beneficiaries of an unfair event, for example, a sibling being punished for something another child has done. Some children feel guilty (Evans et al., 2001), but by no means all children. Dunn et al. (1995) found in their study of kindergarten and first grade children that most children reported that if a child won a game and in doing so had cheated, the child would feel happy.

Children’s perceptions of parental fairness within family discipline situations are important. These can be related to important facets of socialisation (Kochanska, 1997) and to general effects of the consequences for children’s behaviour (Evans et al., 2001).

One of the most common experiences of unfairness children are likely to encounter is that of unfair punishment – being punished for something that they did not do or that was not their fault…The positive and negative consequences of our actions represent a fundamental aspect of everyday experience, but in a social context they are rarely consistent or balanced. Thus, children’s cognitive judgements of unfair reward and punishment and their feelings evoked by such experiences could provide insight into the shaping of prosocial and antisocial behaviour. (Evans et al., 2001, p. 214)
A small number of studies have incorporated assessments on children's ability to show emotional empathy towards others. Barker, Barthelemy and Kurdek (1993) asked children to act out how they thought their parents might react if the parent experienced a particular emotion, for example, anger. Children who were rated by teachers as more socially skilled, more cooperative and more empathic towards peers tended to evaluate parents as comforting and displaying positive emotions. The same children also reported that their parents were more likely to openly discuss emotions with them, compared with children who perceived their parents as displaying negative emotions. Lopez et al. (2001) looked at the association between parental discipline styles experienced during childhood and levels of empathy and moral reasoning during early adulthood (19-year-olds). They found that the use of physical punishment and low use of induction were associated with low levels of empathy. Young adults who experienced high levels of physical punishment during childhood displayed low levels of moral development, and females reported higher levels of emotional empathy than males.

Most studies divide parental disciplinary interventions techniques into three categories: power assertion, love withdrawal and induction:

Power assertion involves the use of physical discipline, force, threat, and the removal of privileges or material possessions with the child to change the child’s behaviour. Love withdrawal involves ignoring or isolating the child, refusing to speak to the child, and explicitly stating a dislike for the child. Induction involves the parental use of reasoning, the communication of clear standards of behaviour, and an emphasis on intentions, feelings, and reparation. (Barnett, Quackenbush & Sinisi, 1996, p. 1)

Induction interventions may contain a small power assertive component, but are designed to obtain the child’s attention without eliciting a strong affective response from the child (Hoffman, 1994). Horton et al., (2001) evaluated parent-child inductive discipline situations with 80 girls and 79 boys. Hypothetical situations focused on the type of induction delivered: parent-orientated, which focused on how the transgressor’s behaviour affected the parent, and victim-orientated, which focused on the transgressor’s attention to how the negative
behaviour affected the other peer involved. Children evaluated the given scenarios in terms of the fairness, justification, and appropriateness of the discipline. The hypothetical scenarios depicted the type of transgression committed; physical - a child pushing another into the mud, and psychological – a child making fun of another child’s clothes and calling them names. Younger children found parent-orientated discipline to be more appropriate than the older children. Conversely, the older children found that discipline which focused the child’s attention on the plight of the victim was more acceptable than discipline which focused on the parent’s feelings. Girls were more likely to find parent-orientated induction fairer than boys; while boys evaluated victim-orientated discipline as fairer than girls.

Barnett et al. (1996) in their study of 663 children and young people (second grade to college undergraduates) found that children’s, adolescents’, and young adults’ perceptions of power assertion, love withdrawal, and induction were influenced by their gender and age, as well as by the gender of the child-transgressor and the parent-disciplinarian. They also found that children tended to favour disciplinary actions, within the scenarios presented, which were reported to be similar to their own experiences of parental disciplinary techniques. Induction was regarded as more effective for girls than boys in suppressing behaviour when parents were absent. In contrast, boys responded better to the use of power assertion than girls. Father’s use of induction was rated more favourably when used with girls, and fathers’ power assertion was rated more favourably when used with boys. The youngest participants rated inductive parents as less sensitive and fair than the older children and young adults in the study.

Seigal and Barclay (1985) asked 30 boys and 30 girls in four age groups (6, 8, 12 and 17 years of age) to evaluate fathers disciplinary techniques using induction, physical punishment, love withdrawal and permissiveness. They found that the three older age groups evaluated both inductive and physical
punishment more favourably than love withdrawal and permissive techniques. The youngest children had no clear preferences. Boys generally evaluated fathers more favourably than girls especially when fathers used physical punishment as a means of discipline in cases of simple disobedience and physical self harm. There was a correlation between the younger boys self-reports of empathy and their positive ratings of their fathers’ inductive disciplinary technique. Seigal and Barclay (1985) also found that in no age group was induction evaluated more highly than physical punishment for all of the given situations. In a previous study by Seigal & Cowan (1984) children were asked to evaluate mothers’ disciplinary techniques over a range of situations in which the culprit was described as having transgressed. They found that, regardless of age, children gave strong approval of the use of induction techniques and mild approval for use of physical punishment by mothers.

Lytton and Romney (1991) undertook a meta-analysis of 172 studies to “resolve the conflict between previous narrative reviews on whether parents make systematic differences in their rearing of boys and girls” (p. 267). They found that physical punishment was applied significantly more to boys and that fathers seemed to differentiate between boys and girls more than mothers when using discipline. Sorbring et al. (2003) found that boys believed that they would receive more physical punishment and less induction than girls. Children believed their parents would choose different responses if they themselves were of the other sex than their parents. Conversely, the responses from children with a sibling of the other sex did not reveal any gender differences in response to their parents’ discipline techniques. Sorbring et al. (2003) comment on gender socialisation:

Family patterns and family activities within the home, as well as parents’ attitudes and behaviour, influence the strength and rigidity of the gender schema. (pp. 54-55)

The gender differences found in children’s perceptions of their upbringing follow classic gender stereotype patterns (Barnett et al., 1996). The attributions associated with the father’s socialisation behaviour, as suggested by Sorbring et
al. (2003), may differ from those associated with the mother’s (Siegal & Barclay, 1985), as daughters are often treated more gently by fathers than are sons, girls may perceive power assertion as unexpected and threatening. Internalisation may be affected by children’s differential evaluations and expectations of fathers and mothers in ways similar to adults’ expectation-linked attributions for achievement behaviour of males and females (Siegal & Barclay, 1985). The overall extent to which fathers’ socialisation behaviour elicits internal attributions may be influenced by his involvement in child-rearing and the pattern of parenting that exists in the family (Siegal & Barclay, 1985). Young children often lack verbal reasoning skills and role-taking abilities to fully understand inductive disciplinary attempts, so they may not see the relative advantages of this technique (and the relative disadvantages of alternative techniques) as older individuals do (Barnett et al., 1996). Therefore, it is not surprising that children, as they grow older, tend to become more responsive to non-punitive socialisation techniques from parents which involve more verbal reasoning. Children often report their intention to use the same disciplinary techniques as their parents which has implications for the intergenerational transmission of disciplinary techniques. However, this was not the case in ‘child perspective studies’ in the United Kingdom. Children in these studies said that they did not want to physically punish their own children when they became parents themselves (Cutting, 2001; Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998).

Time out is another family discipline technique used with children in a number of different settings, including the home, childcare facilities, special educational facilities and, in some cases, psychiatric facilities. Time out has been defined as “a behaviour-reduction technique involving contingent withdrawal from reinforcing stimuli for a specified period of time” (Costenbader & Reading-Brown, 1995, p. 353). Readdick and Chapman (2000) elicited pre-schoolers perceptions of the use of time out in eleven early childhood centres using observations and a subsequent interview with the children after being placed in time-out. They found that children expressed largely negative feelings about being placed in time out.
and saw this discipline technique as being a punishment rather than instructional. The children also reported that they felt alone, safe and disliked by the teacher. Some children, however, reported that they had deserved time out and would not repeat the behaviour. Some children did not recall why they had been in time out or what they had done to be placed in time out. The observations showed that children were put in time out for primarily non-aggressive, non-compliant behaviour that annoyed staff, rather than the recommended use for children who were aggressive or out of control. Delaney (1999) suggested that time out is a useful tool, but only when used carefully, and with an understanding of just how it should help the child.

**Children’s views on physical punishment**

Many studies have asked children about physical punishment in conjunction with other parental disciplinary techniques when discussing children’s transgressions. Few studies have asked children about their views on physical punishment exclusively. An early study by Ritchie, Paine & Tourelle (1980) used questionnaires to elicit children’s views on physical punishment. More recently, Willow & Hyder (1998), Children in Scotland (2000); Cutting (2001), Dobbs (2002), Horgan (2002) and Crowley & Vulliamy (2003) have all carried out research with children eliciting their views on the use of physical punishment. While a number of researchers include the use of physical punishment in school settings (Anderson & Payne, 1994; Kennedy, 1995), this review will exclude these.

As a result of the English government announcing, in 1997, that it intended to consult the public on reforming the law on reasonable chastisement, the National Children's Bureau and Save the Children wanted to ensure that children contributed to this debate (Willow & Hyder, 1998). Consequently, in 1998, Willow and Hyder (1998) elicited views on physical punishment from 76 children, aged between 5 to 7 years. They used 16 small discussion groups in six schools and two summer play schemes. A storybook was used with a central
character called Splodge to whom the children could relate. Splodge was introduced to the children as not knowing much about our world. To help Splodge understand smacking, a series of questions were put to groups of children (Willow & Hyder, 1998).

In Northern Ireland, 189 children aged between 4 and 11 years of age were asked what they thought about smacking (Horgan, 2002). One hundred and twenty-one children answered four questions posted out to after-school clubs. These questions asked children why they thought adults hit children, how children feel after being hit, alternatives to hitting and whether or not it was right or wrong for adults to hit children and the reasons for their answers. Sixty eight other children were spoken to using the Splodge character and questions used in the Willow and Hyder (1998) study. The children’s responses were reported to the Office of Law Reform and to politicians in Northern Ireland (Horgan, 2002).

In New Zealand, Dobbs (2002) adapted the Splodge story book to elicit the views of ten children aged between 5 and 7 years using two focus groups about the use of physical punishment. Children in Scotland (2000) and Cutting (2001) used focus groups in Scotland. The Children in Scotland (2000) consultation with 40 children and young people aged between 8 and 16 years of age, was prompted by the Scottish Executive’s consultation paper on Physical Punishment of Children in Scotland (2000). Cutting’s (2001) study involved asking 1319 Scottish children and young people between the ages of 6 and 18 years about their views on physical punishment using focus groups and questionnaires. The questionnaire used the same questions as Horgan (2002). Scenarios were read to children in the focus groups and they were then asked to comment on how they thought the adult in the story would react to the child’s misbehaviour. Cutting (2001) reported that for each scenario a number of children in each group felt that the adult would respond by using physical punishment.
Crowley & Vulliamy (2003) undertook a study for Save the Children in Wales which elicited children’s views on physical punishment. The consultation with the children followed Willow & Hyder’s (1998) methodology using the Splodge story book. The aim of the study was “to lobby for the United Kingdom law to be changed to outlaw the physical punishment of children” (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003, p. 2). Seventy seven children aged between 4 and 10 years took part in the focus groups. The children were from six different areas of Wales and the research was undertaken in three after-school clubs and three primary schools.

The studies carried out in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and New Zealand had socially and culturally diverse populations to reflect the diversity of each country and had similar proportions of male and female participants. The majority of children who participated in these studies were reported to be aged between 5 and 12 years old. The results from all these studies are very similar. The children and young people described a smack as a hit, or a very hard hit. In the Crowley & Vulliamy (2003) study children reported that a smack was a hit often delivered with some degree of force and, sometimes using some sort of implement. In all the studies, children reported both the physical and emotional impact of being smacked. For example, hitting hurts “inside your body”, and physically, “it gives you a big red mark and it stings” (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003, p. 20). Children also said that smacking makes children feel scared, sad and angry (Horgan, 2002). In the Cutting (2001) study, children used over 40 different adjectives to describe how being smacked made them feel, for example, “emotionally hurt, unhappy, upset, afraid, intimidated, uncared for and resentful” (p. 14). Children also reported that being smacked affected their relationship with the person who smacked them: “you feel that you don’t like you parents anymore” (Willow & Hyder, 1998, p. 47) and “they feel that nobody loves them” (Horgan, 2002, p. 8).
The main reasons reported by children for being smacked included being violent to others (mainly siblings), naughty, disobedient, or not listening to their parents’ instructions (Dobbs, 2002; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Horgan (2002) reported that the older children commented that children were hit because of the way the adult was feeling and not necessarily because of what the child had done. Willow and Hyder (1998) comment:

The main reason children reported being smacked was for being violent to themselves. This is a powerful message – that it is not okay for them to hurt others, but it is okay for a larger person to hurt them. It is interesting to consider the impact of this contradictory message on children: a child is told that it is wrong to hurt someone then is hurt in response. (Willow & Hyder, 1998, p. 32)

Cutting (2001) reported some feelings of confusion from the children over this issue. Some children commented that adults hitting children sets a bad example - “It gives them a bad example to use violence to sort out an argument” (Cutting, 2001, p. 20) and “then when they grow up, they'll smack their children and those children will smack their children and it will go on and on” (Willow & Hyder, 1998, p. 71).

Children said that they were mainly smacked indoors. Crowley and Vulliamy (2003) reported that children indicated they felt embarrassed and humiliated if they were smacked in a public place. They knew adults did not want to be seen hitting them. Children reported being smacked on the bottom, hands, arms, back and around or on the head. Children from the Scottish study (Cutting, 2001) voiced their concern as to the potential dangers of adults hitting children, as did the children in Wales (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003). Dobbs (2002) argued that “given the acknowledged dangers of hitting children about the head, it was concerning that children talked about being hit on their face “(p. 55). Willow and Hyder (1998), Dobbs (2002) and Crowley and Vulliamy (2003) asked children who usually smacks children. The results showed that children were mostly smacked by parents. However, the children also said that they were smacked by grandparents, uncles, aunts, babysitters, cousins and some stated that their teachers smacked them.
When asked how children and adults felt and acted after the smacking incident, children reported reacting negatively to being smacked. Most commonly, after a smack children cried and became upset (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Willow & Hyder, 1998), with the predominant feeling described by children as one of sadness. Some children reporting feeling scared of being smacked again (Dobbs, 2002). Children associated being smacked with angry or bad-tempered adults; many of them said that adults get cross or look mad (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Dobbs, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). A large number of children reported that they thought that the adults felt sorry, or regretted smacking children (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Dobbs, 2002; Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Some children reported that smacking made their behaviour worse and others felt that the child might change their behaviour.

Children were asked why children don’t smack adults and why adults don’t smack each other. Children said they did not smack parents due to their fear of being smacked back harder, and because of the size difference between adults and children (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Dobbs, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Children said that adults don’t smack each other because they know better, are too big too smack, can control themselves, would get a divorce, know how to act when other people are around, yell instead, would get into trouble, and love and care about each other (Dobbs, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). The majority of children did not see smacking as something that adults do to each other as they perceived adults as liking each other and behaving well towards each other (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003). A small number of children commented that adults do smack each other.

A number of alternatives were given by children to smacking. Most of these involved withdrawals of privileges, timeout, being grounded, apologizing and doing extra jobs for the adult (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Horgan (2002) reported that over a quarter of the children (mainly 9 to 11 year old girls) said that helping children
understand what they did wrong by talking to the child was a good alternative to smacking. Cutting (2001) reported that 94% of children gave alternatives to smacking that the children felt would be preferable. Asked whether or not the children would smack their own children, Willow and Hyde (1998) reported that half the children said they would not smack their children. Most of the children in Dobbs’ (2002) and Horgan’s (2002) studies said they would not smack their children when they were adults, as did two-thirds of the children from the Crowley and Vulliamy (2003) study. The vast majority of children from all these studies reported that smacking was wrong as it hurt children both physically and emotionally.

Children were asked how we could stop children being smacked. Willow and Hyde (1998) and Dobbs (2002) reported that children appeared to accept responsibility for being smacked and may have internalised strong messages from adults that children are smacked because of their own actions, rather than any responsibility resting with their parents. Crowley and Vulliamy (2003) reported that children had mixed views as to whether or not children or adults should be the target for reform, but some children clearly accepted that children have the major responsibility to stop adults smacking them. Some children wanted to try and persuade adults to stop smacking by using the media, or wanted to encourage the use of alternative discipline strategies. The older children thought a legal process might be best; eleven children from the Willow and Hyde (1998) also supported this view.

One study has been carried out in the United States by Graziano, Hamblen and Plante (1996) with children and their parents. This study showed that whilst both children and parents agreed on the type, frequency and severity of the physical punishment used, the children reported that the physical and emotional impact of the disciplinary act was greater on them than what their parents judged to be the impact. The children reported that they were hit frequently and did not like being hit because it made them feel hurt, angry and
upset. Children indicated that being hit was considered to be part of being a child.

**Summary**

Children and young people are able to differentiate between moral, social-conventional and prudential transgressions and to articulate which transgression type they consider to be more severe than others. Moral transgressions were regarded as the most serious type of transgression, especially with younger children. Younger children accept a broader range of disciplinary techniques from parents, including physical punishment. However, younger children are more likely to believe that smacking children is wrong as it hurts children physically and emotionally. Studies on children’s views on parental techniques (induction, love withdrawal and power assertion) reported gender differences in the discipline technique used and children’s experiences of different forms of discipline by parents. The type of induction delivered had an age effect with the younger children reporting parent-orientated discipline as being more effective, whilst older children reported that peer/victim - orientated discipline was more effective. Both boys and girls reported that boys were more likely to meet with sterner discipline methods, and that fathers are more likely to use more severe discipline methods than mothers.

Lack of empathy to others by children was related to being physically punished and the low use of induction. Parental unfairness was seen by children as having negative emotional effects. Situations involving unfair practices were seen as more intense and lasted longer for children than situations without this element.

Studies eliciting children’s own perceptions on smacking show that children’s views challenge a number of commonly held adult beliefs and assumptions about the use of physical punishment on children. Children were clear that smacking was hitting and smacking hurt both physically and
emotionally. Children associated smacking with angry adults who often later felt sorry and regretted smacking their children. Children also reported being smacked on or around the head by angry parents. A very small number of children reported being smacked when in potentially dangerous situations.

The literature indicates that whilst smacking may interrupt bad behaviour, there are other negative effects. The vast majority of children said that smacking was wrong and came up with a number of alternatives to smacking that they believed would make them behave better and be a more effective alternative to smacking. Most of the children indicated that they do not plan to use physical punishment on their own children. However, some children in these studies were confused about the fact that they thought smacking was wrong yet their parents smacked them. Some indicated that whilst they disliked smacking, there was an acceptance that it was a parental right and an inevitable part of parenting. These studies on children’s direct responses to the use of physical punishment, and those studies on children views about other aspects of family discipline, show clearly that children and young people can express comprehensive views on their experiences of parental disciplinary techniques.
CHAPTER FOUR

Physical punishment: A global perspective

Nothing is a clearer statement of the position that children occupy in society, a clearer badge of the status of childhood, than the fact that children alone of all people in society can be hit with impunity. There is probably no more significant or symbolic step that can be taken to advance both status and protection of children than to outlaw the practice of physical punishment. Much child abuse, we know, is physical punishment gone awfully wrong. (Freeman, 1996, p. 36)

Introduction

A wide range of disciplinary techniques are used with children, including physical punishment. This chapter explores the issues surrounding the use of physical punishment on children as this is the most commonly used but contentious, form of family discipline. It also examines the complexities of defining physical punishment and will consider the social and legal mechanisms that sanction its use. The characteristics of parents who deliver and children who receive, physical punishment will be discussed. The prevalence of its use and effects will also be explored.

Is physical punishment an act of violence?

Defining physical discipline of children is a difficult business as it is a phenomenon which attracts many connotations, ranging from gentle to severe manifestations. (Gough & Reavey, 1997, p. 417)

Acts of physical violence by adults on children can range from mild slaps to extremes of injurious, even deadly attacks. Violence at the higher end of the continuum is readily labelled as abusive and easily defined as acts of violence; acts at the lower end of the continuum are generally accepted as appropriate discipline by parents to help their children to develop properly (Graziano, 1994). Public perceptions of what constitutes physical punishment and physical abuse vary widely and there is no national or scientific consensus on what constitute acceptable definitions or levels of physical punishment (Whipple & Richey, 1996). Almost all research on violence against children has focused on the abusive end
of the continuum. Graziano (1994) questions the use of subabusive violence, which he defines as those acts of violence that do not give rise to the common definition of abuse. He comments that:

The fact parents engage in any violence at all against their children raises disturbing questions about the nature of the parent-child relationship. A traditional belief is that the parent-child relationship involves natural protection for the child from injury. Given that nearly all parents deliberately cause their children physical pain at some time ... Any assumption of the inherent protectiveness of the parenting role should be examined ... Research is needed to help us understand the apparent contradictions between the ideal concepts of the nurturing-protective parent role and the common reality of parent-inflicted pain and injury on the child. (Graziano, 1994, p. 414)

Leach (1999) observes that deliberately inflicted pain is pivotal to the definitions that structure most modern researchers' work on parental discipline in general and physical punishment in particular:

There is a widespread assumption that ordinary smacking does not really hurt. But although nobody wants to talk – or even think – about hurting small children on purpose, that is the point of smacking or spanking them. No pain, no punishment. (p. 12)

Newson, Favell and Rincover (1983) are clear that attempts to minimise the pain of physical punishment were misguided. If physical punishment is to be used, it has to hurt. Leach (1999) asserts that supporters of a parents' right to smack still refer to loving taps and little smacks. References to pain or fear of pain, is rejected by parents who support their right to smack their children. Smith (1995) asked mothers whether they thought they had hurt their children the last time they smacked them. Fifteen percent reported that they thought that they hurt their under one-year-olds, and more than 50% stated that they had hurt their four-year-olds. Straus (1994) also discussed the use of deliberately inflicted pain when defining corporal punishment (physical punishment):

Corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child’s behaviour. This definition mentions the intention of causing a child to experience pain for two reasons. The first is to distinguish it from acts that have other purposes but that also may cause pain, such as putting antiseptic on a cut. The second reason is to make clear the fact that causing pain is intentional. This may seem obvious, but our culture leads people to focus on why the child was
hit, rather than the fact that hitting hurts … If you don’t stop crying, I’ll give you something to cry about. (Straus, 1994, p. 4)

Straus (1994) defines violence “as an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person” (p. 7). In adult terms this intention to cause pain is seen as a criminal act. However, used against children, in many countries, it is legally sanctioned provided the force is reasonable and for the purpose of correction (Smith et al., 2004). Whilst many terms are used throughout the literature - for example, physical discipline, physical punishment, subabusive violence or corporal punishment - the purpose and the ‘act’ are the same, to inflict pain, with pain being the ‘treatment’. CYF, New Zealand’s statutory agency for ensuring children’s safety and well being, contends whether or not people are talking about a little smack or a good spanking, hitting children is a form of violence (Thompson, 2000).

For the majority of parents in New Zealand physical punishment includes deliberately inflicted smacking, hitting, slapping, grabbing, pushing and physically restraining children for the purpose of correction, teaching and punishment (Maxwell, 1993). Examination of the definitions of, and motives for, physical punishment and acts of violence demonstrates that they are one and the same. Thus, physical punishment is violence by definition.

Global Perspective
Studies show that there is a cultural acceptance of physical punishment in many Western countries (Smith et al., 2004). In a number of countries, including New Zealand, governments are grappling with how to attend to children’s human rights and the need for protection by changing attitudes about the use of physical force in disciplining children. There is growing recognition that change is necessary if children are to receive better protection and respect for their physical integrity (EPOCH, 2002).
A nation’s legal approach to this issue may be seen to reflect its position along two of the fundamental dimensions of social relations: hierarchy and solidarity (Hamilton & Sanders, 1992). Hierarchy refers to the relationship of authority and dominance over equality. Solidarity refers to personal closeness which is represented by the extent and permanence of social ties and in the degree of collectivism in society - the commitment of the society at large to support those whom are more vulnerable or less well off. Nations whose laws sanction physical punishment of children are high on the hierarchy dimension, as physical punishment embodies total dominance and authority of parents over children and low on the solidarity dimension as the human rights of the weaker party (the child) are given only weak protection. Conversely, nations with laws prohibiting the physical punishment of children are lower on the hierarchy and higher on the solidarity dimension. Such laws express greater equality of rights between parents and children, and place limits on the dominance of the parent over the child (Durrant, Rose-Krasnor & Broberg, 2003).


**England:** The British Government accepted in 1998 that its law must change to give children better protection after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
ordered the Government to pay an English boy ten thousand pounds for failing to protect him against his stepfather who repeatedly caned him between the ages of five to eight (A v UK). The stepfather had successfully invoked the defence of reasonable chastisement. The ECHR found, and the United Kingdom accepted, that this punishment was degrading and breached the child’s human rights under Article 3 of the European Convention. In 2000 a consultation document on the use of physical punishment of children Protecting Children, Supporting Parents, was issued by the Department of Health for England (Department of Health (U.K.), 2000).

In 2003 the British Parliament’s Health Committee and Joint Committee on Human Rights both recommended repeal of the parental defence of reasonable chastisement for parents who physically punish their children. This was as a result of the Health Committee’s green paper into the death of Victoria Climbie, an 8 year old child who had died after suffering 128 separate injuries. David Hinchcliffe MP introduced into the House of Commons, in November 2003, a Bill which would remove any existing defence justifying the use of physical punishment and seeking to give children the same protection under the law as adults if hit. On the 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 2004 the House of Commons voted on this new clause to abolish the legal defence of reasonable chastisement, but it was defeated (Taylor, 2004).

\textbf{Scotland:} Following the case of A v UK, and publication of England’s consultation document, the Scottish government issued a consultation paper on the physical punishment of children in Scotland. After the publication of this consultation, Scottish Executive White Paper 2001, the Scottish Executive announced its intentions to provide more clarity for adults and greater protection for children by outlining the factors to guide courts when determining the reasonableness of punishment. The Executive suggested prohibiting blows to the head, shaking and the use of implements. It also suggested the prohibiting of the physical punishment of children up to and including the age of two (Taylor, 2004).
These proposals were introduced into the Scottish Parliament in March 2002 via the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. The banning of the blows to the head, shaking and the use of implements was supported, but the age prohibition was not. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act came into force in October 2003 and abandoned the age prohibition and instead introduced the concept of ‘justifiable assault’ of children (Taylor, 2004). Section 51 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act (2003) bans the use of implements to hit children, shaking and blows to the head.

**Canada:** The legal status of physical punishment in child welfare, childcare and education varies by jurisdiction and statute across the different territories, with federal legislation being applicable across all territories and provinces. Section 43 of the Criminal Code provides a defence to assaults that justifies the use of reasonable force for correction of children by teachers, parents or persons standing in the place of parents. In 1998 the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and Law (CFCYL) started an action in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice challenging the constitutionality of section 43 arguing it violated Canada’s Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This challenge was dismissed by the Superior Court in 2002. CFCYL then applied to the Supreme Court of Canada. In January 2004 six judges upheld the constitutionality of section 43 (Taylor, 2004).

**United States of America:** Minnesota is the only state in the United States of America that has statutory provisions in state law that implies that parental physical punishment could be prosecuted as assault. America is not a signatory to UNCROC.

**Australia:** In New South Wales the Crimes Amendment (Child Protection Physical Mistreatment) Act was introduced in 2001. This Act sets out to define unreasonable physical punishment which includes; if force is applied to a child’s head, neck or any other part of the body that may cause the child harm for more
than a short period. Child advocates believe this Act is ambiguous. In Tasmania section 50 of the Tasmanian Criminal Code provides a defence that can be raised in relation to any charge involving the application of force to a child by a parent or person in place of a parent. Parents can use physical punishment as long as the intention is for discipline and the force used is reasonable in the circumstance. In 2001, the Children’s Commissioner recommended repeal of section 50 as she argued that there are no clear guidance for parents as to what levels of physical punishment is acceptable. She also advocated for the promotion of non-violent discipline methods through education. The Tasmania Law Reform Institute responded by publishing an Issues Paper (Gawlik, Henning & Warner, 2002). Their final report was released in 2003 and recommended two options for reform: prohibit the use of physical punishment; or clarify the law by further defining what type and/or degree of punishment are reasonable or unreasonable (Taylor, 2004). These recommendations are still being reviewed by Parliament.

**South Africa:** The South African Law Commission has published proposals for a new Children’s Bill which includes the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement (EPOCH, 2002).

**Sweden:** Sweden was the first country in the world to ban the use of physical punishment in 1979. It was encouraged to do so after evidence from an extensive research project showed that stopping all physical punishment was the gateway to preventing child abuse. The goals of the ban were to alter public attitudes towards physical punishment, establish a clear framework for parent education and support, and to facilitate an earlier and less intrusive intervention in child protection cases (Newell, 1999).

Sweden has long recognised that children have the same rights to protection as those of adults. Sweden abolished corporal punishment from secondary schools in 1928. In 1957, the defence to corrective assault was
removed from the Penal Code. And in 1979 an explicit statement was added to the Civil Code that made it clear that physical punishment was not permitted (Durrant, 2004). Within Sweden, physical punishment is seen at best as socially unacceptable and at worst, as a form of child abuse (Gallaway, 2000). Other Nordic countries have followed Sweden’s lead and physical punishment is no longer a normative parenting practice.

**New Zealand:** It is legal to use physical force on children as long as it is for the purpose of correcting the child’s behaviour and the force used is deemed reasonable under section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961. The UN Committee has criticised the New Zealand Government, in both 1997 and 2003, for its failure to repeal section 59 and to comply with Article 19 of UNCROC. The government has reviewed the current legislation and whilst a decision has not been made to amend or repeal it, the matter is still under review. The New Zealand government has initiated a $10.8 million education programme called **SKIP** to support positive parenting on the premise that education of parents and the public is needed prior to any law reform. However, public opinion on the use of physical punishment has not changed over the last 4 decades in New Zealand (Ritchie, 2004). Therefore a number of organisations, for example, Save the Child, UNICEF and EPOCH, are calling for the repeal of section 59 to be coupled with public education as occurred in Sweden. New Zealand’s Children’s Commissioner has publicity endorsed the removal of section 59. A recent review of research (Smith et al., 2004) on the use and effects of physical punishment supports a public education campaign in association with legal reform.

**The New Zealand and Swedish Models** - When comparing Sweden’s and New Zealand’s legislation on physical punishment questions are raised regarding differences in parental beliefs and behaviour that differ in their legal expressions of family hierarchy and solidarity as discussed by Durrant et al. (2003). Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961, reads:
Domestic discipline (1) every parent [of a child and subject to subsection (3) of this section, every person in place of a parent of a child is justified in using force by way of correction towards a child], if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances.

(2) The reasonableness of the force used is a question of fact.
(3) Nothing in subsection (1) if this section justifies the use of force towards a child in contravention of section 139A of the Education Act 1989.

The Swedish legislation reads:

Children are entitled to care, security and a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment. (Parenthood and Guardianship Code, Sweden, 1979)

The New Zealand legal system views children as parents' possessions, with no autonomous legal rights; whereas the Swedish legislation regards children as legal entities whose vulnerability merits special legal protection.

**Defining ‘reasonable’**

A number of governments have been attempting to try and provide better protection for children, without fully banning the use of physical punishment. They seek to amend legislation by more clearly defining the reasonable force that can be used against children and yet remain lawful. There is fear within those countries still to ban physical punishment that it would criminalise parents and intrude into family life if this was banned. A number of governments believe that public opinion must change before legislation can be reformed (EPOCH, 2001).

Research shows that in Sweden prosecutions for assaults on children have declined, most markedly in younger parents who themselves have had a violence-free childhood (Durrant, 2000). In Germany, there have been no prosecutions of parents since the legislation was enacted (UNICEF, 2003). Informal reports from other countries with bans on physical punishment of children indicate that there has been no increase in prosecutions for minor assaults. However, parent support services have increased and occurrences of child abuse related deaths have reduced (EPOCH, 2001).
The concept of reasonable force has its roots in traditional views of children and childhood (Dobbs, 2002). Defining reasonable force is problematic - at what age should a child be hit, what with, how often, and in what circumstances by whom? The defence of reasonable force works against aims to encourage positive parental discipline in all families whilst providing effective child protection. Newell (1999) suggests that the most common acts of family violence are direct violence by adult family members on children. Public education promoting positive discipline in the context of a legal framework which condones or defines reasonable force, inevitably promotes the message ‘carry on smacking’, which renders the message ineffective (Children are Unbeatable Alliance, 2000). The removal of reasonable force would eliminate the current dangerous confusion over what is acceptable and provide a clear basis for child protection. Defining reasonable force will do nothing to provide guidance to parents, and may even intensify the current confusion over what forms of punishment are ‘reasonable’ (Dobbs, 2002). EPOCH New Zealand believes that section 59 is a confusing and inconsistent legal provision which the Courts have difficulty interpreting consistently (Hancock, 2004). Section 59 is also inconsistent with the intent of the Domestic Violence Act 1995. It leads to the anomalous situation where a child can be considered abused if s/he witnesses a parent being hit, but not necessarily considered to be abused if he or she is hit (Ludbrook & Wood, 1999).

The care and protection principles in section 13 (a) of the CYPF Act, 1989 state that children and young persons must be protected from harm, their rights upheld and their welfare protected. The linchpin to the Act is the ‘paramountcy principle’, which ensures that any decisions made within the Act have the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration. Section 59 is inconsistent with these principles (Dobbs, 2001b). It fails to uphold children’s basic human rights because it sanctions the use of physical force on children. As long as a degree of force is permitted it is possible for parents to miscalculate the extent to which use of force is legal, let alone ‘safe’. In New Zealand, the existence of the
defence of ‘reasonable force’ prevents child protection workers supporting parents at risk of abusing their children from giving a clear message that hitting and hurting children is not only wrong, but unlawful. The point is being missed - hitting people is wrong - and children are people too (Newell, 1989). Lansdown (1994) argues that:

The social and legal endorsement of hitting children is one of the most symbolic indications of their low status in our society and until we cease to endorse it as legitimate punishment, we will continue to violate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and perpetuate children’s vulnerability to the abuse of adults. (Lansdown, 1994, p. 43)

The use of physical punishment

There has been recent focus on the effects on children witnessing family violence (Maxwell, 1994; Maxwell & Carroll-Lind, 1998). However, the most common acts of family violence are direct violence by adult family members on children, commencing with babies (Newell, 1999). In New Zealand 70% of parents reported using physical punishment on their children (Maxwell, 1993) and 80% of the public agreed that the law should permit parents to smack a child (Carswell, 2001). Ritchie (2004) reports that over the four decades that they have researched parenting practices in New Zealand “parental use of physical punishment continues at much the same level in spite of campaigns to educate parents about safer and more effective alternatives to smacking” (p.1). Research from the United Kingdom suggests 90% of parents use physical punishment on their children (Leach, 1999), as do 90% of American parents (Straus, Sugarman & Giles-Sims, 1997). In Canada estimates of the proportion of parents who have smacked their children have been as high as 88% (Durrant et al., 2003). The accuracy in making assessments on the prevalence of physical punishment of children is difficult to measure as it occurs in conditions of privacy and relies largely on self-reports of adults (Dobbs, 2002). Nobes and Smith (1997) report that children in two-parent families are physically punished more than they are by either mothers or fathers alone. Therefore, they contend that reports from only one parent in each family will underestimate the extent of physical punishment of children. However, physical punishment is not universally practiced. In a study of
90 societies, Levinson (1989, cited in Durrant et al., 2003) found it to be present in 74%.

**Family characteristics and the use of physical punishment**

Research findings relating to the relationship between ethnic group membership and the use of physical punishment have been inconclusive and contradictory (Dietz, 2000; Smith et al., 2004). For example, Wolfner and Gelles (1993) found black parents more likely to use physical punishment while Gunnoe and Mariner (1997) found white students were more likely than Hispanic students to have experienced physical punishment. In New Zealand, Maxwell (1993) found that Maori and Pacific Island families were more likely to endorse hitting than Pakeha, but the difference was not significant. She stated: “there is no evidence to support the notion of major cultural differences in the use of physical punishment among the main ethnic groups living in New Zealand” (p. 11). An evaluation by CYF of their *Alternatives to Smacking* campaign found that New Zealand Europeans were more likely to endorse the use of physical punishment on children than Maori or Pacific Island peoples (Smith et al., 2004).

Research that examined the relationship between SES and the use of physical punishment revealed that there might be class differences in the reasons for the use of physical punishment (Dietz, 2000). However, Gershoff (2002) argues that findings on the effects of SES are contradictory because of the different variables used to define SES. In New Zealand, Woodward and Fergusson (2002) found no evidence of a relationship between SES based on occupation but found that low income was associated with higher levels of the use of physical punishment. Maxwell (1993) reported that levels of education made little difference to the frequency with which physical punishment was used. Oakes (1984) reports those studies that have formally tested the intelligence of the parents who abuse their children have shown conflicting results. Even though the literature shows inconsistencies and inconclusive results relating to the circumstances that may surround the use of physical punishment on children,
70% of parents in New Zealand are not poor, are not stressed, are not uneducated and are not from one ethnic group (Dobbs, 2002). Proponents of the use of physical punishment within New Zealand, Adhar and Allan (2001), argue that research into the harmful effects of physical punishment remains inconclusive. The review carried out by Smith et al. (2004) contradicts this view. Moreover, there is no conclusive research to suggest that physical punishment does any good (Dobbs, 2001b).

**Physical punishment, physical abuse and child protection**

In 2003, CYF received 33,000 care and protection notifications, which is equivalent to 4% of the child population of New Zealand. A large number of these cases were of substantiated physical abuse. Gough and Reavey (1997) urge that, the pervasiveness of the use of physical punishment raises serious questions about child welfare. It is imperative for researchers interested in the rights of the child to study the mechanisms by which physical punishment is perpetuated. In New Zealand the use of physical punishment on children starts early (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). The literature reports that children aged between one and seven are most often physically punished, whilst two-year-olds are smacked more than any other age group. Hitting with a stick or strap is more common for 10 to 13 year olds. These results are comparable to findings in the United States (Wolfner & Gelles, 1993), in the United Kingdom (Nobes & Smith, 1997) and in Australia (Wightman, 1993 cited in Maxwell 1993).

Ake Edeldt, the Director of an international study of violence in children’s lives, Violence Towards Children (1979), suggests a link between physical punishment and physical abuse: “The existing social acceptance of minor physical correctives is the kingsway to a better understanding of the more violent and grave forms of child abuse” (p. 36). He maintains that there is only a difference in degree not in kind between these two groups of phenomena. If physical punishment is not abuse, most physical abuse is certainly likely to begin with physical punishment (Dobbs, 2002).
Ian Hassall (2001) New Zealand’s first Commissioner for Children, highlighted that the highest ‘risk year’ for death by homicide is your first year of life. He does not believe that the status of infants has improved since the last ‘death by abuse’ figures published by the World Health Organisation in 1993. Ten years later, the recent UNICEF (2003) report shows that New Zealand has the third highest rate of death from child homicide amongst the OECD countries, six times higher than that of Spain, Greece and Italy. In 1998, the New Zealand Ministry of Health recorded a 58% increase from 1980 to 1994 in child homicides.

By contrast Sweden has very different statistics. Between 1990 and 1996, four children were reported to have died from the effects of physical abuse; only one of these children was killed by a parent (Durrant, 1999). In the 20 years since Norway has banned physical punishment that country has lost 8 children at the hands of their parents. New Zealand has lost 200 (Ansley, 2001) with 55 deaths in the last five years (UNICEF, 2003). Child mortalities are unequivocal indicators of the levels of violence towards children. The most prevalent and best-documented risk factor for physical abuse is physical punishment by parents (Durrant, 1999; ISPCAN, 2004; Straus, 2000). Leach (1999) suggests that the literature leaves no doubt that all physical punishment carries an inbuilt risk of escalation and this is supported by the observations of many social work practitioners:

It is very noticeable that parents who injure their children, at whatever age and however seriously, more often than not relate the event to the concept of punishment, even when they accept that they went ‘too far’ (General Secretary of the British Association of Social Workers, 1987 cited in Leach, 1999, p. 11).

In Gershoff’s (2002) meta-analysis of 84 studies she revisited the issue of whether current knowledge is sufficient to condemn the use of physical punishment. She concluded that the lack of demonstrable positive effects and the potential links to physical abuse provide an argument for discouraging physical punishment in favour of alternative methods of discipline. Physical punishment, particularly its unique juxtapositions of love and pain and submission with anger,
is associated with a wide range of emotional and mental health problems later in life (Leach, 1999). There is evidence that the use of physical punishment to reduce anti-social behaviour produces the opposite effect in the long term (Gershoff, 2002; Smith et al., 2004).

**Effects of physical punishment**

Physical punishment is associated with aggressive behaviour, poor academic achievement, quality of parent-child relationships, poor self-esteem and higher risk of suicide (Gershoff, 2002; Ferguson & Lynskey, 1997; Newell, 1999; Salzinger, Richards, Feldman, & Hammer, 1993; Smith et al., 2004; Straus, 1994; Straus et al., 1997). The use of physical punishment decreases children’s moral internalisation and impairs mental health in childhood (Gershoff, 2002). However, not all children who experience physical punishment turn out to be aggressive or delinquent and the absence of physical punishment does not guarantee a child’s positive development; rather it is the presence of non-physical discipline, and the use of inductive reasoning, that promotes favourable child outcomes (Gershoff, 2002). Whilst the use of physical punishment does not guarantee a poor outcome, it is clearly a risk factor for children’s development (Smith et al., 2004).

Proponents of physical punishment of children argue ‘that it does no harm’ (Adhar & Allan, 2001; Larzelere, 2000). Yet we no longer ask this question in relation to hitting women, employees or prisoners (Wood, 2001). The question, ‘does it do them any harm?’ is irrelevant. This argument was used more than a century ago to justify punishment of wives and servants. Why does it remain acceptable to retain legal defences that justify violence towards children? Slapping a child is an act of violence, just as slapping a wife is an act of violence. In New Zealand, proponents of section 59 maintain that a ‘loving smack’ by a ‘loving parent’ does no harm (Ahdar & Allan, 2001). However, adult self-report studies conclude that children are almost always hit spontaneously and almost always when parents are angry, irritable, stressed or depressed (Dietz, 2000;
Graziano, 1996; Leach, 1993; Straus, 1994). Parents reported hitting their children because the child's behaviour acted as a trigger and they had 'lost it', 'cracked' or 'struck out'. Clearly these are not loving smacks. Children have validated these research findings (Crowley & Vuillamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs, 2002; Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Children in these studies describe and associate being smacked with angry parents. They also described a smack as a 'hard' or 'very hard hit' which hurt them both physically and emotionally. Adults are not always the best judges of how hard they smack. The belief that a safe loving smack corrects behaviour is fallacious. The issue is one of rights to personal and physical integrity including protection from risk of harm. Article 19 of UNCROC is breached when parental physical punishment of children is sanctioned by the state.

Summary
Children are the only people who can be legally hit in New Zealand. Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 allows parents to physically punish children and babies as long as the force used is reasonable and for the purpose of correction. This Act gives confusing and mixed messages about family violence. It conveys the message to children, parents and society that violence is sometimes acceptable. The inherent inconsistency of retaining section 59, in both legislation and policy within New Zealand, undermines the predominant message that violence is unacceptable. Retaining or trying to define reasonable force seriously undermines the government’s positive policies for strengthening and supporting families, for child protection and for crime and violence prevention. It is incompatible with the government’s commitment to human rights and with its obligations under international law.

Proponents of the use of physical punishment argue that whether physical punishment violates children’s dignity or does them any harm has not been established due to the inconsistency of research findings. There is, however, now a substantial body of international research confirming that physical punishment is harmful to children (Gershoff, 2002; Leach, 1999; Smith, et al., 2004).
Determining whether physical punishment degrades or violates children’s rights to integrity can be established on principled grounds, in the same way that societies have assessed the acceptability of physical punishment towards other vulnerable groups.

While societal pressure to use physical punishment remains so strong and legislation supports this, parents will continue to fulfill this social norm (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993; Ritchie, 2004). In Sweden, the law passed in 1979 prohibiting physical punishment has created sufficient social pressure to make it easier for parents not to use physical punishment than to defend using it. The use of physical punishment is deeply embedded as a cultural norm in New Zealand. It is clear that it is a preventable health risk for children. The use of physical punishment does not guarantee a harmful effect, but the more that children experience physical punishment and the more frequent and severe it is, the more they are put at risk. The use of physical punishment as a method of family discipline is one which hopefully parents would avoid using if they understood its potentially harmful effects (Smith et al., 2004).
CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

If one is to represent the viewpoint of the child, it seems reasonable to argue that data ought to originate from the child at the cultural and developmental level of the child rather than from an adult report. (Sorenson, 1993, p. 4)

Introduction

This chapter provides a rationale for the use of qualitative research, including focus groups, to ascertain children’s perspectives. Issues of power, validity, ethics and context are also discussed, as well as how these were taken into consideration in the procedures used in the study. The research process adopted is then outlined.

Qualitative research

Qualitative work with children should be regarded as a process of narrative inquiry. Children are both living their stories in an experimental text, but also telling their stories as they talk to their own selves and explain themselves to others. (Butler & Shaw, 1996, p. 25)

Qualitative research is primarily descriptive and has an emphasis on process, meaning and understanding gained through the use of words and pictures (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research “speaks to issues of everyday life” (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 50) and is inclusive and connected to the human experience. It explores how social experience is created and given meaning. Bronfenbrenner (1992) believes that what is needed is information on how individuals experience their environments as well as objective data. Greig and Taylor (1999) suggest that the qualitative framework entails a methodology that endeavours to “understand the social world from the point of view of the child living in it” (p. 43).

Understanding the social world of the child entails children’s active participation in the research process:

Listening to the voice of youths … makes young people feel they are valued and contributing members of society … However … the approach is not without
complication. To overcome adult-centered interpretations and covert relations of power, it is essential to employ a methodology that allows youth to speak from, and be appreciated for, their own perspective. (Barron, 2000, pp. 44-45)

A qualitative framework for doing research is based on assumptions about the subjective nature of children, knowledge and research methods (Greig & Taylor, 1999). The intent of qualitative researchers is to promote a subjective research paradigm (Stake, 1995). Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated, but as an essential element to understanding how participants interpret and understand their experiences.

Docherty and Sandelowski (1999) suggest that there is a particular need to get inside the unique culture of childhood to understand how the world actually appears to children. Thus a qualitative framework establishes a foundation for understanding children and young people’s perspectives of family discipline. Qualitative research is fundamentally inductive in nature and influenced by the idea of grounded theory (Graue & Walsh, 1998). It is not about testing existing theory, rather it is a process in which new theory emerges from data, through, for example, focus group discussions, children’s art work, or one on one interviews (Greig & Taylor, 1999).

There are many issues requiring exploration in the development of methodologies for incorporating children’s perspectives in research:

The emergence of the new paradigm for the study of childhood has been traced along a somewhat tortuous path; as yet the paradigm is still relatively fluid and unformed, and there remain many obstacles with must be overcome before (the study of) childhood can be said to have a theoretical footing.(Prout & James, 1990, p. 21)

Since 1990 and the emergence of the sociology of childhood the field of research with children has grown gradually and now much more is known about ascertaining children’s perceptions via research.
Rationale for methodology

In undertaking research on family life, reports from parents, professionals, and observers have often relied on adult memories of childhood events, which can be inaccurate. Structured questions can oversimplify and ignore important information, and hypothetical vignettes about what may happen in families may have little to do with what actually happens in families (Smith et al., 2004). These methods have tended to stifle the expression of children’s own voices and decontextualised them from their family or institutional settings (Biddulph, 2004). Children are the most appropriate people to articulate their own experiences and views of their families. “While parents understand a great deal about their children, they are unable to know exactly how their children experience family life” (Ochiltree & Amato, 1985, p. 7).

Recent theoretical perspectives from the sociology of childhood have stimulated qualitative research with children (Mayall, 2002). This methodology respects children’s own perspectives on aspects of their lives:

The most obvious advantage of interviewing a child is that the child is the expert (the only expert) on his [her] feelings, perceptions and thoughts. Thus, if knowing the child’s point of view is important, the interview is unsurpassed as a technique for obtaining information. If an adult wants to know what or how the child is feeling, or thinking, the adults must ask the child. (Hughes, 1988, p. 91)

Thus a qualitative participatory design assisted the grounding of this research and was drawn from existing theories of children and childhood, as well as my own experience as an Evidential Interviewer CYF.

Use of focus groups

When engaging in research with children and young people it is necessary to use a methodology that will ensure that participants become active participants telling their own stories in their own way. Therefore, a focus group process was chosen as the primary means of data collection. There are many definitions of a focus group, but features like organised discussion (Kitzinger, 1994), collective activity (Powell & Single, 1996) and interaction (Kitzinger, 1995) identify their contribution
to social research. The parameters for focus groups should ensure that participants have a specific experience of or opinion about the topic under investigation; that an explicit guide is used; and that the subjective experiences of participants are explored in relation to predetermined research questions (Gibbs, 1997).

The main purpose of using focus groups is to draw upon participants’ attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a manner not feasible using other methods such as observation or questionnaire surveys (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups are useful when there are power differences between the participants and the researcher (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). Interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world (Kitzinger, 1994). Focus groups give participants an opportunity to be valued as experts and the chance to work collaboratively with the researcher. This can be empowering for many participants (Race, Hotch & Parker, 1994). Lewis (1995) suggests that focus groups encourage children to develop and articulate their thoughts, allow the researcher to view children as socially interactive beings, and enable children to assist each other to extend their thinking.

Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that focus group discussions diffuse the normal adult-child power relationship. Therefore, focus groups are ideally suited to exploring children’s perspectives on important areas in their lives. Children in a one to one setting may be inclined to understate their feelings or experiences for fear of upsetting or contradicting the views of the adult interviewer (Dobbs, 2001a). In this study, care was taken to ensure that the focus group participants did not know my views on family discipline thereby facilitating free conversation.

Focus groups have their limitations. The researcher has less control over the data acquired than in quantitative studies and one to one interviewing, and
has to allow participants to talk to each other while having little control over the interactions. Focus group research is open ended and cannot be entirely predetermined (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups may be intimidating for inarticulate or shy members.

Individuals in a focus group should not be assumed to be expressing their own definite individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. (Gibbs, 1997, p. 4)

Validity
Validity of evidence needs careful scrutiny in all research projects, and should be considered equally, but not necessarily more thoroughly, when the evidence of children is involved (Brooker, 2001). Validity (the issue of whether the research instruments – the interview questions – measure what they are intended to measure) was established in a number of ways in this study. Brooker (2001) suggests that piloting of the questions is one method to enhance validity. The questions used in this research were piloted with a small group of children prior to the research taking place. Within qualitative research validity can be assisted by the use of interpretive validity by accurately documenting participants’ viewpoints (Johnson, 2004). This was also established in this research with all participants’ viewpoints being recorded, transcribed and these transcriptions being checked by the researcher against the original tapes. Kidd and Parshall (2000) suggest that validity is enhanced in qualitative research by using focus groups as the participants should be the experts in the field of what the researcher is researching. This study assumes that children are the experts on the effects of family discipline.

Triangulation, the procedure for establishing validity in qualitative research, involves the use of data from several sources so that the research uses a constellation of evidence to substantiate conclusions (Eisner, 1991 cited in Smith, Gollop & Taylor, 1998). In this study a theoretical triangulation has been used rather than a triangulation of data. Multiple theories and perspectives have
been used to help interpret the data. Magnusson & Stattin (1998) argue that to capture the reality of individuals' lives; a person-orientated approach is preferred to the variable-orientated approach, which has been common in psychology in general and in the study of discipline, in particular:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, report detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (Creswell, 1998, p. 15)

The aim of the study was to gain knowledge of children and young people's views on family discipline and not to establish how precise their experiences or views were. Researchers must keep in mind the perspective of the participants and the larger context of the study (Krueger, 1998). The children in this research gave their own views on family discipline by responding to the questions asked in a spontaneous way which generated a lot of discussions between the children and young people within each focus group. The views that the children and young people expressed were from their own reality, whether 'true' or not, they expressed their views of their world. These views were their 'truth'.

**Interviewing Children**

Including children's voices is increasingly being attempted in research. However, there is relatively little information for researchers on how to interview children effectively (Gollop, 2000). Researchers have sought ways to conduct interviews that best enable children to convey their experiences (Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein, Larus & Clubb, 1993). There has been a small amount of research emerging on the interviewing of children in relation to alleged child sexual abuse and children's testimony in these cases (Merritt, Ornstein, & Spicker, 1994; Orbach & Lamb, 2000; Wilson, 2002). The nature of the information the researcher receives from children is dependent on the method used to gather that information (Doverborg & Pramling, 1993).
Some disciplines, such as social work, counselling, psychology and the legal profession, provide training and practical advice on conducting interviews with children. Interviewing children to gain their perspective for research purposes is considered different from interviewing children for clinical, therapeutic or legal purposes (Gollop, 2000). The key difference being that the researcher wants something from the child that may not necessarily be for the child’s immediate benefit. The context and process of interviews including the best time, location, the use of open ended questions and best techniques for building rapport with children are discussed by several researchers (Butler & Williamson, 1994; Gollop 2000; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Parker, 1984). The ethical issues of children’s rights to withdraw, confidentiality, and the informed consent process are also important.

Researchers need to have skills in ‘talking’ with children in their own language and have insight about child culture on order to enable children to speak of their experiences. As adults it is very easy to silence children. The way we look, our body language and our verbal language may contribute, even when conversations may be of a supportive nature, for example: Child: “My Mum doesn’t like me”. Researcher: “Oh, I’m sure she does”. From this example, children could perceive that the researcher is telling the child that s/he is not being believed or that his/her opinion is wrong.

The researcher should create an environment in which children wish to talk with them freely. Children very quickly ascertain when adults are not ‘tuned’ into them and they are not being understood. Children are also very aware when adults are ‘pretending’ to be interested in them. The key to collecting good data from children is to establish rapport (Gollop, 2000) and to talk with them in their own language. It would be advantageous for researchers to have training on the most effective ways to engage with children in research (Polson, 1998).

According to Hughes and Baker (1990):
When children feel respected, accepted, and safe in the interview, they respond more freely and honestly. The child’s relationship with the interviewer is the most important determinant of the child’s communicative competence and openness. (p. 56)

Adults are powerful figures in the lives of children and are often perceived by them as omnipotent and omnipresent (Garbarino & Stott, 1992). Children from an early age experience adults asking them questions to which the adult already knows the answer. Children learn that much of this questioning is ‘test’ questioning (‘I know the answer, but let’s see if you know’) to which there are right or wrong answers. Hence, in order to produce the required response, much of the children’s effort consists of working out what is in the adult’s mind (Brooker, 2001). Children are not often asked for their views (Gollop, 2000).

Most children and young people are not accustomed to being encouraged to articulate their opinions in an open and honest way; they consider them to be unimportant to anyone but themselves, a view often confirmed by adults around them in their everyday lives. (Butler & Williamson, 1994, p. 38)

In this study, significant importance was placed on how I presented myself and related to the participants. The majority of participants had not met me previously so it was important to establish rapport quickly. Parker (1984) suggests that an interview is a situation and the child’s responses will be shaped by the nature of the situation. The entire context and process of an interview can have an impact on the outcome and can influence the child’s responses. An inequality in power exists between adult interviewer and a child (Parker, 1984) with the interviewer occupying a position of authority. In order for me to elicit children’s views on family discipline I needed the power balance to shift. To assist in this process the participants needed to know why they were talking with me, the purpose of my research and why I was inviting their participation, as well as information on the process of the focus group.

Issues of power
Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that the power of adults can be reduced by employing a variety of research techniques which allow children to feel part of the research process. Preparation for interviewing children starts with the first
contact (Barker, 1990). I adopted a ‘one-down’ position or the ‘least-adult role’ discussed by Mandell (1988). In both techniques the interviewer is taking on a non-expert adult role by emphasising that he/she does not have the knowledge that the child participants have. This is the opposite of the authoritative, knowledgeable position expected of adults by children (Baker, 1990).

I told participants in each focus group that adults do not always know what children and young people think about various issues. I explained that I had some understanding of what adults thought about family discipline, but not what children thought, and I felt that it was important for children to have a say in issues that affected them. I explained that the reason I was asking them was because I felt that they would be the experts in this field and I needed their assistance with ‘my homework’ (Master’s Thesis), which was to determine what children and young people’s views were on family discipline. These explanations encouraged the children and young people to communicate in a field they felt knowledgeable about. They were positioned as the experts. Hughes (1988) suggests that children are more likely to co-operate with the interviewer when they have feelings of control.

Focus group discussions were also used to avoid giving the impression that the discussions were aimed at questioning individual children about their personal experiences of family discipline, because of the potentially sensitive nature of family discipline. Both James (1993) and Morrow and Richards (1996) argue that within focus groups children have the support of their peers thus diffusing the normal adult-child power relationship. Having the security of being among others who share many of their feelings and experiences, the participants possess a basis for sharing their views. Thus focus group interviews, when conducted in a non-threatening and permissive environment, are especially useful when working with categories of people who have historically had limited power and influence. (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993, p. 15)
The aim of the researcher was to promote responsive interactions by re-negotiating the power relations between adults and children (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Mayall, 1994). I believed that the use of focus groups would create a non-threatening environment where participants could voice their opinions and experiences, or experiences of others, freely. Davis (1998) points out that research with children should be about empowerment. He says that this is associated with children choosing to become active participants in the research process, with researchers maximising the opportunity for children to put forward their views and reducing the social distance between researcher and child.

**Ethical approval**
The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago on the 16th February, 2004.

**Method**

**Recruitment**
The Ethics Committee proposal indicated a sample size of 150 children. The 3 different age groups (5 to 7 year olds, 9 to 11 year olds and 12 to 14 year olds) were to have ten children in each focus group in each of the five locations. These locations were predominately in the upper North Island and one location was in the South Island. However, recruitment of participants in some locations proved difficult, especially for the younger age groups. A commonly held adult view that children at younger ages are less competent and would not be able to participate in a focus group could have contributed to this. Some feedback from principals indicated parental reluctance to have their children participate because of the potentially sensitive nature of the study. Other feedback indicated that parents were very interested in the topic and were happy for their children to participate.

**Criteria**
The criteria for children to participate in the study were that they had no known history of alleged child abuse or neglect and that they had sufficient verbal skills
to participate in a focus group discussion. The principals of the selected schools were asked to initially select ten children from the appropriate age group that would fit these criteria, and to then approach the parents to ascertain if they would consent to their child’s participation. The principals’ knowledge of their school communities was sufficient to achieve this goal. Principals chose to do this in a number of ways, depending on their relationship with the school community. Parents were approached directly by phone or in person, or a letter of explanation about the research project was distributed which invited parents to consent to their child’s participation in the study.

The consent process
The consent process in chronological order was agreement by the principals, Board of Trustee (B.O.T.), parents and finally the child participants themselves.

Board of Trustee and Principal consent
I initially approached the principals of each school either by telephone, e-mail or directly, to ascertain their interest in allowing me to carry out this research in their school and what that would entail. I then visited principals and discussed the research further. Principals were given an information sheet (see Appendix A) and a consent form (see Appendix B). They were also given information sheets and consent forms that parents and children would be given. The principals’ consent form had an agreement that the principal consented to select the participants. I discussed with all principals the criteria for participants, and the processes to be adopted if children made disclosures of a nature that were of concern to me in regard to child safety.

Six out of the sixteen principals approached declined to participate in this research. They cited the sensitive nature of the project and/or the lack of perceived competency of the children to explain non-participation. One principal said that his school had been involved in a recent research project and that he felt his pupils could not afford further time away from their studies.
Consents were obtained from B.O.T’s in two ways. In eight out of the 10 participating schools the principals approached their B.O.T. for consent on my behalf. An information sheet (see Appendix C) and Consent form (see Appendix D) were provided to the principal to take to the B.O.T. to assist this process. Two of the B.O.T’s requested that I attend a meeting to discuss the study. At these meetings I outlined the aim of the research, who would be doing the research and why, criteria for selection of participants, what the participants would be asked to do, what would happen to the data and the consent process for the parents and children. The B.O.T. then discussed whether they consented to the research being carried out in their school.

**Parent’s consents**

I spoke to only nine parents at the request of the principal of one school. All of these parents consented to their child’s participation in the research. The parents at the other schools were spoken to by the principals. The principals gave each parent a parent information sheet (see Appendix E), parent consent form (see Appendix F), a child information sheet, and a child consent form, along with my contact details, should they wish to discuss the research or their child’s participation further. Only one parent contacted me. He was concerned about how much school time his son would miss if his child participated in the research. By consenting to their child’s participation, parents were also agreeing to the safety procedures I had put in place. Parents were also made aware that interviews would only take place if the parent and the child consents were granted. It is difficult to ascertain the exact numbers of parents who declined their child’s participation. However, on speaking with the principals, some reported large numbers of parents who declined, while others reported that most parents had consented to their child’s participation.

**Children’s consent**

The ethics of research with children involves informed consent, confidentiality and protection (Davis, 1998). To be able to consent one needs to know what it is
one is consenting to (Dobbs, 2001). Adults should develop research approaches which are respectful and fair to children, providing information enabling them to fully comprehend what the research entails (Alderson, 1995; Beresford, 1997). Children should understand that participation is truly voluntary and that they have the power to end their participation at any time (Ross & Ross, 1984).

Consent is about selecting options negotiating them, and accepting or rejecting them. Beyond making a decision, consent is about making an informed choice and becoming emotionally committed to it. Consent can only happen when there is no force. (Alderson, 1995, p. 69)

Time was spent at the beginning of each focus group explaining to the children and young people who I was, the purpose of the study and an explanation of what we would be talking about. The children and young people were given an information sheet as part of this explanation (see Appendix G and Appendix G (1)) and were told that their parents or guardians had agreed to their participation; however, they were under no obligation to participate. The children and young people were told that if they chose not to participate there would be no consequences for them, their parents or the school. Alderson (1995) recommends that gaining parental and children’s consent is advantageous, as parental involvement at this level supports children’s consent to participate.

I felt that the children should have a good understanding about the research so I facilitated the children’s choice of participating before eliciting their consent. I read the information sheets to the younger children in the focus groups and in some cases rephrased some of the information sheet so I could better ensure that they had an understanding of the study and what they were consenting to. Some of the older children brought signed consent forms with them that had been given to their parents. However, I felt I needed to know that the young people understood what they consented to do, and gave them an opportunity to ask me any questions about the process.

The children were given the opportunity to opt out of taking part before the discussions began. I was aware that it may have been difficult for children to say
to an adult that they did not want to participate. I was also aware that peer pressure would also make this difficult for some children. All care was given to assist children and young people to feel comfortable about saying no. Children and young people’s individual written consent was gained before the focus group discussions began (see Appendix I and Appendix H (1)). None of the children or young people refused consent. The majority of children and young people appeared very interested in this topic which was considered by many as “better than doing school work”. The consent process is a continual process throughout the entire research process, so I emphasised children’s right to withdraw at any stage.

Children’s positioning in society means that they are rarely able to decide one hundred percent for themselves whether they participate in research or not (Masson, 2000). The children in the focus groups, however, were told that they did not have to answer all the questions if they did not wish to, and that there were no right or wrong answers. The children were also told that they did not necessarily have to discuss what they personally thought about family discipline, but could talk about what they believed children generally thought about family discipline. Mahon (1996) believes that children make their own decisions about whether to participate, and that they themselves identify which issues are sensitive during the research process. In this study not all children and young people answered every question. While some of the answers and discussions were clearly from children’s own experiences, some were not.

Confidentiality and safety
Ethical social work practice demands openness and honesty when working with children and families and an obligation to report suspected child abuse to the CYF. Section 16 of the CYPF Act 1989 provides protection for any person reporting suspected abuse in good faith. Principle 11 of the Privacy Act 1993 allows information to be disclosed to a third party on the grounds of the safety of children. I therefore could not guarantee absolute confidentiality to the children
and young people. Amongst most researchers there is consensus that complete confidentiality can never be given to child research participants (Alderson, 1995; Mahon, 1996). Alderson (1995) suggests that discussions should be had with participants at the start of the research to make this clear, and to have a plan in place should the participants disclose potential harm.

This research asked children and young people about family discipline, so it had the potential for children to disclose situations of likely or actual harm. Using the naïve questioners Splodge and Spike, the central characters in the story books, enabled children to choose more easily whether they talked about their own experiences, or answered questions in general terms. However, I did not want children to be silenced if they had worries they wished to discuss. Children and young people were told at the beginning of the focus group discussions that what was spoken about in the discussion group was private, but that if I had any worries about children being safe then I may have to tell some other adults to help make the child safe.

Children were also told at the beginning, and the end of the discussions, that if they did have any worries or wanted to talk more that they could talk with me, their teacher, or their Social Worker in Schools. I had discussed this and agreed upon a process with the B.O.T, principal and, where appropriate, the Social Worker in Schools prior to the children’s interview to ensure children’s safety and wellbeing should any disclosures come forth. The process was included in the children and young people’s consent forms. However, to ensure that the children fully understood the protocol, I also explained it at the start of each focus group discussion.

Privacy
There were two issues surrounding privacy within the study. One concerned the privacy of the location of the focus groups, and the other was about the privacy of the children and young people’s information. All of the focus groups were held at
schools. The majority of schools provided a quiet child-centred room for the focus group discussions. My only request to schools was that the room not be the principal's office. Children usually see this as an adult space, belonging to an adult in authority, and this may have hindered the children and young people's free conversations. Child-centred and comfortable physical surroundings can assist the tone of the interview (Baker, 1990).

Children were told that the focus group discussions would be taped and transcribed by a professional typist. They were also told that my Supervisors (teachers) and the professional typist would be the only other people who would hear their words. I explained to the children and young people that I would use some of their words in my Master’s Thesis, but I would not identify them or their school in any way. It was explained that the tapes and transcripts would be stored securely at the University. I made myself available to both parents and children after the interviews to ensure that no stress or concerns arose for the children or their parents.

**Process**

The focus group discussion was presented to the children and young people as an opportunity to tell adults what children and young people thought about family discipline. This was necessary as often adults did not know what children and young people thought about family discipline and such knowledge could assist adults in the parenting of children and young people. It was explained to the children participants that they were viewed by the researcher as the 'experts' in this field. The research design therefore had to be of a nature that allowed children and young people to speak freely and candidly with the researcher, reflecting or describing their own, or other children and young people's, views and experiences of family discipline. Therefore a qualitative participatory design was chosen as the methodology.
A picture story book and power point storybook were used to interview children to alleviate any possible concerns that the children and young people may have perceived the interview as similar to a test with right or wrong answers. Such an approach was intended to enhance the children’s ability to communicate with the interviewer (Hughes & Baker, 1990). The use of the story book with the 5 to 11 year olds provided a medium which the children were familiar with [having books read to them in school and at home] and made it less likely that children would become bored with an exclusively verbal presentation by the researcher. The use of the power point story book for the 12 to 14 year olds was used as young people have some familiarity with the use of information technology in their daily lives. Again this medium was used to promote participation within the focus group. The story book and power point also allowed the children and young people to participate in open dialogue with the interview questions originating not from the researcher, but from the central characters in the story books and on the screen. The visual presentations were also used to avoid the researcher controlling the conversation.

The picture story book and power point story book provided a context for discussions with the children. Qualitative interviews are always subject to change in the course of a study as events occurring and the nature of the data collected may require flexibility (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1998). Both the story book and the power point story book had specific questions that the children were asked. Within each focus group, however, the children and young people determined other topics of interest to them within the scope of family discipline and discussed these. General listening skills, such as paraphrasing and reflecting, were used to make the conversation more natural (Gollop, 2000), and assisted in assuring that the children and young people in the focus groups were heard. If children and young people feel they have not been heard, this may silence further contributions from them.
Instrument

The focus group discussions with the 5 to 11 year old children were centered on a storybook adapted from the Willow and Hyder (1998) study. The storybook has a central character called Splodge (an alien from outer space) that children can relate to (see Appendix I). Splodge was introduced to the children in the discussion groups as being very curious about life on Earth. They were told that Splodge did not know much about life on Earth and wanted to know about lots of things. Splodge was especially interested to know about family discipline and thought that children would be the best people to ask. The children were asked if they could help Splodge by answering the questions in the Splodge storybook.

Table 1: Questions asked by Splodge and Spike.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home what are some of the things that children have to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home what are some of the things that children shouldn’t do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some of the things that happen to children when they do things they shouldn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do children always understand why they should or shouldn’t do these things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When children do things they shouldn’t, do parents always act the same?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do all the children in the family get treated the same way when they do something they shouldn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do parents sometimes let children do things they shouldn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens when children and parents disagree about what children should or shouldn’t do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus group discussions were of 60 minutes duration on average. All the children and young people chose to remain in the focus groups. Each child was encouraged to answer each question. On a few occasions individual children declined to answer a particular question by stating that they did not wish to answer that question, or children just refrained from speaking. There was no noticeable difference between girls and boys across all ages when participating in the focus group discussions.

At the end of each focus group, the children were thanked for their participation and had turns at hearing themselves on the tape. The children were again reminded that if they had any worries I was available to talk. They were also told to talk to their parents, their teachers, or where appropriate the Social Worker in Schools. The children and young people were then told that each participant would receive a certificate for “achieving a high standard of excellent talking” (see Appendix K) which I would send to their school.
Participants
Eighty children and young people participated in the study between April and September 2004. Of the eighty children, there were slightly more boys (n=43) than girls (n=37) and the largest age group were the 12-14 year olds. (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Total Number of Children by Age and Gender](image)

The children consented to tell me their place in the family and their family structure. As we were discussing family discipline, it was important to have some idea about the children’s family structure (see Figure 2). Children were asked whereabouts in the family they came and with whom they lived (see Figure 3). It was interesting to note that the majority of children lived in two parent families. In 2001, 18.9 percent of New Zealand families were single parent families (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). All but six children lived in a household where they had siblings.
The participants came from five separate locations throughout New Zealand. The schools that were chosen within the five locations were selected on the basis of my previous contact with them in my role as a social worker, or up until recently in my role as a Supervisor and Assessor of the New Zealand-wide Social Workers in Schools Programme. I also approached colleagues from previous Post Graduate courses who were involved with schools. The demographics for the ten participating schools along with ages and numbers of children in each focus group are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: School Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Decile Rating</th>
<th>Age of Children</th>
<th>Focus Group Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Island Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kaikohe</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kerikeri</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hawkes Bay</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Island Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most New Zealand Primary Schools have children attending them from age 5 to 11 years old. The 12 to 14 year old age group were a little more difficult to recruit from one school as this age group spanned the Intermediate School and High School age group. However, throughout New Zealand there are also schools that have 5 to 17 year olds, commonly called Area Schools. Some Private Schools also cater for this age group.

Children in New Zealand are more ethnically diverse than their adult counterparts, with 18% of children identifying with more than one ethnic group, compared with 6% of adults. The percentages of children who identify with New Zealand's major ethnic groups are: European (75%), Māori (24%), Pacific Peoples (11%) and Asian (7%) (Statistics, New Zealand, 2004). In this study by far the majority of children and young people were from European descent (over 70%) with small percentages of Maori, Pacific Island and Asian children. It must be noted that these percentages are from the point of view of the researcher and not necessarily from the children themselves.

Only the school demographics were elicited. This was to provide a description of the context of participants, rather than to represent individual children or families, or to allow comparative judgements. The focus of this study was to report and discuss children and young people’s views on the use of family discipline. No comparative data is reported between the responses of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds, although the influence of gender and age is explored.

**Apparatus**
A tape recorder was used to record the children and young people’s conversations, which were then transcribed by a professional typist. Writing the
children's discussions could have distracted the free flow conversations of the children and prevented me from giving full attention to facilitating discussions.

**Data gathering and analysis**

The children in the present study were interviewed at school at a time that was age appropriate. The younger children were interviewed in the morning and the older children in the afternoon. Care was taken during the focus group interviews to ensure that all the information collected was accurately recorded. As researcher, I was the direct recipient of the children’s reports and this greatly contributed to the reliability of the data obtained. The accuracy of the tape transcripts were confirmed by reviewing the written transcripts whilst listening to the tapes. The narratives from each focus group in each location were then placed into a table which was then coded.

The coding was determined by the theme or sub-theme that emerged from the children’s responses, age, gender and location. This ensured that I could track each child’s response. Codes were assigned in the following manner: The location was depicted by the first letter or letters in the areas name. Dunedin = D, Kaikohe = Ka, KeriKeri = Ke, Hawkes Bay = H and Auckland= A. The gender was represented by F= Female and M=Male. Finally the age of the child was represented by the age of the child as a number. As an example, a ten year old male child’s quote from Dunedin would be represented as DM10. Finally, all narratives from the five locations were combined. This enabled a thematic analysis to be conducted whereby, a narrative summary of the transcripts in relation to each theme or sub-theme was written for each transcript. Relevant quotes were also noted so they could be easily retrieved.

**Limitations of the research**

The desired sample size was not achieved. This could be attributed to the potentially sensitive nature of the study, and/or the perception that children were not competent to engage in the study. Within the sample fewer 5 to 7 year olds
(n=21) participated in comparison with the other age groups. The younger children’s perception of family discipline is important in this research as it explores how children’s views on family discipline differ by age. Having more children of this age in the sample would have provided a better balance with the contributions of the other two age groupings. Finally, this study asked children for their views on physical punishment, but did not ask about the socio-legal policy context. Some children did voice their opinions about section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961, but it may have been advantageous to have asked the children directly about this issue given its significance to the research topic.

Summary
By utilising a qualitative, group-focused approach to the research methodology, the children in this study were provided with a safe environment in which to relay their views and perspectives on the use of family discipline. Central to this study was creating the perception that the children and young people were the experts with the researcher there to learn. The use of the naïve questioners, Splodge and Spike, afforded the children the option of whether to talk about their own personal experiences or to talk about family discipline in general. What emerged from this study demonstrated that the children and young people were capable of expressing their opinions.

Research Questions
This project is based within the socio-cultural, ecological and sociology of childhood theoretical frameworks. The following research questions frame this study:

• What are children and young people’s views on family discipline?
• How do children and young people’s views on family disciplinary methods compare with their reports of their parent’s views and actions?
• How do children and young people’s views on family discipline differ by gender and age?
CHAPTER SIX

Results

Introduction
The results presented here are from interviews with eighty children aged between 5 and 14 who were interviewed in 30 focus groups. Children and young people were asked to assist Splodge or Spike, depending on the age of the particular focus group, by answering questions on family discipline. The themes that have been subsequently developed emerged from the focus groups. The children and young people’s discussions provided many pages of information on their views on family discipline. However, I have been selective in using their quotes and have chosen examples that are representative of others. This chapter introduces the following themes:

Theme One - The scope of family discipline.

Theme Two – Children’s perceptions of the parental message.

Theme Three - Parental consistency.

Theme Four - Fairness and conflict.

Theme Five – Children’s views on physical punishment.

Theme Six – Time out, withdrawal of privileges and grounding

Theme Seven – Children’s advice on family discipline.

A section on age and gender will be included at the end of this chapter.
Theme One
The scope of family discipline

Introduction
To determine how children and young people define family discipline and the range of parental discipline techniques, children were asked three questions:

1. At home what are some of the things that children have to do?
2. At home what are some of the things that children shouldn't do?
3. What are some of the things that happen to children when they do things they shouldn't?

These first two questions were also asked as warm-up questions as most children could easily contribute to this discussion. These questions also gave some context to the third question, which covered the consequences of children’s transgressions and subsequent parental disciplinary techniques.

Table 3: Children’s views on appropriate behaviour at home (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 - 7 year olds (n=21)</th>
<th>9 -11 year olds (n=28)</th>
<th>12-14 year olds (n=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home what are some of the things that children have to do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Do the dishes” (DM6)</td>
<td>“Make your bed” (KaM9)</td>
<td>“Clear the table” (KeM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Clean your room” (AF5)</td>
<td>“Walk the dog” (HF10)</td>
<td>“Feed the dogs” (HM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Listen to your mum and dad” (KeF7)</td>
<td>“They [child] have regard for their parents” (KeF10)</td>
<td>“Mow the lawns”(KaF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 gives examples of children’s views on appropriate behaviour at home. The responses from all focus groups to what children should do at home were very similar. Consequently, I have summarised these results together. Appropriate behaviour centered on children completing household tasks. All age groups tended to describe household tasks in two categories, inside the house and outside the house. A small number of children (11%, n=8) mentioned the behaviours and interactions between people residing in the home rather than what household tasks that were expected of them. The majority of these children were female and aged between 9 and 11 years old.
Table 4: Children’s views on inappropriate behaviour at home (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“They [children] shouldn’t say swear words to their parents” (DM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t pinch, or bite or kick your brothers and sisters” (KaF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You can’t meet strangers by yourself” (DM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“You shouldn’t make smart remarks to your parents” (DM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not to be violent, like hitting some-one” (AF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When visitors come and there’s like a basket of lollies and you can’t get them, don’t play up because it is embarrassing yourself” (HM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t play with fire; if your Mum tells you not to touch the fire and you do you will get hurt” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Having a smart attitude towards your parents” (AF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t make fun of your brothers and sisters; it makes them cry” (KaM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No kicking or beating up your brothers and sisters” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t answer the door if you don’t know who they are” (KeF14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 gives examples of children’s perceptions of what children should not do at home. Most of the 5 to 7 year olds reported that children’s transgressions at home ranged from being ‘naughty’ to being ‘disrespectful’ towards parents. Transgressions towards siblings were described by these children as physically or emotionally hurting siblings. The safety issues described by this age group were behaviours that may put them at risk from other adults outside the home, as well as harmful things that could happen to children inside the home. Children in this age group did not mention unacceptable behaviours around visitors or when out in public.

Similarly, most 9 to 11 year olds reported that child’s transgressions that constituted ‘breaking the rules’ were behaviours that were considered disrespectful to parents. Transgressions towards siblings entailed negative physical and/or emotional outcomes for their siblings. A small number of children used the word ‘violent’ when discussing hitting or fighting with siblings. The transgressions described by some of these children when visitors were in the
home tended to focus on the children embarrassing themselves and their family which reflected badly on them. Transgressions that evoked safety issues focused on children being physically harmed. They did not mention being harmed by adults outside the home as the 5 to 7 year old did.

Most of the **12 to 14 year** old age group reported similar transgressions towards parents by being disrespectful, as the other two age groups. However, these children added being ungrateful or having a bad attitude towards parents. Transgressions by children towards siblings were reported to be either of a physical and/or emotional nature that had negative outcomes for their siblings. Similar to the other two age groups this age group reported that if children broke the rules set down by parents in regard to safety this could result in someone being harmed or that children may be harmed by other adults.

**Table 5 - Consequences of children’s behaviour (examples)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some of the things that happen when children do things they shouldn’t.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds  “They [parents] get really angry with you” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds “I get sent to my room and yelled at” (AF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds “They [parents] look angry and serious, their faces and voices are angry and loud, they scream at you” (DM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds  “They [parents] get a stick and smack it [bottom] “ (KeF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You get a smack in the mouth” (AM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds “You get a clip on the ear” (KaF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes my sister drops something like really valuable or she drops a really new bottle of milk and she gets yelled at or gets hit around the head” (KeF11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds “Parents whack them [children] that what happens to me” (HM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You get a smack when you were younger” (DF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Withdrawal of privileges/Grounding/Time out</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds  “I get told off and sent to my room” (DF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Get grounded” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds “Not allowed to play on the play station or go to a friends house” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Have to stay in my room until I say sorry” (DM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds “You might get grounded and not allowed to watch T.V. and a clip around the ear” (HM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You get yelled at sent to your room or grounded” (KaF14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 gives some examples of the children’s descriptions of the range of parental discipline techniques used when children transgress. Over half (58%, n=12) of the 5 to 7 year olds mentioned being physically punished when they transgressed. The girls mentioned the probability of the use of physical punishment for transgressions more than boys. Forty two percent (n=8) of this age group reported being put in time out, grounded or having to do extra chores. Boys mentioned the use of time out more than girls did. Children of this age tended to mention only one form of family discipline being used at a time.

The 9 to 11 year olds reported a range of consequences for children's transgressions. Forty six percent (n=13) of this age group reported being put into time out, grounded, privileges withdrawn or being yelled at. Forty two percent (n=12) reported being physically punished. More girls (58%) than boys reported that parents may or do use time out, grounding, and withdrawal of privileges or yelling. Boys (n=16) reported that children are or could be physically punished (59%), more than girls. However, these children also stated that combinations of discipline techniques were used by parents.

Most of the 12 to 14 year old age group reported being sent to their room (time out), having privileges taken from them, or grounding, which some children described as being the same thing. These children also spoke about parents using a combination of time out, physical punishment, grounding and privileges being taken away. Half (51%, n=16) of the children also mentioned being yelled or screamed out by parents for their misbehaviour. Seventy seven percent (n=23) of this age group reported that they remember being physically punished when younger. A surprising proportion of this age group (29%, n=9) reported being physically punished at their present age.

**Summary**

Children detailed clearly what they saw as parental expectations of children’s behaviour, by describing family rules and what children should and shouldn’t do.
at home. These generally centered on household tasks and behaviour within the home and interactions with people residing in the home. Over the three age groups, girls tended to report doing more household task inside the home than boys did. Boys reported doing more outside household task. A small number of 9 to 11 year old girls reported behaviours parents expected of children, rather than the household tasks.

Across all three age groups, children described conceptual distinctions between classes of transgressions when discussing what children should not do at home. These transgressions fell into four categories: towards parents, towards siblings, safety issues and public behaviour. The three age groups reported similar findings when discussing transgressions towards parents and siblings. Children described transgressions towards siblings as physically or emotionally hurting siblings. While the 5 to 7 and 9 to 11 year olds described the nature of this behaviour, the 12 to 14 year olds also described its consequences for siblings.

All age groups reported that if children broke the safety rules set down by parents, it could result in children being harmed. The 5 to 7 year olds and 12 to 14 year olds included transgressions that could put children at risk of harm from adults outside the home. The two older age groups reported that parents use combinations of disciplinary techniques, while the 5 to 7 year olds reported parents only using one. The two younger age groups described the use of physical punishment more often than the other types of discipline techniques. Surprisingly the 5 to 7 year old girls reported the probability of being physically punished far more than the boys in this age group. The majority (77%, n=23) of the 12 to 14 year old age group reported being smacked or hit when younger, and just over a quarter of this age group reported that they were still physically punished at present.
Theme Two
Children’s perceptions of the parental message

Introduction
Children who understand and accept their parent’s disciplinary requests are more likely to comply with them and, as a result, to behave in socially appropriate ways (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). To assist in determining children’s understanding of the parental disciplinary message and children’s perceptions of the processes of learning the family rules, children were asked:

1. Do children always understand why they should or shouldn’t do these things?
2. How do children get to understand?
3. Who tells or shows children?
4. How come children have to understand?

Table 6: Children’s understanding of the rules (examples)

| Do children always understand why they should or shouldn’t do these things? |
| 5 to 7 year olds | “No, sometimes I forget the rules” (DF5) |
|                 | “Kids don’t understand what parents mean sometimes” (KeM6) |
| 9 to 11 year olds | “Sometimes parents use words that kids don’t understand” (AM9) |
|                 | “Because parents wouldn’t actually tell you straight away that you’ve done something wrong, parents don’t always tell you why they are growling” (KeF11) |
| 12 to 14 year olds | “Sometimes they [children] do and sometimes they don’t, it depends” (KaF12) |
|                 | “Sometimes it’s pretty obvious because there’s a difference between right and wrong and you know when you are wrong” (HM13) |

Table 6 gives examples of children’s perceptions on their understanding of the family rules. Over half (57%, n=11) of the 5 to 7 year olds reported not understanding the family rules because they had either forgotten the rules or that family rules were only understood by them some of the time. Slightly less (47%, n=13) of the 9 to 11 year olds said they did not always understand the parental disciplinary message. The 9 to 11 year olds said that children did not always understand the vocabulary used by parents and that parents omitted to explain to children the wrong doing. Forty two percent (n=13) of the 12 to 14 year old age
group reported that children did not necessarily understand the family rules or that understanding only occurred sometimes. Conversely, 35% (n=9) reported that the family rules were made clear by parents, and that children did understand why they had been disciplined. Most of these responses were from boys.

Table 7: Children’s perceptions on their acquisition of knowledge on family rules (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do children get to understand?</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They learn by doing it and then they get told off” (KeM6)</td>
<td>“By watching others get told off” (HM9)</td>
<td>“Your parents explaining it to you, its kind of drummed into you from an early age, like your parent’s reinforce it, sometimes by yelling at you if it’s wrong” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Like if they [children] do it, and they aren’t allowed to ride their bike, because they haven’t learnt and they fall off so they learn that they shouldn’t do it” (KaF7)</td>
<td>“Your parents just tell you” (DF11)</td>
<td>“Learning from your mistakes, by doing things and then being told off” (AF14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who tells or shows children?</td>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They [child] gets learnt by their parents” (AF5)</td>
<td>“Their parents, mums and dads they tell them [children] that you can do this and you can do that” (KeF10)</td>
<td>“Sometimes older brothers and sisters tell you the opposite to your parents” (KaF14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They [parents] say it slowly to them [child] and they understand” (DM7)</td>
<td>“My big sister shows me what I shouldn’t do but my parents also show me what I shouldn’t do, its like half and half” (AF9)</td>
<td>“Don’t listen to your uncles or your dads mates they get you into trouble man” (DM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t listen to your dad or your cousins when they are drunk” (DM13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 gives examples of how children believe they acquire knowledge of the family rules. The 5 to 7 year olds explained that children gained knowledge by being disciplined, listening to parents and learning from their own mistakes. This understanding was gained from their parents and older brothers and sisters. The 9 to 11 year olds reported that they learnt by being told what the rules were, observing others and asking questions. This age group did not mention that they
learnt from the disciplinary act specifically and said that children gained knowledge of the rules from their parents, older siblings and other family/whanau members. The 12 to 14 year old group reported that children learnt the rules from being told by parents, making mistakes, from their experiences and learning from parental responses, when doing something they shouldn’t. They also reported that children gained knowledge of household rules from their parents, older family members (grandparents) and sometimes older siblings. Just over a quarter (27%, n=8) of these children mentioned that older adults (cousins, uncles or parent’s friends) and older siblings could actually get children in to trouble, and copying them or following their instructions was not always wise.

Table 8: Children’s reasons as to why they need to know the rules (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How come children have to understand?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If they [children] don’t listen and they don’t listen to their parents then when they grow up they might steal from a shop” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] have to know the rules cause they [children] are always naughty” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“So they don’t break the rules and get time out” (KaF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because if you don’t know, you might do something wrong” (HF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You could just keep on doing one thing and you would never know why it’s bad, sometimes and you could turn into a bad person” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Everybody would hate you if you just didn’t know [the rules]” (DF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“So it doesn’t build up later and you get sent to jail or something, like you might steal little things at the start, then you start getting away with it and then later you steal something big and you go to jail” (HM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With a job it’s probably more important [to know the rules] because you are earning a living so if you do bad stuff relating to jobs you might get fired” (DM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you don’t understand [the rules] then things go wrong and you can get hurt” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 gives some examples of why children feel they need to have knowledge of the family rules. The 5 to 7 year olds said that knowing the rules was a deterrent to bad behaviour when children were older, to prevent children from breaking the rules; prevent others from copying the behaviour and to avoid discipline. The importance of learning the family rules was explained by the 9 to
11 year olds as how children avoided wrong doings, acquired knowledge of acceptable behaviour, and prevented children from being disliked. Surprisingly there were no responses from boys to this question in any of focus groups in this age group. Nearly half (48%, n=14) of the 12 to 14 year olds reported that the purpose of children learning family rules was for safety reasons. These children described safety in terms of children’s physical safety. Just over a half (52%, n=16) explained that children needed to know and follow the family rules to prevent inappropriate behaviours and negative consequences in adulthood, and to be good role models for younger children, which was this age group’s responsibility and was part of the ‘growing up’ process.

Summary
The majority of children said that children did not always understand the family rules or only understood them on occasions. However, boys in the 12 to 14 year old age group contradicted this and reported that children did have clear understanding of family rules and why parents disciplined them. The two older age groups both reported that the understanding of family rules came with age, and believed that younger children were only in the process of understanding. The 12 to 14 year age group also commented on parental responsibility to ensure that children know what the family rules are, commencing from when children are young. Children reported several different processes that assisted children to gain knowledge of the family rules. The majority of children described these as being directly told by parents, from a transgression and the parental discipline act preceding this transgression, and seeing the consequences of their own action and “learning from our mistakes”.

The younger children gained understanding of parental family rules solely from parents whereas the two older groups included wider family members. The 12 to 14 year olds were becoming prudent in judging whether or not to pay attention to some family members. Children were clear that there was a need for parents to have rules and that it was important for children to learn and
understand these rules. All age groups commented that knowing the rules formed the foundation for positive outcomes when children became adults. Without this foundation there would be negative consequences. These children also commented that having knowledge of the rules also prevented children from being subjected to parental discipline. The 12 to 14 year olds were clear that children required rules for safety reasons, and also mentioned a responsibility to younger children to be positive role models. There were no responses from the 9 to 11 year old boys about the necessity of family rules.
Introduction
To elicit children’s perceptions on the consistency of parental family discipline children were asked the following questions:

1. When children do things they shouldn’t, do parents always act the same way?
2. Do all the children in the family get treated the same way when they do something they shouldn’t?
3. Do parents sometimes let children do things they shouldn’t?
4. How does this make children feel?

Table 9: Children’s perceptions of parental consistency (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When children do things they shouldn’t, do parents always act the same way?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes they [parents] smack you on the bottom for not picking up your toys and sometimes they don’t” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My dad does the same, but my mum doesn’t [act the same]” (AM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not always because sometimes they [parents] might act this way, they say “oh just go to your room now okay?” and the next time they might yell at you and scream at you and go “no more playing on the computer for 3 weeks”” (KeM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes with my parents it just depends on if we’ve done it before or if it’s the first time. If it’s the first time, they [parents] are not so hard on us but if we’ve done it many times before then they [parents] start to get more angrier and angrier and harder punishment” (HF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It depends how many times you did it. If you do it [transgression] heaps of times then it [discipline] gets worse each time” (KeM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like if you hit your sister, you get hit back but if you are calling names at her you get told to go to your room” (KaF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 gives examples of children’s beliefs about their parents’ consistency when delivering family discipline. The majority (85%, n=16) of the **5 to 7 year olds** indicated that parents were not always consistent when delivering family discipline. Most (61%, n=17) of the **9 to 11 year olds** also indicated that parents were not always consistent. Some of the 9 to 11 year olds explained that
the reason for parents’ inconsistencies when disciplining children was due to the child’s behaviour. Which would have to be “really bad” and was also dependent on how many times the child had behaved like this, or whether or not parents felt that they had done “it on purpose”. Children linked their own behaviour with parental inconsistencies. The majority (82%, n=25) of the 12 to 14 year old age group considered that parents were not always consistent when delivering family discipline. These children discussed how the child’s behaviour influenced what parents did and discussed how parental discipline can escalate.

Table 10: Consistency between mothers and fathers (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“No they aren’t the same” (KeF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Mum’s easiest” (KaM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“Like because dad might say “okay, no computer” and mum might say “oh, no going out to your friend, no computer, no TV, no anything” (KeM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My dad’s more rough [when he disciplines] but he lets me get away with things mum doesn’t” (DF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’d say it’s usually the dad or the granddad because they are stronger and they can do things that the mum can’t do” (KeF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Like they (fathers) can run faster if you are running away, dad’s can catch you better than mums” (DF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Like mum’s like she’s [my mother] overprotective” (AF14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Dads have the know how, cause he was like us once. It’s like ’been there done that’ and he knows ‘oh it’s happened now so you know not to do it next time’. Mums don’t have the experience because they aren’t blokes” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Mum like girls more but then what dad does [when disciplining], it gets through to me better” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Boys take more notice of their dads” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows examples of children’s responses to being asked who the easiest and most consistent disciplinarian was. Seventy seven percent (n=16) of the 5 to 7 year olds said that mothers and fathers do not respond in the same way to children’s transgressions. Mothers were reported as being the ‘easiest’ disciplinarians by this age group. These children did not verbalise any rationale to account for parental inconsistencies. Four children reported that while mothers
and fathers do not discipline children similarly father's discipline was more consistent than their mothers.

The majority (82%, n=22) of the 9 to 11 year olds said that mothers and fathers disciplined children differently. These children reported inconsistencies in what mothers and fathers allowed children to do and inconsistencies in the discipline meted out by parents for the same transgression. Six children in this age group reported that mothers and fathers do discipline children consistently and that their own parents had achieved this. There was little difference reported between mothers and fathers as to who was the ‘easiest’ disciplinarian or who delivered the most family discipline. Four girls commented that male adults may be more effective disciplinarians because of their physical attributes.

The majority (77%, n=22) of the 12 to 14 year olds reported that family discipline was inconsistent between mothers and fathers. Slightly more children indicated that their mothers (52%, n=16) were more lenient disciplinarians than their fathers. Just under a quarter (23%, n=7) of these children mentioned that they thought their mothers were overprotective; this was a noticeable response for the girls. A number of boys (9) from one location said that boys were not disciplined by their mothers because mothers lacked the knowledge needed to be effective at this task compared with fathers. These boys also indicated that fathers were more effective at delivering the disciplinary message to boys than mothers were.

Table 11: Children's perceptions of fairness (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do all the children in the family get treated the same way when they do something they shouldn't?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because like sometimes I get told off and my brother doesn't for doing the same thing” (KeM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because I do something naughty and they [sibling] do something naughty and then Mum thinks that I started it and I get a smack” (AF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In my family it depends on the attitude towards other things, sometimes it's different for my sister than for me” (HF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My mum does that [disciplines differently] with my little brother. She acts”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
like he can do anything, like we get more discipline than what he does because he's only little. My mum says that he doesn’t know and we do know what we are doing” (KeM11)

12 to 14 year olds

“No every-one doesn’t get treated the same” (DF12)
“The older ones get like harsher discipline” (KaM13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for inconsistencies between siblings: GENDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for inconsistencies between siblings: AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 reports some of the children’s comments on parental consistency between siblings when children transgress. The majority (68%, n=12) of the **5 to 7 year olds** reported that siblings do not get always get disciplined in a similar fashion. Five children in this age group mentioned that parents do not always understand children’s behaviour because of the child’s age. These children explained that sometimes children do things “by mistake” or by “accident”, explaining that sometimes children would be disciplined for these mistakes or accidents.

The majority (69%, n=19) of the **9 to 11 year olds** reported that siblings were often disciplined differently by parents. Just under a third (30%, n=7) of this age group indicated this would depend on what the child had done and the child’s ‘attitude’. Children reported that parents disciplined younger children differently, some reporting that younger children are disciplined more and others reporting that younger children receive less discipline. Children also discussed how parents expected older children to ‘know better’ and be appropriate role models for younger siblings. These children indicated that while children may accept this expectation from parents, they may not necessarily think it fair. Children reported that gender made a difference to the way parents disciplined children. Both genders were in agreement on this issue. Children discussed the different physical attributes of boys and girls, indicating that they believed boys were stronger than girls and so accounted for some of the differences in parental behaviour. Conversely, some children reported that gender made no difference to parental discipline but may have different consequences for boys and girls.

The majority (81%, n=24) of the **12 to 14 year old** age group said that siblings were not disciplined the same when they transgressed. This age group gave a number of reasons for siblings being disciplined differently, which centered on the age of the child. Just under a half (48%, n=12) of this age group added that older children are under pressure to set a good example to younger siblings. Interestingly, children appeared to accept that there was a parental
expectation for older siblings to be good role models for younger siblings, but they did not necessarily agree on the appropriateness of this expectation.

Table 12: Other circumstances of parental inconsistencies (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe they [parents] have been up all night reading or they are in a bad mood” (DM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It depends on how differently the child is feeling too, they [child] might be all grumpy and not want to listen” (AF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you have asked a few hours ago if you can watch T.V. and the mood has changed to a good mood, then maybe they [parents] might let you watch T.V.” (Ka M11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes because of the things that are happening at home parents will let things go, like sometimes they are so sick of it [parental argument] they just walk out of the room or don’t even talk to you about what you’ve done or anything” (KeF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Also what’s going on in their [parents] life, if there’s something good going on in their life they’re like “oh yeah, just don’t do it again” but if they are like not in a good mood they’ll probably growl and yell” (DM14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well my sister doesn’t get as told off as me. Because even though she doesn’t act good she’s not really dad’s, oh I shouldn’t tell you that” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like when you’re the only kid at home and your brother and sister are away or something, they [parents] act real nice to you like and they let you do anything” (HF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well especially if there is a split family, like there is with mine, my step mum and my step dad treat me really good compared to other parents that don’t but they always treat their kids as their favourite even though I’ve known them since I was really little, they always treat them as their favourite, just because they are their children, they never treat you the same” (AF14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because we are at boarding school and just go home for weekends our parents are much nicer to us and they let you get away with more things than your brothers and sisters” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My Dad is not here all the time he is a pilot so my mum is usually the one who has to discipline us so when he’s home and there’s like an argument so sometimes he just doesn’t want to get involved” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 gives examples of other factors children reported as contributing to parental inconsistencies. Some of the **9 to 11 year olds** attributed inconsistent discipline from parents to the emotional circumstances of the parent and/or the
child and what was happening in the home at the time. Some of the 12 to 14 year old age group also mentioned circumstances in the home and parents’ emotional state as influencing parent's consistency. Just over a third (35%, n=10) of these children mentioned that a family always had a favoured child who was disciplined less than the other siblings. Age and gender made no difference to whether or not the child was favoured by parents.

Table 13: Children’s perception why parents allow transgressions (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do parents sometimes let children do things they shouldn’t?</th>
<th>Reasons for being able to do things they shouldn’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No, they [parents] always give the kids a good smack for doing it&quot; (AF5)</td>
<td>“Sometimes my Mum and dad say “No” to dairy stuff. Sometimes when Dad is at work, Mum only lets us have a bit” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No they wouldn’t let you play with the chainsaw because that’s dangerous” (KaM7)</td>
<td>“Yeah like when they [parents] have had a drink or a smoke and are stoned” (KaM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If they [parents] are feeling happy they might” (DF7)</td>
<td>“When they [parents] are tired you can get away with things. If something really bad has happened that week and they [parents] are mad about it then you can’t” (HF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah all the time” (DF9)</td>
<td>“They [parents] might let you, like if you say please, please, please, they might say “oh alright”” (Ke F11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No not in my house” (HM9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because most of the time one parent agrees on doing this and the other doesn’t so when the other [parent] has gone away, the child can get away with doing it” (KeF10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like a big party and your parents know that it’s going to be bad or something and then you really want to go so they will let you go because they trust you. Sometimes you can show that you’ll be good at a party, like it shows that you are responsible” (AF13)</td>
<td>“Maybe when they [parents] are in a good mood or something; they let you do things depending on what’s happening for them”” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like you have been hunting with your dad enough times and he might let you go out on your own now” (HM14)</td>
<td>“To find out the hard way; or to let you see what actually happens if you do it” (KaM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When you are little you don’t really understand why they [parents] are”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 reports some of the children’s comments on why parents may allow them to transgress. The **5 to 7 year old** children were divided equally in their responses, when asked whether parents allowed children to do things they shouldn’t. Only two children were able to verbalise a rationale for why parents may or may not allow children to do things they shouldn’t. One child cited safety reasons and the other commented on parents’ emotions.

The **9 to 11 year olds** were also divided equally in their responses. These children commented that the situation in the home at the time would assist in determining whether parents allowed children to do things they shouldn’t or not. Parent’s emotional disposition at the time of the child’s transgression and the child’s own persistence were also reported as contributing factors to children being able to do things they shouldn’t.

Fifty eight percent (n=17) of the **12 to 14 year olds** said that parents did let children do things they shouldn’t frequently or on occasions. These children reported that parents allowed children to do things they shouldn’t in terms of gaining parental trust and the child’s developing capabilities. Children also discussed the influence of parental mood on the parental disciplinary approach. Some of these children mentioned that parents may also allow children to do things so that they learn. Family circumstances were again mentioned by children when discussing the effects of inconsistent family discipline. They reported feelings of confusions, and discussed how children coped.
Table 14: Impact of parental inconsistencies (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does that make children feel?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It makes me feel really sad” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Makes me feel really angry boy” (KaF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I cry when that happens” (DF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Left out, they [children] want another family” (HF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You kind of go for the easier one” (KeM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Makes you like one parent more than the other” (KaF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not being treated the same feels annoying; you want to swear at your parents it makes you feel bad and sad” (AM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It makes you feel angry and it sucks” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You kind of feel confused like why is that happening” (KeF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You just accept it, there’s nothing you can do” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments about parental inconsistencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes I feel it’s unfair like when they [parents] say they are going to believe my brother instead of me, you can do nothing” (DM9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t like it when they [sibling] say something like bad to me and I tell mum and my sister goes ‘he did it’ and then I’ll get like bashed up by my dad, adults might think they know better than the children do, but they don’t and they get it wrong” (KeM12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 reports children’s feelings on parental inconsistencies. The 5 to 7 year olds reported that children felt angry, sad, children might cry and children feel a sense of unfairness when parents are inconsistent. One child mentioned that parents did not always “get it” when it came to fairness. The majority (63%, n=17) of the 9 to 11 year olds reported that there were negative outcomes for children. They described the emotional consequences for themselves and the effect these inconsistencies had on children’s relationship with their parents. This age group also discussed the consequences that inconsistent discipline from mothers and fathers produced. These children said children would often seek the ‘easiest’ parent after being disciplined and that children would have negative feelings towards the parent who had disciplined them ‘unfairly’. The 12 to 14 year olds described the emotional consequences for children when parents were being inconsistent when delivering family discipline. These children also described feeling of confusion, powerlessness and the inevitability of having to accept parent’s inconsistencies. Another aspect of inconsistent family discipline that created a lot of discussion across all age groups was children being
disciplined for transgressions their siblings had performed. These children appeared to have a sense of powerlessness in these situations. One child spoke of the physical consequences of not being believed by his parents.

**Summary**

Most children reported that parents were inconsistent when delivering family discipline. Children also reported that mothers and fathers disciplined children differently including differential treatment for siblings. There were no age or gender differences in children’s responses over these issues. Children suggested the following factors as being related to parental inconsistent discipline: the child’s age, capabilities, parental mood, family circumstances, and the child's behaviour. The 5 to 7 year olds had some difficulty in articulating reasons for parents' inconsistencies.

The majority of children of all age and gender groups reported that there were negative outcomes for children as a consequence of parental inconsistencies when delivering family discipline. A feeling of powerlessness was a common outcome. A small number of children from the 9 to 14 year old age groups reported that children used these inconsistencies to their advantage. With the exception of the 5 to 7 year olds, who reported that mothers were the easiest disciplinarians, the majority of children were equally likely to think mothers and fathers were tougher. However, one group of 12 to 14 year old boys indicated that mothers did not have the necessary skills or experience to discipline boys effectively.

The children in the two older age groups (9 to 11 and 12 to 14 year olds) reported parental expectations that older siblings should be appropriate role models for younger siblings. Children did not necessarily accept this. These children were equally divided about the effects of age and gender, with some saying that older children and boys were punished more and others saying that there was no difference. It should be noted that 93% of all these children had siblings.
Introduction

Children’s perceptions of parent-child interactions and children’s information-processing skills were elicited by asking children the following questions:

1. What happens when children and parents disagree about what children should or shouldn’t do?

2. What happens when children and parents disagree about the punishment?

3. How come sometimes children do things their parents have told them not to?

4. When children do things they shouldn’t how do parents act?

5. What happens if children think parents aren’t being fair?

6. What do children do when they are being treated unfairly?

7. What do other children do at home when people are being treated unfairly?

Table 15: Child parent conflict over family rules and punishment (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/child disagreement over the rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] get hidings” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bad things like smacks” (AF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] get hurt feelings and feel sad” (DF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] start to argue” (HF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] and child sort of fight and yell” (KaM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes they’ll [parents] tell us to go and sit down at the table and they will see us in 5 minutes and they make us think about it and then we talk together to see what we should and shouldn’t do, like to see if we are allowed to do more responsibilities then perhaps we would have” (KaM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents and child] start to fight and argue and then there is yelling” (KeF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My Dad thinks my Mum doesn’t discipline me enough and that, so then they just get into a fight” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “They [child and parent] could work it out between them, sometimes we
Parent/child disagreement over punishment

5 to 7 year olds
- “We will get a bigger smack” (KeM7)
- “Kids don’t get a say in the punishment” (KaF6)
- “The parents make the rules” (AM7)

9 to 11 year olds
- “My Mum and Dad sometimes fight because sometimes my Mum says I can go on the playstation but Dad says no. I ask him why you say no. It’s hard for me to know what to do about Dad. It’s confusing” (DF11)
- “They [parents] just say that’s what’s going to happen and that is that” (AM11)
- “No we don’t get a say children just suffer the consequences” (KeM10)
- “We just have to listen; it’s part of being a kid” (KeF11)
- “Sometimes you can’t do anything because the parents are the parents and it’s not easy telling parents they may have got it wrong” (KeF10)

12 to 14 year olds
- “Yeah we get a say, they [parents] go you have a choice of not talking on the phone or you have a choice of not having the computer on” (AF13)
- “You just get more punishment because they [parents] get annoyed” (DM12)
- “Yeah you can’t speak your mind because they [parents] are older” (HM13)

Table 15 gives examples of how children perceive parent child conflict over the family rules and punishment. Forty percent (n=8) of the 5 to 7 year olds reported that the consequence of disagreement between parents and children over the family rules was that parents would react by physically disciplining the child. Just over a quarter (27%, n=5) of these children articulated the emotional consequences for children. This age group reported that physical punishment would also be a consequence for children disagreeing with parents over discipline. Over half (60%, n=12) of this age group reported children’s sense of powerlessness in their success or ability to disagree with parents, whether this was disagreement over the family rules or the family discipline.
Forty three percent (n=10) of the 9 to 11 year olds reported that the consequence for children of parental disagreement over the family rules was that parents ended up in conflict. However, 34% (n=6) of this age group said that the consequences of parental and child disagreement about the family rules was conflict between the parent and child. Conversely, just under a quarter (23%, n=4) of this age group reported that when there is disagreement between children and parents about the family rules, both parents and children resolved these matters. Over half (57%, n=15) reported that children did not have a say in family discipline and they discussed the merits of children disagreeing with their parents who left children feeling powerless in these situations. These children also mentioned that not having a say in any aspect of family discipline was an inevitable part of being a child.

The majority (64%, n=19) of the 12 to 14 year olds reported that when parents and children disagreed over family rules this led to conflict between children and parents, and that this often precipitates arguments between parents. A small number (5) of children indicated that parents and children could negotiate the rules. Conversely, a small number (4) of children commented that children had a sense of powerlessness when conflicts arose. Children discussed whether they had a say in deciding the family rules. This generated a lot of debate amongst the children. Children’s responses are put into 4 categories: - those that said children did not get a say in the family rules; those that said children do or should do; those that said it would depend on the particular family rule that was in dispute; and those who said it was dependent on age. However, within all of these categories there was debate amongst the children. Just under half (48%, n=14) of these children said that children sometimes had a say in what discipline they received. The consequences for children’s disagreement were that the parents would further discipline the child. Four children reported that children can negotiate with parents on the discipline they receive.
Table 16: Why children do things they have been told not to and parents reactions (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Children’s Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“The Mum and Dad, make them [children] angry to do it [transgression], they make you do it” (KeM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Because they [children] just want to see what happens” (KaF5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They may want to get a smack and then get Mc Donald’s” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“I know kids whose parents don’t pay enough attention to them and they just want more and more attention so they do bad things to get attention” (DM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Because they [children] are angry at their parents for what they have done in the past or what they are doing now” (HF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No, children don’t do it on purpose; I try not to do it” (KeF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Kids forget about the rules sometimes and sometimes it’s an accident” (KaM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Oh like everybody you know has done it and its pretty reasonable then you might go up to your parents and they just say “no” so you just do it” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Because if you think it’s unfair [family rule or family discipline] then you sometimes will go behind their [parents] back just to annoy them and just to get them back” (KaF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If you are annoyed with them [parents] and you want to get at them, when you are at the clothes line or something you think oh Mum told me not to do this, oh I don’t like her at the moment lets go and do it” (DF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No, we wouldn’t want to get back at them [parents] if we thought they were being fair” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If you’ve identified what you’ve done wrong, like if you know what you’ve done wrong and the punishment is fair, you wouldn’t want to get them back” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When children do things they shouldn’t how do parents react?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Parents’ Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“Parents are angry at what you’ve done, their faces are angry” (AM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Parents are sad at you” (KaM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They smack your bottom and get their shoe and smack with that” (KeF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“They [parents] are sad and disappointed because you are being disrespectful” (AF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They [parents] come back in a totally different way and they get really angry” (KaM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Disappointed, they give you that disappointed look” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They should say I’m disappointed, if they let it out that they are angry about it, maybe some people would stop it” (KaM12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16 gives examples from children as to why they may transgress and their parents’ reactions to these transgressions. The 5 to 7 year olds explained that children transgressed as a response to parental behaviour (37%, n=7), to gain a reaction from parents (36%, n=7) or that children often received rewards after being disciplined (25%, n=5). Some of this age group said that children did things they shouldn’t on purpose, other disagreed and said children did not transgress on purpose. Forty two percent (n=8) of this age group reported that parents were angry at the child and not necessarily at the child’s action. A quarter (25%, n=5) of these children thought parents would be “sad” because of the child’s behaviour.

Just under a third (32%, n=8) of the 9 to 11 year olds reported that children misbehaved to get parental attention, and 40% (n=11) reported that children “broke the rules on purpose” because children were angry with parents for prior parental unfairness. Four girls said that children did not break the family rules on purpose. Four boys commented that sometimes children break the family rules unintentionally. Predominantly (59%, n=12) children said that parents would feel angry at the child who transgressed.

The majority (71%, n=22) of the 12 to 14 year olds reported that most of the time children did things that their parents told them not to on purpose; behaving in this manner to get back at parents because they felt that their parents had disciplined them unfairly, or that the family rule was inappropriate. However, they explained that if children had done something wrong or understood why their transgression was wrong and received fair discipline, then the child would not want to ‘get back’ at their parents by doing something they shouldn’t. These children used adjectives like angry, annoyed, ashamed, grumpy, embarrassed, let down and betrayed when discussing how parents would feel when children broke a family rule on purpose. Most (68%, n=21) of these children reported that parents would be disappointed with the child.
However, some of these children said that parents could be more effective in their discipline if they made their feelings known to children.

Table 17: How children feel when they are doing something they shouldn't (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How children feel when they are transgressing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] feel bad” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A bit weird and you feel a bit weird and a bit happy too” (DF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes when I do it, like inside me doesn’t want to do it but then the outside of me is doing it” (KeF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You feel guilty that you shouldn’t have done it” (AM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The inside of me is thinking about the future and what my parents are going to do when they find out” (HM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You feel like I wish I hadn’t of done that” (KaF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 years olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Going behind your parents back is wrong; you just know that it’s wrong” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You feel guilty, and then afterwards you feel good” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When you are annoyed you feel good doing it and then you start getting worried and thinking that you shouldn’t have done that” (KaM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe happy in some ways, like if your parents are really strict and they say you can’t do such and such and you do, you kind of feel naughty” (DM12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 reports examples of how children described their feeling when they transgressed on purpose. The **5 to 7 year olds** expressed the positive and negative emotional consequences for children when transgressing from family rules on purpose. The majority (62%, n=12) of this age group said that nobody was around when children did things they shouldn’t and 25% (n=4) mentioned that only one parent was around. A small number mentioned other siblings being in the vicinity of the child’s transgression.

Some of the **9 to 11 year olds** reported a diverse range of feelings that children may have when they are doing something they shouldn’t. Over half (56%, n=14) of these children talked about feeling guilty and the conflicting emotions children feel. Most children (58%, n=16) of this age reported that
siblings accompanied children when they did things they shouldn’t. Older siblings were reported as being present more than younger siblings. Three children said that children were by themselves and a further three said that friends or cousins were present.

Forty one percent (n=12) of the 12 to 14 year olds said that children felt guilty when they did things they shouldn’t. Just over a quarter (27%, n=8) explained that children felt that they had been wrong to transgress and 25% (n=7) said children had mixed emotions during these transgressions. Twenty five percent (n=7) of this age group reported that peers had an influence on whether or not children would break a family rule on purpose. However, 38% (n=11) of this age group reported that no-one was around, at the time of the transgression, and certainly not parents. These children said that the parent who determined the family rule was not around. Only six children mentioned siblings or cousins being with them when family rules were broken on purpose.

Table 18: Children’s responses to parental unfairness (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happens if children think parents are being unfair?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s unfair if you don’t hear your parent’s properly and if you don’t understand” (DM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If it was really your brother did it and you get a smack that is not fair and they [parents] don’t believe you” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Kids get told off for doing things that they didn’t do and their parents thought they did, that’s unfair” (KaM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The children will be feeling sad and hurt and pissed off” (KeM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When the parents and the child both agree that’s fair” (AF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Children get blamed for doing things they haven’t done and parents don’t listen” (DF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah we get told off for things we didn’t do” (DM12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When you are little you get blamed for things you didn’t do’ (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah mainly around friends, like parents don’t let you go where your friends are allowed to go” (KeF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do children do when they are being treated unfairly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] might go and do something naughty” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My sister just goes and does something unfair” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What do other children do at home when people are being treated unfairly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Example Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
<td>“The other kids get into it and being mean” (AF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They tease me” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The other children make them happy and give them something. If they have lollies they might share them” (KaF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
<td>“Try and be kind to them” (KaF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You want to go outside and not listen, my brother swears and my sister cries” (DM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I probably sit down and have a good laugh at them” (DM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Maybe they will tell their parents saying “I don’t really think this is fair” and that there must be some other way of sorting it out” (KeF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
<td>“I stick up for them. Or sometimes when they are not there and they are in their room I tell my Dad, you know, you’re not treating them [siblings] very fair here” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s funny, like when you start a fight with your sister and she gets blamed for it” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“With me and my sister it’s just leave and ignore it really” (Ka12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 reports what happens when children think parents are being unfair. The **5 to 7 year olds** focused mainly on children being wrongly blamed for transgression by parents, or children being disciplined for something the child had done “by accident”. A small number (3) of this age group mentioned being disciplined, while not understanding the parent instructions or message which was seen as being unfair. Just over half (51%, n=10) of this age group said that children felt angry and sad when parents were being unfair. Thirty nine percent (n=8) of these children said that children would intentionally transgress as a consequence of parental unfairness. Half of this age group said that siblings
would be empathic towards the person being treated unfairly, while the other half said that children would not.

Most (60%, n=16) of the 9 to 11 year olds mentioned children being disciplined for something they had not done and this was not fair. Conversely, 32% (n=8) of this age group gave examples of the circumstances by which children saw as fair discipline. Children expressed a range of emotional responses as consequences of perceived parental unfairness. A third (33%, n=8) of these children said that other children would either be empathic to the person who was being treated unfairly, or they would become upset and try and avoid this situation. Under a quarter (23%, n=6) of this age group said children would show very little empathy for the person who was being treated unfairly. Three children said that children would try and rectify the parent’s unfair behaviour with the parent. Twenty five percent (n=7) of this age group articulated how children felt when there was disagreement between mothers and fathers. This may have been because of the wording of this question, as it did not specifically mention children but ‘people’ being treated unfairly in the family. Children described feeling sad, lonely and that they would hide or withdraw when this was happening. These descriptions were similar to how children responded when other siblings were being treated unfairly.

The majority (61%, n=18) of the 12 to 14 year olds reported that a child being blamed for sibling’s transgressions was unfair. These children were divided as to whether the age of the sibling was a factor in fairness. Six children reported that parental unfairness also centered on not being able to do what peers were allowed to do. The children said that they reacted to parental unfairness by becoming angry, swearing or being disrespectful to parents, withdrawing from parents or ‘taking it out’ on siblings by being physically aggressive. Thirty five percent (n=9) said they would react by trying to get back at parents but would not react in this manner if they felt that the family rule and discipline was fair. Seven children said that children felt they could assert themselves and discuss parents
being unfair with their parents. Just under a third (32%, n=9) of this age group reported that children would be empathic and supportive of others in the family that was being treated unfairly. Conversely, 36% (n=11) of this age group, predominantly the boys, reported that others in the family would not be empathic.

**Summary**

Most children said that child/parent disagreements over the family rules resulted in conflict between parents and children which often precipitated conflict between parents. The 5 to 7 year olds reported that disagreement between parents and children resulted in parents using physical punishment. All three age groups reported that within these disagreements children felt powerless. The two older age groups however felt that children could assert themselves by questioning or negotiating with parents over family rules and discipline.

All three age groups reported that children transgressed the family rules on purpose. Generally this action was taken by children as a response to alleged unfairness by parents towards the child. The majority of children cited children being unjustly blamed for other siblings’ transgression as the most unfair behaviour by parents, which lead children into further transgressing. Children were divided as to whether the age of the ‘other’ sibling had an effect on parents’ unfairness. Interestingly some of the 5 to 7 year olds reported that children transgressed because they receive rewards from parents. The two older age groups mentioned that peers had an effect on whether children transgressed.

All three age groups (the majority reported by girls) indicated that not all of children’s transgressions were ‘done on purpose’, as sometimes children did not understand the parental message or the transgression was not intentional. The two older age groups reported that if children understood the disciplinary message and agreed that the discipline was fair, then this would prevent children from misbehaving again.
All three age groups reported that both parents and children felt angry over disagreements about family rules and family discipline. The two older age groups described the impact of children’s behaviour on parents, with most saying that parents are disappointed and saddened by their behaviour. Boys were less likely to feel empathic to others in the home when there was a perception that people were not being treated fairly. A number of children in the two older age groups discussed children becoming upset and wanting to withdraw when people were being treated unfairly at home.
Theme Five
Children’s views on physical punishment

Introduction
Children were asked a series of direct questions about the use of physical punishment by parents. These questions assisted in finding out the frequency, impact and associated child and parents’ behaviours when this form of family discipline is used:

1. Do sometimes children get smacked when they do things they shouldn’t?
2. What is a smack?
3. Why do you think children get smacked?
4. Where do children get smacked?
5. What does it feel like to be smacked?
6. How do children act after being smacked?
7. How do adults act after they have given a smack?
8. Adults smack children but how come children don’t smack adults?
9. Is it okay to smack or not okay to smack?
10. When you are an adult will you smack children?
11. What are some others things parents could do instead of smacking?

Table 19: Prevalence and descriptions of a smack (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do sometimes children get smacked when they do things they shouldn’t?</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah, we get smacked” (KeF7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Only if I am doing something really, really bad, not usually though” (DM9)</td>
<td>“We used to have these shoe horns but it was a long one and it was green one and we called it the “whacker” and you had lie on the bed so you couldn’t run away and my Mum and Dad would go whack and whack like that” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No, I don’t my Mum and Dad don’t like it” (KeF7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Or if I keep on doing something that I shouldn’t and I keep on repeating it” (DF10)</td>
<td>“Kids get smacked until they are about 10 and then they start avoiding their parents and running away” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My parents don’t like smacking, they don’t believe in it” (KeF10)</td>
<td>“Yeah we get hit we dirtied the washing the other day and we got the triple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

123
cane the next morning” (HM13)

**What is a smack?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>“It’s loud and sore and it stings” (KaM5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Like a big hit” (KaM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When your parents hit you on the butt, and like if Splodge didn’t know what it looked like, it goes like that [indicating arm and hand going up and down]” (DM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“A smack is a nasty hit” (KeF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Smacking is violent” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It gives you a big bruise on your bum” (AF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s just like a warning around the head” (KaM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Feels really sore and stingy and hurtly and it stays there for awhile” (DF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Smacks sting especially when it’s with a wooden spoon, I remember ours breaking once” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Hitting can be with a cricket bat and smacking is like an open hand” (HM13)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I actually thank my Dad for smacking me because it has changed what I do” (HM13)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A hit is more aggressive and more violent” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A smack is like a tap and a hit is really hard” (KeM12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other comments:**

| 12 to 14 year olds | “In some families they do depending if the parent had been treated like that, they think it’s right, and they think that’s how they are supposed to be disciplined depending on their childhood” (AF13) |
|                   | “Yeah they [parents] always go on about how tough it was when they were little, they say I go hit and it didn’t harm me” (HM13) |
|                   | “Depending like sometimes they [parents] like deliberately want to hurt you” (KaF12) |
|                   | “Depending on how angry they [parents] are because if it’s something they get really angry about then they will probably hit you because they won’t be able to control their anger and stuff” (HM13) |
|                   | “A smack is probably somewhere that wouldn’t hurt very much like it’s a slap and a hit could be somewhere where it would hurt like on the face or something, really strongly” (DF13) |

Table 19 gives examples of children’s descriptions of what a smack is and reports on how many children are smacked. Ninety percent (n=18) of the 5 to 7 year olds reported that children receive physical punishment. Seventy three percent (n=20) of the 9 to 11 year olds reported that children did get smacked.
by parents. Three additional children said that children do get smacked but only under certain circumstances, which focused on the severity and frequency of the child’s behaviour. All of the **12 to 14 year olds** who responded to this question said that they had been smacked. Far more children said that they could remember being smacked when they were younger (69%, n=21) than those children who reported that they were smacked at their present age (29%, n=9).

Fourteen percent (n=4) **9 to 11 year olds** said that they did not get smacked. These children explained that this was due to their parents not believing in this form of family discipline and 10% (n=2) of the **5 to 7 year olds** who said that children were not physically disciplined reported this was because their parents were against this practice.

The majority (63%, n=12) of the **5 to 7 year olds** described a smack as an action that physically hurt children. Just over a third (36%, n=7) of this age group described a smack as a hit or a whack. Similarly, 48% (n=13) of the **9 to 11 year olds** described a smack as a hit. Three children described smacking as being an act of violence. Children discussed the physical pain of being smacked and some said that smacking was used as an indicator to children that their behaviour was inappropriate.

The **12 to 14 year olds** described the physical pain that was experienced when they were smacked. Interestingly this age group discussed whether there was a difference between smacking and hitting. Fifty five percent (n=17) of these children explained that a hit was more violent and delivered by parents with more aggression than a smack. What the child was struck with and how the parent struck the child were also factors that these children mentioned. Children said that age was an important factor as to whether children were smacked or not. Children also mentioned the parental intention behind the smack and the physical consequences for the child as factors which determine the difference between a smack and a hit. Twenty three percent (n=7) of these children
indicated that a predictor for whether children will be smacked was parents’ own experiences as children. Six children in one focus group thought that smacking was an effective form of family discipline. It was noticeable that these comments came from the boys. These boys also made comment that their fathers had expressed that they “had it easy” compared to the physical punishment their fathers had received as children.

Table 20: Where, why and with what are children smacked? (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do children get smacked?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
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<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Where do children get smacked?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
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<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
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<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
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</table>
"On the back of the head sometimes" (KaM13)
"If you swear you get your mouth scrubbed out with soap" (HM13)
"My cousin gets mustard in her mouth" (DF14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What with?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
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<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
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**Other comments**

| **12 to 14 year olds** | “If she like deserves it and Dad says “oh she’s done this to you and you’ve done nothing to her, you can sort it out” but I don’t like to hurt her, I just hold her down on the ground until she cries” (HM13) |
| | “Yeah, like if my sister really pisses me off and like Mum won’t stop her, Dad just goes “oh if Mum doesn’t stop her, you can deal to her” (HM13) |

Table 20 reports the children’s discussions on why and where children are physically punished and with what. Being naughty was mentioned by a large number (62%, n=13) of the **5 to 7 year olds** as the reason children were smacked. When asked what kinds of things children did to be naughty, the child’s use of physical violence towards others mainly siblings, accounted for the majority of examples. Being smacked for not understanding the parental message, accidentally breaking a rule, stealing, being disobedient, and disagreeing with parents were also mentioned as reasons children were smacked. Similarly the **9 to 11 year olds**, 52% (n=14) said they were smacked for physically hurting others, mainly siblings. Being disrespectful to parents, swearing, using rude words were also mentioned by 32% (n=8) of these children. Three children mentioned that parents smacked children to make sure that children learnt the correct behaviour. Interestingly one child mentioned that
parents smacked children because “sometimes parents don’t know what else to do”.

Fifty one percent (n=15) of the 12 to 14 year olds said that being violent to others (usually siblings) was the main reasons children get smacked. Some children referred to incidences of why younger children would be smacked which was to assist younger children to learn. Being disrespectful to parents, breaking valuable household items and for continuous disobedience were also mentioned as reasons for children being smacked. A small number (3) of children explained that children were smacked not because of the child's behaviour but because of parents’ belief systems and their own childhood experiences. A small number of children commented that children get smacked because they “deserve it”, to “toughen them up” and to “be taught a lesson”. Again it was noticeable that these comments came from one location and were all boys. Concerningly, this same group of boys mentioned incidents where fathers endorsed their sons using physical force on siblings as a resolution to conflict. Conversely, eight children (3 boys and 5 girls) were adamant that smacking does not teach children a lesson and said that smacking makes children misbehave, makes children angry and scared of their parents.

The 5 to 7 year old children reported that children are smacked on the hand and bottom (31%, n=6), concerningly on the head and back (40%, n=8) and with implements (27%, n=5). Three children mentioned locations in the home; the bedroom and kitchen where children were smacked. One child mentioned being smacked in public. Children mentioned being smacked with wooden spoons, sticks, and spatula and with a tennis racket. None of the 9 to 11 year olds mentioned the location where children usually get smacked. These children reported 41% (n=11) are smacked on the hand, bottom, legs and arms, concerningly 36% (n=10) on or around the face and head and on the back and 22% (n=5) with implements. None of the 12 to 14 year olds mentioned the location. Forty five percent (n=13) of these children mentioned being smacked or
hit on their bottoms, arms, hands and legs. Two children spoke about being grabbed around the arm as a means of restraint. Concerningly, 26% (n=8) of this age group mentioned that children are smacked or hit on or around the head, face and mouth and 20% (n=6) reported that children have their mouth washed out with soap and/or being forced to ingest mustard for swearing. Twenty percent (n=6) of these children said that children get hit or smacked with implements, mentioning the “wooden spoon”, the “cane”, the “whacker” and “Dads belt”.

As an additional question children were asked who usually smacks children. The 5 to 7 year olds reported that parents (75%, n=15) were the main people who smacked children. Just under a quarter (24%, n=5) mentioned other family members who smacked children which included mothers and fathers, boyfriends and girlfriends, uncles and older brothers. Fathers were mentioned more than mothers as the parent who would be more likely to smack children. The 9 to 11 year olds reported that parents (72%, n=17) were the main people who smacked children. A quarter (25%, n=7) of this age group mentioned other family members who smacked children which included caregivers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins and older brothers and sisters. Two girls mentioned stepfathers and added their displeasure about being hit by a stepfather. Fathers were mentioned more (60%, n=16) than mothers (40%, n=11) as the parent who would be more likely to smack children.

The majority (78%, n=24) of 12 to 14 year olds reported that parents, adults or older people were the main people who smacked or hit children. Fathers were mentioned more (62%, n=19) than mothers (33%, n=10) as being the parent more likely to smack children. Boys tended to report that fathers smacked or hit more than mothers. A small number of children mentioned children being hit by mothers when they were small. Twenty percent (n=6) of the children mentioned that children can also be hit or smacked by uncles, grandparents and older brothers and sisters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Physical Experience</th>
<th>Emotional Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“It hurts you all over” (KeM7)</td>
<td>“It makes you feel sad and you cry” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It feels sore” (KaF6)</td>
<td>“You might get really sore, and you might run away and cry” (DF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Feel like crying cause it hurts” (DF7)</td>
<td>“You feel scared because you don’t want it to happen again and you might forget about your promise when you said “I won’t do it again” and you might do it” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“It’s really sore” (AF9)</td>
<td>“It feels like they [parents] don’t love you anymore” (KeF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Get a red patch and it gets numb a bit” (HF10)</td>
<td>“It feels like you’ve been adopted or something and you’re not part of their family” (KaF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“It’s really sore and painful” (AF14)</td>
<td>“You feel real upset because they are hurting you and you love them so much and then all of a sudden they hit you and hurt you and you feel like as though they don’t care about you because they are hurting you” (DF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s like a burning pain, it all goes red” (KeM12)</td>
<td>“Yeah, depends who it’s in front of, if it’s just like you and your Mother, but if it’s in front of a group of people then its really shameful, like in front of the family too” (KaF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 gives examples of how children feel both emotionally and physically after being smacked. The predominant (64%, n=12) feeling described by the 5 to 7 year olds was one of physical pain. Twenty four percent (n=5) of this age group reported the fear of being smacked again. Some children said that children felt sad when they were smacked. The 9 to 11 year olds spoke about the emotional impact of being smacked more than the physical impact of being smacked. They described the emotional impact of being smacked with 57% (N=15) describing feeling of sadness, anger and rejection. The 12 to 14 year olds also reported that smacking was physically painful and left marks on their bodies. It is interesting to note that while the questions asked in the focus groups predominately used the word ‘smack’ the children answered by using the word ‘hit’. Children reported the emotional impact of being smacked by
describing the effect smacking had on children’s relationship with the person who
smacked them and of feeling ashamed of being smacked. Three children
mentioned having feelings of anger and “hurt” when they were physically
punished for something they did not do.

Table 22: How children and parents act after children are smacked (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do children act after being smacked?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Angry at your parents; they [children] might hate their Mums and Dads” (DM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] are feeling sad and they [children] might cry” (AF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You are careful what you do” (KeM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like you want payback and revenge” (KeM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The children feel sad and it’s sore and they [children] are angry” (KaM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Smacking doesn’t really work cause they [parents] have to keep doing it” (KeM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I just feel really angry; I just like to tell my parents that I hate them and stuff” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] are crying and they are angry” (DF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [children] kind of go away from their parents because they don’t want to be hit again” (KeM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You hurt your sister like you take it out on somebody else” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Smacking doesn’t work because children do it again” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do adults act after they have given a smack?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 to 7 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Angry at the person who’s done it” (DF5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] feel sorry for you they come and say sorry, that’s what my Mum does” (KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] feel nothing” (DM7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9 to 11 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Parents feel really angry” (KaF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My Mum when she smacks me, she ends up saying that she’s sorry and says that she shouldn’t have done that” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Like when you have come down from your room you might get a treat because they feel guilty for smacking” (AM10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It [smacking] might be the first reaction” (DM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 to 14 year olds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think when they [parents] get so angry they just do it [smack] and then afterwards they think; oh I shouldn’t have done that” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mum does that [buys stuff] when Dad smacks me for what I did naughty, Mum comes and goes “its okay”” (DF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] say sorry sometimes if they think it [smacking] was a bit harsh” (DM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] think good job” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22 gives examples of children’s descriptions on how parents and children act after being smacked. Feelings of anger towards parents after being smacked were reported by 43% (n=8) of the 5 to 7 year olds and 35% (n=7) of them reported that children felt sad as a consequence of being smacked. Children also mentioned how smacking affected relationships with parents, making children dislike them. One child commented on the potential effectiveness of smacking. The majority (76%, n=15) of the 5 to 7 year olds associated being smacked with angry parents who felt sad after giving the smack. Some of these children also mentioned parents feeling sorry for the child that they had smacked. Twenty three percent (n=4) of this age group discussed that parents’ behaviour did not change after they had given a smack.

The 9 to 11 year olds reported that children feel anger (33%, n=9) and want retribution (37%, n=10) against the parent who did the smacking. Children also mentioned feeling sad, physically sore, crying, and feeling scared of being smacked again. Interestingly, four children mentioned that smacking did not work because it did not teach children anything. Most (61%, n=17) of the children in this age group associated being smacked with angry and grumpy parents. Thirty five percent (n=9) of this group mentioned that parents felt sorry for smacking the child. One child mentioned that parents might smack as an impulsive action.

Fifty one percent (n=15) of the 12 to 14 year olds said that children feel angry with their parents, cried and children disliked their parents after they have given a smack. Children said that they avoided and ignored parents after being smacked or hit. A small number (3) of children said that children do “other naughty stuff” after being smacked and described being violent to siblings. A further 20% (n=6) said that smacking does not work as children “do it again”. Children associated being smacked or hit with angry parents who were either upset or disappointed with the child. Fifty nine percent (n=18) reported that parents often regretted smacking their children and would verbalise this to the
A small number (4) of boys reported that parents think that children deserve to be smacked and do not react.

Table 23: Children's perception of why children do not smack adults (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults smack children but how come children don’t smack adults?</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The adults would be angry and they might smack you back really, really hard” (DF5)</td>
<td>“Adults they are in control” (KeF9)</td>
<td>“Then they [parents] would hit you back twice as hard” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Because that isn’t just how it is” (AM7)</td>
<td>“Usually because they [parents] know they have power over them [children]” (KaF11)</td>
<td>“Because they are bigger and stronger and because they are older” (KaF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They [adults] are just bigger than us and we can’t do it” (KeM7)</td>
<td>“I couldn’t smack my Dad, because he almost broke my arm by me smacking him back, he held me up by my arm and he held me about 3 feet off the ground and it was really hurting and if he drops you, that’s sore, that’s what he’s done to me” (KeM10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Because like if they are your parents they have the right to smack you” (KeF11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 gives examples of children’s reasons why they do not smack adults. Seventy seven percent (n=15) of the **5 to 7 year olds** described the fear of additional smacking by adults as the main reason. Children also described adults as bigger and stronger, and therefore having the ability to smack with greater severity than children. Two children discussed how unfeasible it was for a child to smack an adult. Sixty per cent (n=17) of the **9 to 11 year olds** that responded to this question reported that children do not smack adults because they are physically bigger and stronger and have more “power” than children. The fear of being smacked back by parent was mentioned by 20% (n=5) of the children with one child relaying the physical consequences of hitting his father. Interestingly within this discussion three children mentioned that parents have the right to smack children. The majority of **12 to 14 year olds** responded to this question by saying that children did not smack adults because adults are bigger,
stronger and older (30%, n=9) and for fear of being smacked back harder by parents (42%, n=13).

Table 24: Appropriateness of smacking and children’s future behaviour (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is it okay to smack or not okay to smack?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“It’s not okay, only adults can smack their kids but not anyone else’s”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(KeF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No its not okay to smack cause it hurts” (KaM6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, because it’s embarrassing if somebody sees you getting smacked in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front of heaps of people” (AF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“No it’s not okay to smack” (KeF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Only responsible parents should be given the right to smack children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(KaM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Only if it’s appropriate like if you’ve done something real bad it’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate to smack them” (DF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“No it is very much not okay” (KaF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not hits, smacks can be alright when you’re younger” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not physically hurting them but just teaching them a lesson and not too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>harsh” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There’s got to be some other ways to discipline rather than hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kids. You never forget what happened when you were younger” (KeF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yeah like Mum and Dads could just be angry or stressed or something,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>so don’t take it out on your kid’” (KeF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When you are an adult will you smack children?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“No because it hurts” (DF5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No, only if they’re being really, really naughty” (KeM5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“I don’t think it does anything, it makes it worse” (DF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It teaches them, when they get children, to smack their kids” (AF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Well some people do think its okay but some people don’t. The children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that are getting hit don’t think its okay even if they’ve been naughty”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(HM11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think that there are other ways to solve those kinds of problems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(KeF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“Not sure, maybe” (DF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We don’t want to put them through it but I guess we say that we wouldn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do it to them now but when we are older we probably might end up doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it” (KaF12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24 shows children’s perception on the appropriateness of smacking and whether or not they will use this form of discipline in the future. All the 5 to 7 year olds who responded to this question said it was not okay for adults to smack children. Whilst endorsing that smacking was not okay 24% (n=5) of these children commented on aspects of other adults smacking children which were slightly contradictory. Two children mentioned that the reason it was not okay to smack children was that it may embarrass the child. Eighty four percent (n=17) said that they would not use smacking as a form of family discipline. The main reason mentioned was because smacking hurt. Two children gave provisos where they may use this form of discipline.

Sixty four percent (n=16) of the 9 to 11 year olds said it was not okay for parents to smack children. A further four children explained that smacking was okay as long as the person that was giving the smack was responsible and smacking was used appropriately. Interestingly, 35% (n=9) reported this form of family discipline did not teach children correct behaviour. These children also mentioned the possibilities of passing this form of family discipline to the next generation and began to discuss how adults and children can hold different views. Children in this age group were very much undecided about whether they would use smacking as a form of family discipline or not. Fifty percent (n=14) of this age group said they would not use smacking as a form of family discipline and 30% (n=8) said they would. However, throughout the focus groups some of the children changed their views. Some children said that it would be dependent on the child’s behaviour.

Thirty two percent (n=9) of the 12 to 14 year olds said it was unacceptable to hit or smack children under any circumstances and 58% (n=17) said that smacking was okay but only under certain conditions. These conditions seemed to centre on the child’s age, their definition (smacking as opposed to hitting) and the frequency and severity of the punishment. The context of the child’s behaviour and what the child had done was also mentioned by this group.
of children. The children who said that it was not okay to smack gave reasons for this by reporting that it was harmful to children and that there must be more effective ways of disciplining children. These children also said it was not fair for adults to take their own frustrations out on children and mentioned the possibilities of the intergenerational transfer of hitting children. Fifty four percent (n=16) of this age group said they would not smack or hit children when they were adults. These children gave reasons for this by saying that their own experiences of being smacked would prevent them from smacking their children. Just under a quarter (23%, n=7) of these children (mainly girls) were undecided as to whether or not they would smack their children. Children expressed an awareness that they may not want to smack their children but this may become inevitable. The gender of the child reported did not play a part in whether these children would smack or hit their children (reported by both girls and boys). These children were adamant that it made no difference to adults whether the child was a boy or a girl.

Table 25: Children’s views on the law (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 to 11 year olds</td>
<td>“Because there’s a law in 2 years time and then you’re not allowed to smack your kids. Just a couple of years ago I thought, I heard one day on the radio could we have voting for people who should not smack their kids and the vote came out that they should not smack their kids and people are still smacking their children” (KeM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes because if a stranger smacks someone, a small child, and they were a very big strong person, they might break their arm or something and then that way instead of them just getting a big telling off by the Police, they’ve actually broken the law so they will go to jail” (KeF10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes it’s a good idea to make a law about not smacking children cause you can hurt them” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14 year olds</td>
<td>“I reckon if they change the law it will just make all the children like pussies because they know they can’t be hit so they’ll just get soft” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It will make the children more like disobeying the rules because they know they [parents] can’t do anything. You respect them [parents] when you’re smacked” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s okay to hit kids as long as it is reasonable and not too sore afterwards” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Adults hit in anger, they may not mean to hurt the child but do” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“It’s not fair adults hitting is against the law but not children, it’s not okay that adults can’t hit each other but can hit kids” (AF13)

“Kids should be thought of first in the law” (AF13)

Table 25 gives examples of some children’s thoughts about the legislation that surrounds physical punishment of children. Twenty five percent (n=7) of the 9 to 11 year olds in one location had some (not necessarily correct) knowledge “of the law about smacking”. Most of these children supported a ban on the use of physical force on children and some mentioned the potential harm of parents or even strangers using physical punishment. The 12 to 14 year olds in two locations brought up the “law” about physical punishment of children. Children from one location said there was no need for a law to stop parents from physically disciplining their children. These children were of the opinion that should a ‘strict law’ be adopted, there would be negative consequences for children. These children said parents would not be able to control them and saw smacking and hitting as a means for parents to gain respect from children. This group of children was from the same location and all boys. The children from the other location had quite different views. This group of girls reported the discord the present “law” created between children and adults. These children cited recent public cases where children had died due to parental abuse and the possible causes behind this. They also commented that in any law children should come first.

Table 26: Children’s suggestions to alternatives to smacking (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are some things parents could do instead of smacking?</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 to 7 year olds</td>
<td>“Stop the playstation that’s a bad one” (DM7)</td>
<td>“Like send then to their room or ban them from going to a friend’s house” (HM10)</td>
<td>“Say it in to you, just calmly” (DM13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Parents should help you understand; sometimes I don’t know why I get a smack” (AF5)</td>
<td>“Just sit down and talk about it” (KeM10)</td>
<td>“Talking you through it and why you shouldn’t do that” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Try not to be angry and smack” (KeF7)</td>
<td>“Just give us respect” (KaF11)</td>
<td>“I’d rather get smacked than something taken off me” (HM13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26 reports suggestions from children on some alternatives to smacking. The 5 to 7 year olds reported that having privileges taken off them, like the Play Station was an effective disciplinary tool (30%, n=6). Being sent to your room, (29%, n=6) not having friends to stay and having to do more housework were also suggested (20%, n=4). However, 26% (5) of this age group mentioned other behaviours that adults could change rather than discussing alternatives to smacking. These children said parents should control their anger as this led to smacking, and adults should help children to understand the reason for the smack. Fifty seven percent (n=15) of the 9 to 11 year olds described other forms of family discipline children would prefer, which included the withdrawal of privileges, time out and doing extra chores. Forty percent (n=11) of this age group said that children would prefer parents to talk with them instead of smacking them. When describing alternatives to smacking 67% (n=20) of the 12 to 14 year olds mentioned alternative adult behaviours rather than different types of punishment. Children expressed a desire to be talked to by parents in a calm manner, in a way that children could understand and for parents to explain to the child why a particular behaviour was unacceptable. Time out and having extra chores were mentioned by children as an alternative to physical punishment, saying that these worked better than smacking. However, there was a small (3) group of boys who said that smacking was better than getting privileges taken from them.

Summary

The majority of children reported that children were smacked for doing things they shouldn’t, with only seven (8.75%) children reporting that they had not been smacked. The two younger age groups described a smack as a hard hit that hurt both physically and emotionally. The 12 to 14 year old age group reported that there was a distinct difference between a smack and a hit which was dependent on severity, frequency, where on the body, and the parental intent of the smack or hit. This age group also reported the negative impact hitting had on children's relationship with the person who hit them. Children from all age groups reported
that children were smacked mostly because the child had been violent. The younger age group also reported that children get smacked for things that they do by accident. While the majority of children in all age groups reported being smacked on the bottom, hands, arms and legs, a relatively high numbers of children reported that children are smacked on or around the face, head and back.

Most children from all age groups reported male members of their households as more likely to smack children. Boys were also more likely to report being smacked by fathers than girls and especially in the two older age groups. All age groups associated smacking with angry parents; with the two older age groups (9 to 11 and 12 to 14 year olds) reporting that parents often regretted smacking the child. Children also reported feeling angry and sad after being smacked, with the older age group saying that children responded to being smacked by wanting retribution.

Gender and age differences emerged when children discussed the effectiveness of smacking, whether or not children felt that smacking was an acceptable form of family discipline and around the “law about smacking”. The older males (12 to 14 year olds) were more likely to report their support for the use of physical punishment and support its effectiveness as a disciplinary tool, than the girls of the same age. Some of the older boys also endorsed legislation that permitted parental use of physical force.
### Theme Six

**Time out, withdrawal of privileges and grounding**

**Introduction**

Children were asked at the beginning of the focus groups about some of the things that happened to children when they misbehaved. Children's views on the use of other types of family discipline by parents were accessed in the following question.

- Splodge (or Spike) remembers at the beginning that the group said that some other things happen to children when they are doing things they shouldn't. What were those things again?

#### Table 27: Children’s views on other family discipline techniques (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>Time out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You have to do naughty stuff like break your toy car” (KaM7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It feels sad being put in your room” (KeF5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel lonely” (AM5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>Time out, Withdrawal of privileges, Grounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Smash a window on purpose” (DM9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Be doing swearing at your Mum” (AF10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Anger because you can’t play” (KaF11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel annoyed” (HM9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
<th>Time out, Withdrawal of privileges, Grounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Swearing at your parent or something” (AF13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes it feels good because you get away from your brothers and sisters” (DF14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hurling someone or getting in a fight at school” (KaM12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Alcohol or dack [marijuana] is the worst to get caught with” (KaF13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Feel probably sad” (KeM13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Does that make children behave better**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
<th>We have to say sorry but that's okay” (KeF7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It makes you behave better” (DF7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
<th>“Time out makes you behave better” (KeF11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No it does not make kids behave better” (KeM11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grounding is the worst” (DF10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grounding works best and makes you behave better” (KaF10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Time out’s okay it’s better than smacking” (KeF9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
<th>“Yeah taking the good things away from you makes you behave better” (AF13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No it doesn’t make you behave better” (HM13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Privileges being taken away is worse than grounding” (AF13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grounding and not being allowed things is better than smacking and hitting” (KaM13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah and if they [parents] hit you and take your privileges off, that’s just like a double whammy” (HM13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27 presents some examples of the children’s perceptions on other types of discipline used when children transgress at home. While the 5 to 7 year olds said having privileges taken from them and being grounded in other questions in the focus group discussions, only time out was mentioned from this particular set of questions. Children said that children got put in time out for being naughty and described “being naughty” as breaking household items or physically hurting siblings. Children mentioned feeling angry and annoyed at parents, or sad and lonely when being placed in time out. The bedroom was mentioned as the predominate room in the house that was used for time out or being placed outside. Sixty two percent (n=13) of this age group reported that time out made children behave better. Children mentioned that children had to say sorry for their behaviour after coming out of time out. These children said that they felt that this was justified.

The 9 to 11 year olds indicated that parents may use all or a combination of time out, grounding and withdrawal of privileges as a method of disciplining children. Children reported that children were put into time out, were grounded or had privileges withdrawn for being naughty and described being “naughty” as breaking household items or being disrespectful to parents. The bedroom was mentioned as the predominate room in the house that was used for time out. This age group described children feeling sad, angry and annoyed at parents for being placed in time out, for being grounded and having privileges withdrawn. Being grounded or having privileges withdrawn evoked more negative feelings from the children than time out. Fifty seven percent (n=15) reported that timeout, having privileges withdrawn, and being grounded made children behave better. However, there was no consensus between the children as to which of these methods of family discipline was the “worst”.

Twenty nine percent (n=8) of the 12 to 14 year olds mentioned being put in time out. Three children mentioned being put in time out when they were younger. The reasons for being put in time out were described as being
disrespectful to parents or for being physically aggressive. This age group described feeling sad being put in time out and sometimes felt that this form of discipline was not deserved. Conversely, other children felt positive about time out as this gave children some time away from siblings. Grounding and withdrawal of privileges were mentioned by 62% (n=19) of this age group as a form of family discipline that was used at home. These children mentioned parents using a combination of grounding and/or withdrawal of privileges as a method of disciplining children. Some children said that the aforementioned discipline meant the same thing. Children mentioned feeling sad, stupid, and angry when they were grounded or had privileges withdrawn or if they were prevented from doing things they wanted. Fifty eight percent (n=17) explained that grounding and withdrawal of privileges did make children behave better. Six children believed it did not. There was some debate in all the focus groups as to which was “worse” – grounding or withdrawal of privileges.

Summary

All age groups reported that children’s transgressions resulted in being placed in time out, having privileges taken from them or being grounded. The 5 to 7 year olds only mentioned being put in time out. Being disrespectful to parents and harming others was a predominant behaviour reported by the two younger age groups as reasons why children were placed in time out, privileges withdrawn or grounded. The 12 to 14 year old age group mentioned antisocial behaviours and behaviours that happened outside the home. Some children in the two older age groups said that parents used a combination of time out, withdrawal of privileges and grounding when disciplining children. Time out seemed to be used less with the 12 to 14 year olds.

All age groups reported feeling angry, sad and annoyed at parents when these forms of discipline was used. The majority of all age groups, however, reported that the use of time out, withdrawal of privileges and grounding, were effective forms of discipline. There was no consensus amongst the two older age
groups as to which of these discipline methods were the "worst". The majority of children that mentioned smacking in the two older age groups indicated that time out, withdrawal of privileges and being grounded were better forms of discipline than smacking or hitting.
Theme Seven
Children’s advice on family discipline

Introduction

I felt that it was important that children were given the opportunity to give adults some advice on the best ways to discipline children. The children were asked three questions to generate these discussions:

1. What’s the best thing parents can do when children are doing things they shouldn’t?
2. What’s the worst thing parents can do when children are doing things they shouldn’t?
3. When you are an adult, what will you do when children are doing things they shouldn’t?

Table 28: Children’s advice to parents (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best things parents can do</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah talk nice, talk nice so we understand” (AF5)</td>
<td>“Not smacking talking nicely” (DF7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The best thing they [parents] can do is eat lollies and be nice” (KeF6)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst thing parents can do</th>
<th>5 to 7 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Smacking them children is worst” (KaM7)</td>
<td>“Smack them [children] so they can’t walk and get bruises” (DF6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The kid may be sorry for being naughty and the parents don’t know” (KeF6)</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 to 11 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Your parents should let you sit down with them and you should have a talk with them and make sure you understand about what you’ve done wrong” (KaM9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [parents] forgive you and give you big smacking kisses” (AF9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You could find ways that both parent and child could be happy” (KeF11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Instead of punishing you, just talk to them [child] and they just ask you why did you do it and explain to them what they’ve done wrong” (KeF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not yell at us when they talk, it’s like when your parents yell at you, you switch off” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes when we were little we got blamed for things we didn’t do and if they [parents] sat us down and talked to us then that would have come out” (DM13)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12 to 14 year olds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Hitting stuff is the worse” (DF13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Especially if you’re like 6 or 7” (DF12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Smacking is worse than grounding, worse than time out, worse than taking Play Stations away” (KaM14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When they put you down, it’s the verbal stuff” (AF13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 28 reports children’s advice to parents. Fifty one percent (n=10) of the 5 to 7 year olds who responded to this question explained that the best thing parents can do is not be angry when disciplining their children. These children explained that parents should talk with children in a “nice” manner about the rule the child has broken as this would assist the child’s understanding. One child interpreted this question differently from the others and said that the best thing children could do was be good. The use of physical punishment by parents on children was mentioned by 67% (n=14) of this age group as the worst form of family discipline. Making children say they were sorry for being naughty, cleaning the house and being grounded were also mentioned as the worst thing parents could do to children for breaking the rules.

The majority (63%, n=17) of the 9 to 11 year olds advised that parents should talk to children and explain what the child has done wrong before administering any family discipline. Children felt this would have better outcomes for both children and parents. Children also mentioned wanting parents to forgive children for their wrong doing. The use of violence by parents on children was mentioned by 74% (n=20) of this age group as the worst thing parents could do to children. Description of parental violence ranged from a smack to violence that children believed could result in serious harm. Children throughout the focus groups mentioned the potential harm of the use of physical punishment by parents. Being put outside, being grounded and being threatened with boarding school was also mentioned by children as the worst thing parents could do.

Seventy percent (n=20) of the 12 to 14 year olds advised that children wanted their parents to talk with them and to be given an explanation as to why the child’s behaviour was wrong. Some children mentioned wanting to be assisted by parents to understand what behaviours were appropriate or inappropriate by discussing this with each other. Children also advised that when parents were talking about children’s behaviour that this should be done in private and not around siblings. They also commented on how much children
disliked their parents telling other people about their misbehaviour. Children recalled being blamed for things they had not done when younger so advised that if parents and children had had the opportunity to sit down and talk about the event then the matter would have had a better outcome. The use of violence by parents against children was mentioned by 62% (n=19) of this age group as the worst thing parents could do to children. A small number of boys (5) suggested that smacking was better than grounding as the smacking only lasted a short time. Some girls described the emotional harm by parents and made reference to adults’ comments about children’s physical appearance. Children also mentioned being grounded, having privileges taken from them and being threatened with boarding school as the worst things parents can do. One boy mentioned children being neglected as the worst thing he thought adults could do to children.

Table 29: Children’s use of family discipline (examples)

| When you are an adult, what will you do when children are doing things they shouldn't? |
|---|---|
| **5 to 7 year olds** | “Send them to their room” (KeF6)  
“Tell them to walk away” (DM7)  
“I might smack them when they are being very bad to me” (AF7) |
| **9 to 11 year olds** | “I’d probably say this is what you’ve done wrong and next time, just like don’t do it and just remember or get sent to your room” (KaM9)  
“Yeah we would be calm and talk to them, and maybe not yell at them” (AM10)  
“If they have done something bad then give them a smack and send them to their room and once they have settled down tell them not to do it again” (HF9) |
| **12 to 14 year olds** | “Under 10, ground them, you can start to talk to them then, maybe take the play station away” (HM13)  
“Kids under 5 don’t understand what smacking is about so I’d put them in time out” (HM13)  
“Just like explain it to them and work it out together” (KeF12)  
“There would be conflict between the two parents and he might smack the kids” (AF14) |

Table 29 describes some of the children’s comments on what form of family discipline they may use when they are adults. While 67% (n=13) of the 5 to 7 year olds found the use of physical punishment the worst form of family discipline 23% (n=5) said that they would use physical punishment. But this would be dependent on the severity of the child’s behaviour. Forty six percent (n=8) of this age group however reported that as parents they would put their
child in time out, warn the child, or tell the child to remove themselves when their child broke the family rules.

Thirty nine percent (n=10) of the 9 to 11 year olds reported that they would talk with their children about the child’s behaviour in a calm manner and in a way that the child would understand what they had done wrong. Thirty five percent (n=9) reported disciplining their child would depend on the severity of the child’s behaviour. Interestingly, children also discussed how children’s own parenting may have an impact on how they parented. Also of interest was that 25% (n=7) of the children said that parental fighting and arguing was a behaviour that should be stopped.

Forty five percent (n=12) of the 12 to 14 year olds said that the age of the child would determine the discipline they would use because of the different capabilities of children at different ages. Children reported that time out was favoured for the younger children and grounding for the older children. Thirty percent (n=9) of children mentioned that they would talk with their children about the behaviour, ensure that the child understood and assist the child’s understanding together. The gender of the child made no difference to what discipline they thought should be delivered by parents. Children said that children needed boundaries and discipline as long it was not too “harsh”. One child said that parents had to install values into children so they could function in society in the correct manner. This was met with lots of agreement from other children in that focus group. In one location some of the girls mentioned that the way they disciplined their children may depend on their future partner. This generated discussion on what would happen if their partner’s views were different from their own on child rearing. These girls were divided as to whether they could successfully negotiate with their partners on an agreeable parenting style in reality. Children also mentioned that parents’ behaviour could improve when they were separating. Children described the impact of parents’ separating on children, and said that children were often placed in a difficult position.
Summary

Children of all age groups reported that the best actions parents can take when children break family rules is to talk with the child about the transgression in a calm manner and in a way that the child understands. Children also said that children need assistance to understand why the transgression is wrong. The 5 to 7 year olds spoke about the need for parents not to be angry when they disciplined children. The 9 to 11 year olds advised that talking with the child should take place before any punishment. The 12 to 14 year olds expressed a wish that disciplinary discussions with parents should be done in private, and that parents do not discuss children transgressions with others. All three age groups advised that the use of physical force against children was the worst form of discipline parents could use. All age groups commented on the potential physical dangers for children should parents engage in this form of discipline.

Age differences emerged when children were asked about how they would discipline their own children when they were adults. The 5 to 7 year olds were more likely to report that they would not use physical discipline than the two older age groups. All age groups reported that the disciplinary technique would be dependent on the severity of the child’s behaviour. Some of the 9 to 11 year olds said that parental disciplinary styles could be influenced by how the parent was disciplined as a child. The 12 to 14 year olds were more likely to report that the child’s age would determine the disciplinary technique the parent used. Gender differences emerged within the 12 to 14 year old age group when discussing the effectiveness of different parental disciplinary techniques. Boys in this age group were more than likely to endorse the use of physical punishment than girls and saw this method as being effective. Boys also tended to more readily accept parental punishment and its consequences for children than girls.

All age groups saw children’s behaviour as being partly responsible for the disciplinary action of parents. The two older age groups commented on parental responsibilities to children, saying that children do need clear boundaries. The
two older age groups commented that some of the behaviours that parents exhibit in the home have negative consequences for children. They were concerned about the negative impact of parents fighting in front of children when there is marital disharmony.

**Summary of age and gender differences**

**Gender**

Over all three age groups girls reported doing more household task inside the home than boys did. The 9 to 11 year old girls reported household behaviours that were expected of them as well. Interestingly, the 5 to 7 year old girls reported being physically punished more than the boys of the same age. Boys were more likely to report being smacked or hit by their fathers especially in the two older age groups. The 12 to 14 year old boys were also more likely to endorse the use of physical punishment when discussing its effectiveness than girls. Some of the older boys believed that mothers did not have the skills to discipline boys. These boys reported that boys take more notice of their fathers in disciplinary situations. Boys across all age groups were less likely to report feelings of empathy for others that were being treated unfairly. There were no gender differences reported when children discussed different types of transgressions or how they reacted to parental unfairness or inconsistencies.

**Age**

The 5 to 7 year olds reported that parents use only one form of discipline technique at a time whereas the older age groups reported parents using a combination of techniques when children transgressed. The two younger age groups reported that physical punishment was used on children more than any other form of family discipline. The 5 to 7 year olds were less likely to endorse the use of physical punishment than the two older age groups and said they would not use physical punishment on their children when they were adults. Some of the 9 to 11 year old age group were undecided over this issue. The
older age group (12 to 14 year olds) were more likely to endorse its use depending on the child’s age and the severity and frequency of the smack or hit. These children made a distinction between a smack and a hit whereas the two younger age groups described a smack as a hard hit. The two older age groups reported that if children understood the disciplinary message and agreed that the discipline was fair, then this would prevent children from misbehaving again.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion

Value acquisition is one of the most needed as well as the most neglected areas of research ... In a world filled with inequity, conflict, and lack of respect and caring for others, the study of how values are inculcated in childhood demands attention. Nor has the role of parents in instilling values been fully explored ... primary caregivers whose position in the lives of their children’s is unique, play a special and central role in the socialisation of their children. (Grusec & Kuczynski, 1997, p. ix)

Introduction

One of the most powerful findings from this study was that all the children irrespective of age or gender, had considerable understanding and insight into their own and other people’s behaviour and feelings when family discipline occurred. They were able to express themselves clearly and articulately. Alderson (1993) asserts that children become competent by first being treated as if they are competent. The findings from this study support other research (Donaldson, 1987; Dunn, 1988) which shows evidence of the capacity of young children to put themselves in the position of others, provided they are afforded an understandable and meaningful context. The use of focus groups and a naïve questioners (Spike and Splodge) asking children directly about their experiences of family discipline ensured full participation and allowed children to talk about what was important to them, rather than what the researcher had predetermined for them. It is necessary for researchers to provide an environment where children are able to talk about their own experiences in their own way.

Children in this study tended to shift from reporting their own experiences to speculation about what might happen to children in general. All the information these children had to report, however, is of interest in that it represents both their experiences and perceptions of family discipline. Children may have moved from talking about their own experiences to the perceptions of others as a conscious choice, but having this choice allowed them to be comfortable in how they responded in the focus group discussions.
Children’s descriptions of family discipline and its scope

It is important for researchers to use clear definitions when discussing family discipline (Holden, 2002). However, these definitions may be those of the adults rather than those of children. When seeking meanings researchers need to include the research participants and seek their definitions. The starting point to this study was to seek children’s understandings of family discipline. Children were asked to describe the ‘family rules’, and to outline transgressions which constituted breaking a ‘family rule’ which would incur a disciplinary action by parents. They were also asked what that disciplinary action may be.

Children and young people from this study drew conceptual distinctions between classes of transgression as previous research by Nicci (1981), Smetana (1981) and Smetana and Braeges (1990) has shown. The children were not specifically asked which transgression was more deserving of punishment as in the previous studies. These studies (Nicci, 1981; Smetana & Braeges, 1990) showed that younger children generally believe that moral transgressions are more deserving of punishment than social-conventional and prudential transgressions. However, children in all three age groups in this study reported moral transgressions as a behaviour that children should not participate in at home. Social-conventional and prudential transgressions were mentioned less frequently by all age groups in the present study, as behaviour that children should not engage in at home. Prudential transgressions were reported more often in both the youngest and the oldest age groups with concern being expressed about how children could be harmed by adults outside the family. This could be explained as a result of exposure to safety education within New Zealand schools, for example, the “Keeping Ourselves Safe Programme” which is part of the younger children’s education curriculum, or in the older children a heightened awareness of these potential dangers through exposure to the media or television.
There have been few systematic comparisons of specific parental disciplinary techniques (Siegal & Barclay, 1985; Siegal & Cowan, 1984) and even less based upon children’s observations. Therefore it was important in this study to determine what methods of discipline were perceived to be used when children transgressed and to ascertain how effective children thought these disciplinary techniques were. Children of all age groups indicated that the use of time out, having privileges withdrawn and being grounded, made children for the most part behave better, and most said that these forms of discipline were preferable to being physically punished. An exception was observed with a few of the 12 to 14 year old boys, who indicated a preference for physical punishment, because it did not last as long and taught children to behave.

A number of children reported parents using both physical and non-physical forms of discipline in combination. They reported that moral transgressions accounted for most instances where children were put in time out, grounded or experienced withdrawal of privileges. Few children mentioned the use of time out, grounding or withdrawal of privileges as the punishment used for being violent to others.

The two younger groups reported that physical punishment was used more often when children transgressed than any other form of family discipline. An unexpected observation was that the 5 to 7 year old girls talked about being physically punished far more than the boys did for this age group. The younger children’s reports of the use of physical punishment is of concern, as the majority of this age group also reported that parents use only one disciplinary technique at a time. The majority of 12 to 14 year olds (of both genders) indicated being physically punished when they were younger, and an alarming number (29%) reported still being physically punished at this age. These reports from children indicate that often the use of physical punishment is often the first line of discipline parents use when children transgress rather than a ‘last resort’. This supports Lansdown (2000) who asserts that it is a myth that physical punishment
is used in exceptional circumstances and only applied as a measure of last resort. The observations reported in this study came when asked a very open-ended question: “What are some of the things that happen to children when they do things they shouldn’t?” – The use of physical punishment had not been discussed by the researcher or presented in any way by Spike and Splodge. The responses suggest a higher prevalence of the use of physical punishment within New Zealand families than has been previously reported in New Zealand studies based upon adult reports such as Maxwell (1993). Ninety one percent of the children in this study reported the use of physical punishment, compared with 70% of adults that reported using physical punishment in the Maxwell (1993) study.

**Children’s understanding of the parental message**

Grusec and Goodnow’s (1994) review of the parental socialisation literature concluded that the internalisation of parental values is determined by the child’s accurate perception of the parental message and the child’s acceptance or rejection of that message. Children who understand and accept their parent’s disciplinary request are more likely to comply with them and as a result behave in a socially acceptable way. This study has shown that the majority of children (of all ages and both genders) do not always understand the parental message. Children also reported that parents often failed to explain the reason for the ‘rule’ or the reason for the disciplinary action. It was also reported that parents used a vocabulary that children did not always comprehend. This has implications for children’s moral internalisation which is considered critical for child social and moral development (Kochanska, 1994; Maccoby, 1992). Goodnow (1992) suggests that the clearer the parental message the more likely it is that internalisation will occur. However, the older boys (12 to 14 year olds) were an exception, with a number saying that children did know the rules and why parents disciplined them; however this could be due to their present age and ability to assimilate the parental view. Deater-Decker and Dodge (1997) believe that children’s understanding and experiences of family discipline mediates its effects.
Hence one clear implication of children’s perceptions of the issue is that parents could be using more explanation and reasoning. The use of a more inductive parenting style is supported by children’s viewpoint.

Children in the 12 to 14 year old age group believed that younger children were only in the process of developing an understanding of parental discipline and family rules. Some of the older children (12 to 14 year olds) were also more accepting of the use of physical punishment for younger children as a means for children to learn appropriate behaviours and the ‘rules’. These children also commented that having knowledge of the rules also prevented children from being punished, indicating that the use of physical punishment may simply teach some children to avoid being caught. All age groups commented on the need for children to have rules and boundaries and to be disciplined. They also commented on the negative outcomes for children if this did not occur. This is similar to the findings of Smetana (1995). The older children also viewed as a parental responsibility the need to actively teach children the “rules”.

**Parental consistency and fairness**

Consistency in parental discipline is an important component of effective discipline. Stoolmiller, Patterson & Snyder (1997) assert that the contingencies of reinforcement are the most important aspect of discipline and to be successful in changing socially undesirable behaviour it is necessary to change the contingencies of reinforcement. They argue that parents who are consistent in their reinforcement of positive behaviours and in not reinforcing negative behaviour are successful in reducing anti-social behaviour.

There are few studies that have explored children’s views of the effects of perceived parental inconsistencies in disciplining children. The majority of children in this study (all ages and both genders) reported parental inconsistencies in terms of being disciplined differently for the same transgression, receiving inconsistent discipline from mothers and fathers, and
siblings being disciplined differently for the same transgression. The children in this study reported parental “unfairness” in terms of being blamed for something they had not done, or done by accident, or being disciplined for a sibling’s transgression. Children’s perceptions of fairness are important facets of socialisation (Kochanska, 1997), and children’s cognitive judgments of unfair punishment and the feelings this evokes provides insight into the shaping of prosocial and antisocial behaviour (Evans et al., 2001). Some children in this study appeared to accept that this was “just how it was”, as children were powerless to change this parental behaviour and expressed feelings of anger and powerlessness over these inconsistencies.

A number of other children however, expressed a desire to seek “revenge” and spoke about deliberately transgressing to “pay back” the parent who was perceived as being either inconsistent or being unfair. Children may be more likely to reject the parental message if children deem that the messages are delivered by parents who are inconsistent and unfair. Children of all age groups and both genders reported negative outcomes for children as a consequence of parental inconsistencies and unfairness when delivering family discipline. Acker and O’Leary (1996) found a causal link between inconsistencies of parental responses to children’s transgressions and inappropriate behaviour, which had a negative effect on children’s behaviour. The views of the children in this study support this view. While much of the research on conduct disorders correlate with inconsistent discipline, the findings are also relevant to everyday disciplinary encounters between children and their parents (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1995; Kalb & Loeber, 2003).

Some of the children in this study felt that older children were disciplined more as they should ‘know better’ and be ‘role models’ for younger children; while others reported that younger children were disciplined more because they need ‘to learn’ and do not always ‘understand the rules’. No consistency of opinion was expressed by any age group or gender within any age group.
Children in this study, however, were in agreement that the gender of the child who transgressed should not make a difference to the parental disciplinary response. The children did not comment on whether this happened in reality. These findings are interesting when compared to the literature that has elicited adults’ evaluations (Day, Peterson & McCracken, 1998; Dietz, 2000; Straus & Stewart, 1999; Wolfner & Gelles, 1993) on age and gender and parental disciplinary responses. The previous studies assert that age and gender of children has an influence of how parents discipline their children.

Children and parental conflict
Children reported that child/parent disagreement over family rules and discipline resulted in conflict between parents and children which often precipitated conflict between parents. Parental conflict over family rules and family discipline may account for some of the inconsistencies that children reported between their parents. Physical punishment was mentioned by the younger children (5 to 11 year olds) as a consequence for disagreeing with parents. All age groups expressed feelings of anger and powerlessness in these conflicts with parents. Children said their parents were angry when there was conflict over family rules and family discipline. Very few children mentioned that parents engaged in an inductive parenting style when conflict arose, and tended to describe parents using more power assertion in these circumstances. Conflict resolution is an important social skill, but these children’s reports indicate that in many cases these skills are not taught in families.

Children in this study were very open as to why children transgressed, with the majority of the two older age groups saying that a number of children’s transgressions were ‘done on purpose’ as a response to alleged unfairness by parents towards the child, as discussed earlier. Some children reported that transgressions occurred because the child had not understood the parental message. The two older age groups reported that if the child understood the disciplinary message and agreed that the discipline was fair, then children would
not be motivated to respond to the parental discipline by further transgressions. This finding supports Grusec and Goodnow (1994) who argue that to make long term alterations in children’s behaviour the discipline children receive must be judged by children to be appropriate to the misdeed. The reports from this study support the hypothesis that effective discipline is discipline that is matched to the misdeed and perceived to be fair.

The 5 to 7 year old age group reported intentional transgressions to receive rewards which followed disciplinary acts (especially after the use of physical punishment), and that some children transgress to gain attention whether that attention is positive or negative. This raises issues on parenting styles and may show that more permissive or inconsistent parenting is less effective in promoting children’s internalisation. Elements of confusion must appear for children, when on one hand they are reacting to parental unfairness, but on the other hand know the consequence of their actions on parents and on family harmony. Boys tended to show less empathy to others when parents were being ‘unfair’. This may be associated with the use of physical punishment and the low use of induction which are associated with low levels of empathy as reported by Lopez et al. (2001).

Children in this study most often described the use of power assertion when children transgressed. Very few children spoke about parents’ use of love withdrawal, and very few children mentioned parents using induction. Most children wanted parents to use more inductive methods which would result in better outcomes for both children and parents and had the potential to decrease family conflict. Children of all age groups said that parents should talk to children before disciplining them, and explain why the behaviour is unacceptable. Barnett et al. (1996) found that children’s perceptions of power assertion, love withdrawal, and induction were influenced by their age and gender. However, in this study the majority of children of all ages and both genders considered induction as more appropriate than other disciplinary techniques. The difference
may be because of the different methodologies used. Barnett et al. (1996) utilised scenarios with pre-determined rating scales, while this study used more open-ended child directed focus groups.

**Children’s views on physical punishment**

Few studies have elicited children’s views on physical punishment exclusively; (Children in Scotland, 2000; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Many studies have asked children about physical punishment in conjunction with other types of family discipline and parenting styles. The findings from this study are similar to those mentioned above and as reported in chapter 3.

This study shows that children report the use of physical punishment by most parents, but that it is used in conjunction with other types of family discipline. Only 7 children from this study reported that they had not been smacked. These children reported that this was a conscious choice their parents had made, and went to some length to justify why they were not smacked, including their parents own harsh punishment as children, as reported by Russell’s (1996) study on parents who chose not to use physical punishment.

The two younger age groups (5 to 7 and 9 to 11 year olds) in this study described a smack as a hard hit that hurt both emotionally and physically. Leach (1999) believes that there is an assumption from adults that ordinary smacking does not really hurt and although adults do not want to talk or think about hurting children on purpose, which is the point of smacking. She asserts that if there is no pain, there is no punishment (p. 12). However, as Newson, et al. (1983) point out, parents try and minimise the pain that is caused when using physical punishment on their children. Smith (1995) reported that a large number of mothers thought they had hurt their one-year-olds when they last smacked them, and a larger proportion reported hurting their four-year-olds the last time they
smacked them. Logic tells us that hitting young children is unlikely to correct their behaviour.

Adhar and Allan (2001) argue that smacking children does them no harm. The descriptions they give of smacking as a gentle tap or loving slap that doesn't really hurt is in direct contrast to what the children in this study and children in other research (Children in Scotland, 2000; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998) report. Adults do intend to hurt children when they smack and most parents are successful in achieving this outcome (Children in Scotland, 2000; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Graziano et al. (1996) reported from their study that while parents and children may agree on the type, frequency and severity of physical punishment used, children reported a greater physical and emotional impact on children than adults did.

Children in this study described feelings of sadness, anger and fear after being smacked which affected their relationship with the person who smacked them. Questions need to be raised as to whether fear and pain are effective methods of teaching children appropriate behaviour (Dobbs, 2002) and for children’s effective internalisation (Smith et al., 2004). The older age group reported that there was a distinct difference between a smack and a hit which was dependent on the severity, frequency, location on the body and the parental intent of the smack or the hit. It is interesting to note that the older children were beginning to mirror some of the commonly held adult beliefs that there is a difference between a smack and a hit and the justifications for its use as reported by Leach (1999) and Ritchie & Ritchie (1993). The older children did, however, report the negative impact hitting had on their relationship with the person that hit them.

Children in this study reported that children were most often smacked for being violent themselves. It is noticeable that the primary reason children in all
studies (Children in Scotland, 2000; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998) think they get smacked is because they have hurt others. The message these children may be receiving is that it is acceptable for a bigger person to hurt a smaller person. Very few of the children described any other forms of punishment for hurting others and very few children mentioned being hit by parents to avoid being hurt, which is a common adult justification for its use. It is interesting to consider the impact of this contradictory message on children: a child is told that it is wrong to hurt someone and then is hurt in response (Willow & Hyder, 1998).

Children in this study reported the possible correlation between adults’ violence and the message this may be giving children. Some children said that smacking only taught children to smack their own children. This was also reported by a number of children in the other studies referenced in this section (Children in Scotland, 2000; Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998). Many children in this study and the other studies referenced above believe that physical punishment is an act of violence. This raises questions as to whether smacking is the most appropriate method of discouraging children from using violence. Fulton (1998) found that children growing up experiencing violence are more likely to resort to violence as a normal response to conflict and crisis.

While physical punishment may interrupt bad behaviour it does not teach children alternatives (Gershoff, 2002). This view was confirmed in this study and supports the findings in the Crowley & Vulliamy (2003), Dobbs, (2002), Horgan (2002) and Willow and Hyder (1998) studies, with children reporting that whilst smacking stopped the particular behaviour at the time, it did not make them behave better and in some instances made their behaviour worse. It contrasts, however, with adults’ commonly held views that smacking is an effective means of disciplining children. It is widely reported in the literature that there is overwhelming evidence that the use of physical punishment to reduce anti-social
behaviour produces the opposite effect in the long term (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997; Hunter & Stollak, 1995; Leach, 1999; Leach, 2001; Newell, 1999; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Straus, 2000; Straus, et al., 1997; Widom, 1989). Children learn about relationships from the people they live with, and parents are the most significant people in most children’s lives. Therefore, the messages about how to manage conflict in these relationships are taught by parents. Ritchie and Ritchie (1993) point out that we know that patterns of violent behaviour are learnt and transmitted, and that they can therefore be replaced by other behaviours or never learnt in the first place.

Children in this study commented that after being smacked they wanted ‘revenge’ and often ‘took it out on siblings’ by hitting them. These comments from children also challenge the view that smacking is an effective method of discipline and a positive influence on children’s moral internalisation of values. Straus (1994) asserts that most hitting occurs when parents are angry, and in that context parents get emotional release and satisfaction from hitting children. It appears from the findings in this study that children also may seek emotional release after being smacked by hurting others. Straus (1994) further asserts that this parental emotional release is confused with effectiveness in changing the child’s behaviour.

It is important to remember that children in this study were children who did not have a known or alleged history of child abuse or neglect, and parents consented to their children being asked questions on family discipline. Given the acknowledged dangers of hitting children on or about the head, it was unfortunate that relatively high numbers of all age groups and both genders in this study reported that children are smacked or hit on or around the face, head and back. That children were being hit with implements and made to ingest mustard and soap were also a concern. The findings from this study and the previously referenced works (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs 2002, Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998) challenge the assertion that most
children that are physically punished only receive a loving tap or smack on the bottom, and supports Lansdown (2000) who says that it is a myth that “most discipline is gentle and cannot be compared to the broad understanding of abuse of children” (p. 418). Lansdown also asserts that parents not only use physical punishment with frequency, many use levels of force which could significantly harm children, and these events are happening in ordinary families. The findings from this study support her opinion.

While the proponents of the use of physical punishment argue the effectiveness of its use as a disciplinary technique and part of the power assertive parenting style, the children in this study reported that children associated physical punishment with angry parents who often regretted their actions and conveyed this to their children. The children’s descriptions confirm the adult self-report studies of Dietz (2000), Graziano (1996), Leach (1993) and Straus (1994), who concluded that children were more likely to be hit spontaneously and almost always when parents are angry, irritable, stressed or depressed. Gough and Reavey (1997) indicated that parents admitted that hitting their children met their own needs for the release of stress. This raises questions for whose benefit is it to hit children? (Dobbs, 2002). The children’s descriptions of being hit when parents are angry, is in complete contrast to Adhar and Allan (2001) who believe children are never and should never be hit in anger. There is an adult assumption that when parents smack their children that it is done in a controlled manner. Children in this study and the studies carried out by Crowley & Vulliamy (2003), Cuttting (2001), Dobbs (2002), Horgan (2002) and Willow and Hyder (1998) tell us this is not the case.

Children’s descriptions of being hit on or around the head by angry parents in this study and the Crowley & Vulliamy (2003), Dobbs (2002), Horgan (2002) and Willow and Hyder (1998) studies raise some concerns over the potential physical dangers to children of this form of discipline, and challenges those who assert that safe smacking with reasonable force is always possible.
Durrant (2004) argues that physical punishment is a known risk factor for abuse and children’s development. One can assume that parental messages and effective discipline cannot be achieved when both child and parent are in a state of high arousal (Grusec & Goddnow, 1994; Smith et al., 2004).

Parents’ reported feelings of regret over using physical punishment may also indicate that they too do not see physical punishment as an effective discipline technique. Leach (1999) suggests that parents would use other disciplinary methods if they thought other methods could be trusted. Graziano, et al. (1996) found that 85 percent of mothers and fathers would prefer not to use physical punishment, and would not do so if they understood and trusted another form of discipline. Coleman and Howard (1996) reported that few parents saw the use of physical punishment as admirable in principle or practice, with just over half of mothers saying that smacking had been the wrong thing to do. Davies, Wood and Wilson (2003) suggest that there is a lack of good information about the risk factors associated with physical punishment, or information that promotes the fact that physical punishment is not a necessary part of positive parenting. They go on to say that evidence from research needs to be made available not only to parents but also to the community at large. Parents may be more willing to change their views on the use of physical punishment if information is presented to them in a non-threatening and non-judgmental way.

Joan Durrant (2004), at a recent New Zealand conference gave this analogy: in the past parents were unaware of the risk of injury or death children faced if they were not restrained by seatbelts in vehicles. Now this type of behaviour would be regarded by the public as placing children at risk. She suggests that the same can be said with respect to physical punishment as it is now clearly a risk factor for children. New Zealand legislation requires parents to not put their children at risk in cars, but there is no similar policy to prevent children from the risk of physical punishment.
**Children's internalisation**

It is difficult for children to believe that their parents deliberately set out to hurt them. The children in this study appeared to accept the responsibility for being smacked and may have internalised strong messages from adults that children are smacked because of their own actions rather than any responsibility resting with their parents. Willow and Hyder (1998) reported that the children in their study believed that if they stopped being naughty, then adults would stop hitting and commented:

> This begs the question: Is smacking doing anything to help children behave better? If children are right, and it is their behaviour that has to change independently of adults, then this not only makes smacking redundant but also greatly reduces the role of parents in helping children develop and grow into healthy and responsible citizens, now and in the future. (Willow & Hyder, 1998, p. 83)

The majority of children in the present study reported that they knew smacking was wrong, but some indicated that they were unsure if they would use physical punishment on their own children. The numbers of children agreeing with the use of physical punishment increased as children’s ages increased. The older children began to rationalise that perhaps parents were justified in using physical punishment as a means of teaching or correcting, and therefore in certain situations children justified their parent’s behaviour. This is not dissimilar to the parental justification for smacking children reported by Gough and Reavey (1997). They assert that parents justify physical punishment in terms of parental duty and the obligation to instill correct values in their children. When comparing the ages of the children in this study to commonly held adult beliefs it could be argued that as the children progress with age that their views on the use of family discipline become more like that of their parents. Children tend to favour disciplinary actions that are congruent with disciplinary actions their parents have used (Barnett et al., 1993; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). This intergenerational transmission of socialisation technique has been noted before; especially in the case of harsh or abusive parenting (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).
study however shows its relevance to other forms of family discipline, and has implications for changing attitudes on the use of physical punishment.

Fear of further violence by parents and the difference of physical size, were the most common response to why children do not hit adults. This question was intended to encourage the children to think about adult behaviour and how adults manage conflict. Adults do hit each other; however these actions are not often described as smacking but as violence. Some children believed that adult behaviours did not warrant smacking, and that children were prohibited from smacking adults. Children reported that adults do not smack each other because they know better and make a choice not to. This may indicate that children feel that adults have no choice but to smack children. A number of children in the Willow and Hyder (1998) study believed that adults do not smack each other because adults love each other and respect each other. This observation highlights the possibility of relationship damage between children with those that deliver physical punishment. This topic needs further investigation. From this study it is difficult to ascertain whether the children made any link between the ways adults resolve conflict and the ways adults and children resolve conflict. None of the children mentioned adults getting into trouble for smacking children. These children may be beginning to see that there is one set of rules for adults, and another for children in our society, and that children are not afforded the same rights as adults.

**Mothers and fathers disciplinary practices**

There did not appear to be a difference between the disciplinary practices of mothers and fathers, when children were asked about family discipline in general (use of time out, grounding, withdrawal of privileges and physical punishment). The exception being the 5 to 7 year olds, who reported that their mothers were the ‘easiest’ disciplinarians, and fathers who disciplined them more often. This finding is in contrast to studies that report mothers are the primary disciplinarians of younger children. In their study Nobes, Smith, Upton & Heverin (1999) contend
that this result may be because researchers have used only mothers’ reports of parents’ actions, and believe that there is a need for more information based on mothers’ and fathers’ self reports. There is a need to also include more children’s reports. The older two age groups in this study were divided between mothers and fathers as to who disciplined them the most and who were the easiest disciplinarians. However, when fathers and other male members (i.e. uncles, grandfathers) of the household were combined, male members of the household were mentioned slightly more than mothers as being more likely to discipline children.

When children were asked specifically about the use of physical punishment they reported differences between mothers and fathers. Children of all ages and both genders reported that fathers and male members of their households are more likely to administer physical punishment when children transgress than mothers. Nobes et al. (1999) discuss an important issue that has rarely been addressed; the degree to which parents’ physical punishment is a function of the amount of time they spend with their children. Because fathers have less contact with their children generally than do mothers, a finding of parity between mothers and fathers would indicate that fathers are more physically punitive than mothers with children. The difference between mothers and fathers use of physical punishment lies not between male and female parents but, rather, between the mother and father roles (Nobes, et al., 1999).

An interesting finding came from this study from one location (higher SES) where all participants were boys aged between 12 and 14 years old. They reported that mothers did not have the necessary skills and knowledge to discipline boys, and that, boys responded more effectively to father’s discipline. This was in contrast to the reports from other boys in this age group from other locations who had similar responses to the girls, which were that fathers and mothers discipline both genders. It seems likely that these boys may come from families which endorse more traditional parenting roles.
Gender and age differences emerged from the children in this study in three areas: when children discussed the effectiveness of smacking; whether or not children felt smacking was an acceptable form of family discipline; and the ‘law about smacking’. The 5 to 7 year olds said it was not okay to use physical punishment because of the physical and emotional consequences of this action. This is in direct contrast to Catron & Masters (1993) study which reported that younger children were more accepting of physical punishment and that older children were more discriminating. The majority of 5 to 7 year olds in this study said that they would not use physical punishment as a form of family discipline when they had children. This may be related to the fact that younger children are more frequently hit (Newson & Newson, 1989; Smith, 1995), and therefore are more aware of how it feels to be physically punished. Gender did not seem to influence the 5 to 7 year old children’s responses.

Whilst the majority of the 9 to 11 year old children were opposed to the use of physical punishment, they were undecided as to whether they would use physical punishment when they became adults. It could be hypothesized that as children grow older they begin to accept that physical punishment is a normal feature of family life and that children deserve to be hit. This would be especially so if there were no other role models of different types of discipline. Considering only seven children from this study said that they were not physically punished, it would be expected that most children would find physical punishment acceptable to use on their own children. This supports Deater-Deaker and Dodge (1997) hypothesis that within groups where physical punishment is predominant and a normative form of discipline, parents would find physical punishment acceptable in other adults. But in groups where it is forbidden (for example, Sweden), it would be considered bad parenting. However, there were high levels of confusion from the children, especially in the 9 to 11 age group, in linking their own beliefs that smacking was wrong, with the fact that their parents smacked
them. This is corroborated by the children changing their positions of support or non-support of physical punishment in the focus group discussions.

The 12 to 14 year old children’s responses for the most part were very different than the younger age groups. A third of this age group said it was unacceptable to hit or smack a child under any circumstances and over half reported that the use of physical punishment was okay but only under certain circumstances. The circumstances children gave centered on the child’s age. For instance, smacking younger children gently for transgression to learn the correct behaviour was okay as opposed to hitting which was seen as not okay. The frequency (not too often) and severity (not thrashing them) of how the child was smacked were also considerations. Physically harming the child was seen as not okay. The children however did not define the degree of harm. There are similarities between these findings and those of a Ministry of Justice survey on the attitude of the New Zealand public towards the physical punishment of children in 2001. That survey showed that 80% of the 1000 people surveyed, endorsed parents being able to smack children with an open hand if that child was naughty, to correct that child’s behaviour. The use of objects and being smacked in the head or neck, drew negative responses and most respondents indicated that physically punishing very young children (2 to 5 year olds) and older children (15 to 17 year olds) was unacceptable. However, the majority (75 %) endorsed the physical punishment of 6 to 14 year olds as long as the discipline did not leave a red mark or bruising and implements were not used. Men were more likely to support the use of physical punishment for this age group than women (Carswell, 2001). The boys in the 12 to 14 year old age group endorsed the use of physical punishment more than girls of the same age did. The findings from the children in the present study suggest that a large number of children in New Zealand are smacked or hit by parents who leave red marks, are smacked frequently and with some force, often in anger, and parents do use implements. It is interesting to note the similarities between the reported views of
physical punishment of the 12 to 14 year olds to the commonly held views of adults.

Straus (2000) points out the contradiction in people expressing opposition to physical punishment, while also believing that physical punishment may sometimes be necessary. He asserts that this reflects an accommodation to conflict between the changing attitudes towards physical punishment and the cultural myth that physical punishment is sometimes necessary, and harmless when done in moderation by loving parents. Straus asserts that it would be as contradictory to be against slapping a spouse for misbehaviour, whilst also believing that a slap may sometimes be necessary, and that it is harmless if done in moderation by a loving partner. While Straus (2000) is discussing adult views, there are some similarities to what some of the older children are reporting in this study. This rationale is also reported by Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) and Newall (1989), who both contend that parents continue to physically punish their children to fulfill the social norm. Straus (1994) contends that almost everyone has been hit by their parents. Therefore saying hitting children is wrong, condemns the behaviour of one’s own parents. This rationale may be behind the older children’s views on the acceptability of the use of physical punishment by their parents.

One third of the older children opposed physical punishment and said that this was because physical punishment was harmful to children, and that it was not an effective means of discipline, as it did not teach children appropriate behaviour. Children explained that if smacking worked then parents would only have to smack once. The potential physical harm that could be caused by the parental use of physical punishment and the possibilities of the intergenerational transfer of this type of discipline was commented on by all age groups and both genders. It seems that children may have more insight into parental behaviour than their parents.
Children in this study and in other studies (Crowley & Vulliamy, 2003; Cutting, 2001; Dobbs, 2002; Horgan, 2002; Willow & Hyder, 1998) came up with a number of ideas and insights about how children can be encouraged to behave well through positive actions on the part of parents. They suggested talking and reasoning with children, using rewards and encouragement and employing non-violent sanctions such as withdrawing ‘treats’. Likewise, almost all of the children from the Scottish study (Cutting, 2001) thought that other forms of punishment would provide better alternatives and be less damaging for children. Seventy six percent thought it was fundamentally wrong for adults to hit children and that children should be given more protection.

Children’s views on the “smacking law”

Children were not asked directly for their views on the ‘law’ surrounding the physical punishment of children. Such discussions were generated from within the focus groups and may have been influenced by the coverage in the media of the debate surrounding New Zealand’s section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961.

A number of the two older age groups had heard of the ‘law about smacking’. The 9 to 11 year olds all supported a law that prevented adults from smacking children because smacking can harm children. There were no gender differences when discussing the law and legal issues in this age group. However, the responses on the legal issues were markedly different between the two locations that discussed the ‘law’ in the 12 to 14 year old age groups. The children from both these locations came from a higher SES than the other children in the study, with both genders attending private, fee-paying schools. The boys in one location had heard about ‘the smacking law’ and were very adamant that should it be made against the law to physically punish children there would be negative consequences for children and parents. These children expressed concern that children would become unruly and that parents would not be able to control children. They saw the use of physical punishment as a means
for parents to gain respect from children. These boys may have been influenced by the more traditional values of their families and communities.

The girls from the other location talked about the discord the present ‘smacking law’ created between children and adults. These children cited recent public cases where children had died due to parental physical abuse, and the possible causes of this. These children also commented that in any law children should come first. Eleven children from the Willow and Hyder (1998) study also mentioned the ‘law’. These children said that the law would influence their own use of physical punishment when they were adults. The findings from the older children in the present study seem to mirror those of adult debates about the use of physical punishment and show that children do not hold a universal view. Further research with a wider age group would be required to determine whether gender differences may exist for children over 14 years old, and according to SES status or parental values.

**Children’s advice on family discipline**

Very few studies have given children the opportunity to offer adults advice on issues that directly affect children. Socio-cultural, ecological and sociology of childhood theories suggest that children are a social group with specific relationships with adults, who have their own purpose and meanings. Asking children about the use of family discipline also supports children’s participation rights under Article 12 of UNCROC.

Children from all age groups and both genders expressed a wish that parents should stop being angry when disciplining children. Clear and implicit parental communication with children was also requested. According to children, if communication occurred then there would be better outcomes for both parents and children. Children said misunderstandings over the rules, conflict over discipline options, lack of understanding of the parental message, and unfairness could be avoided with better communication. The older children (12 to 14 year
olds) said that children should understand the reasons for the discipline. These older children also commented that communication needs to be in private, without anger, and thought that parents should trust children and allow them to make their own mistakes.

For the most part all age groups and both genders emphasised that the use of physical punishment was the worst thing parents could administer when children transgressed, and mentioned the potential harm and actual harm the use of physical punishment has on children. The 12 to 14 year olds thought that hitting was worse if the child was young. Some of the children in the two older age groups discussed how ineffective physical punishment was as a learning tool. Children said that a precursor to the parental use of physical punishment was whether or not the parent had been physically punished as a child but felt that this was not a reasonable excuse for parents to use it. Children commented that some of the behaviours that parents exhibit towards each other in the home have negative consequences for children. Parents arguing and parents’ marital disharmony were mentioned by children. This is interesting to note as children had reported that parental inconsistencies led to parental conflict over family discipline, which often precipitated parents arguing.

Advantages and limitations of the method
There are few studies that have elicited children’s views of all aspects of family discipline. Previous studies have focused on their views about physical punishment. Many studies have reported children’s perceptions of different parenting styles in relation to child transgression by using observations, vignettes with pre-determined rated scaling, questionnaires, scenarios or self reports from adults. The use of such methodologies may minimise the reality for children and may not coincide with how children would actually respond to real-life similar situations (Gough & Reavey, 1997; Horton et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2004). The children in this study seemed to enjoy the experience of being asked their views and to be viewed as the ‘experts’ on family discipline. In this study, allowing
children to respond freely and independently in an informal focus group about discipline situations has provided a more complete understanding of children’s perceptions of discipline. However, when using focus groups it is difficult to determine how much children are influenced by the replies of their peers and how much they are presenting individual views. In any group, however, it is inevitable that thoughts and ideas will be generated by what has been said before and it represents a typical situation where meanings are jointly constructed. Willow and Hyder (1998) argue that this is no more the case with a group of children than it is with a group of adults. Within focus groups, participants can talk over each other and therefore same data can be lost.

**Summary**

Children’s reports from this study indicate that family discipline would be more effective if the parental message was better understood by children, and was delivered in a fair and consistent manner, without anger and emotional and physical pain. Children expressed some confusion on trying to link their own beliefs about the use of family discipline and the commonly held views of their parents. As children’s age increased so did their acceptance and justification of their parent’s use of physical punishment. Gender differences did not appear from the children’s reports on family discipline, until discussions focused on physical punishment. The older boys were more likely to endorse the use of physical punishment than any other group. It was noticeable that fathers were reported as playing a large part in the parental discipline of children especially physical punishment.

This study supports other research (Gershoff, 2002, Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Smith et al., 2004) suggesting that the use of physical punishment is likely to decrease children’s moral internalisation and to have the effect that children reject the parental disciplinary message. Not all children who experience physical punishment turn out to be aggressive or delinquents and the mere absence of physical punishment will not guarantee a child’s positive development; rather it is
the use of positive discipline including praise for good behaviour, clear boundaries, consistency, and the use of inductive reasoning, that promote favourable child outcomes (Smith et al., 2004). The children in this study give that message too. As agents of children’s socialisation and moral internalisation of values, parents and the wider community must consider what values and morals we want our children to acquire.

The sociology of childhood suggests that children are not simply the passive recipients of socialisation and need to be heard separately from families. They have the right to be viewed as a social group in their own right and thus become visible (Mayall, 2000; Prout & James, 1990). This study supports this view and contributes to the growing field of studies that enhance our knowledge on how children experience childhood from their own perspectives. Children have worthwhile and valuable insights into the use of family discipline, and can contribute significantly to the debate on its use.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The critical question is not so much whether children will be granted absolute autonomy and privacy but instead whether they will be treated with respect. As Zimring (1982) has sagely framed the problem, the central issue is not whether we should treat children like adults but instead whether we should treat them like people – and I would add, whether we should do so routinely in everyday life. (Melton, 2000, p. 143)

Introduction

Family discipline has many meanings and connotations, and in its broadest sense, is the collection of acts and rules that parents use to socialise their children, to teach them the values and normative behaviours of the society in which they will have to function as adults (Wissow, 2003). This study has presented children’s views on family discipline. The use of physical punishment was of particular interest as it is the most commonly used and publicly debated form of family discipline. In this concluding chapter the importance of eliciting children views on discipline through child-participatory research will be discussed together with the implication for legal and policy developments, and key recommendations for future research projects, policy initiatives and service delivery by professionals working with children and their families.

Children’s participation in research

UNCROC provides children with the right to be consulted and to participate in matters affecting them. Family discipline is an inevitable and central part of family life, as all children are disciplined in one way or another. Children have a valuable contribution to make to the debates about the most effective disciplinary techniques. This has been reflected in this study by the methodology which has provided a forum for children to be social actors in their own right and the ‘experts’ in defining their own disciplinary experiences. The use of focus groups and the naïve inquisitors, Spike and Splodge ensured that children expressed their own views on family discipline in their own way. The children actively
engaged in the opportunity to share their views and expressed their opinions with serious thought. Children felt comfortable within this process to be able to disagree with each other and to argue their point of view. Children are not passive recipients of the adult world and their views need to be taken seriously as they have a great deal to teach us.

**Implication of the study**

This study suggests that parents need to acquire a better understanding of what factors promote children’s accurate perception of the parental disciplinary message, and what factors best promote children’s acceptance of this message. In terms of the accurate perception of the parental message, children have suggested that they need clear and implicit instructions that are consistent. Children have also suggested that when parents’ motives are accurately seen as being in the child’s best interest, the message is more likely to occur.

Within the context of promoting positive parenting, the implications from this study suggest that fathers play an important part in family discipline. The role of fathers has been largely ignored by many researchers, professionals and policy makers. If we are to begin to change society’s views on the use of family discipline, fathers and boys must be included in any educational programmes and positive parenting promotions. The results of this study also suggest that physical punishment may be used with more frequency and severity than adults report. While societal pressure to use physical punishment remains strong and legislation supports this, parents will continue to fulfil this social norm. The older children, and especially the older boys, in this study have shown that they are beginning to fulfil this social norm already by endorsing and justifying their parents’ disciplinary techniques.

The results of this study also have implications for the care and protection of children. Children’s reports suggest that many children are hit on and about the head and are being hit with implements. While there is legislation in place
that endorses the use of physical force on children it is difficult for care and protection workers to give clear messages to at risk families that hitting children is an unacceptable form of family violence. It also promotes the message that some forms of violence are acceptable and children do not warrant the same protection as adults. The children’s reports from this study suggest that parents do not find the use of physical punishment a satisfactory means of family discipline. Therefore parents may be more willing to try other techniques should these be promoted in a non-judgemental and positive way, making use of the abundance of literature that now exists that shows physical punishment is not a necessary tool to positive parenting.

Children should not have to wait for public opinion to change on these issues. While New Zealand promotes a slow change in the attitudes of acceptance of physically punishing children, in my view the New Zealand government must lead, not follow public opinion. Only one of the thirteen countries that have banned physical punishment had prior support from opinion polls. In these countries moves were made to change the way children are viewed and to promote more morally acceptable approaches to parenting. In Sweden, physical punishment of a child is seen at best as socially unacceptable and at worst abusive. The passing of legislation in Sweden prohibiting the use of physical punishment has created sufficient social pressure to make it easier for parents not to use physical punishment than defend using it.

Finally, adult views have dominated the debate on the use of family discipline. In this present study, children’s experiences of parental discipline, especially the role of physical punishment, are not the same as reported adult assumptions of its use. In accordance with the sociology of childhood and UNCROC these children’s perceptions of the use of family discipline make a valuable contribution to the debates on its use. Active compliance and promotion of UNCROC and the repeal of section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 will allow us to view children in a different light, to see them as human beings with civil and
human rights, who are entitled to the same protection as adults. Parenting is not a simple task and learning other forms of disciplining children will not be easy. However, with public education and the support of legislation the rewards will be immeasurable both to children and society at large. We need to develop a culture of listening to and respecting children.

**Suggestions for policy change**

**Government policy**

UNCROC should be considered the base document against which all legislation is made in regard to children. This would promote children’s rights to personal integrity, physical safety, respect and dignity and protect children from all forms of violence. The New Zealand government should actively promote and publicise UNCROC through the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and Agenda for Children. This will allow children to be viewed as human beings with human rights and assist in developing a different ‘culture’ of children and childhood. It would also comply with Article 42 - the obligation of State Parties to ensure the Convention is widely known.

This research suggests that the New Zealand government should repeal section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 and common law defences. This would comply with UN Committee’s recommendations to review legislation to ban all forms of physical violence against children. It would also accord children their rights in compliance with Article 3, 12, 19, 24 and 37 of UNCROC and would alleviate the confusing messages that exist in our legislation and policy’s on family violence. This step would ensure that workers in care and protection can give clear messages to at risk families that hitting children is an unacceptable form of family violence and provide clear alternatives.

**Public Education**

Education programmes need to be based on an ecological model that addresses the whole child, family and community. These programmes should address all forms of family discipline and be based on research, including research on
children’s views of effective disciplinary techniques, and delivered in a manner that suits each community. This will ensure that boys and men are also included, as well as other members of the family and wider community. Research findings need to be readily available and easily understood to assist in dispelling the myths that physical punishment is an effective discipline tool and will promote the use of other effective disciplinary methods to enhance children’s effective socialisation.

Government and NGO agencies actively should promote the outcomes and experiences from other countries that have banned the use of physical punishment. This would alleviate parental fears of being ‘made criminals’ should they hit their children and alleviate fears that the state will be intruding into their lives and homes.

Education programmes should provide alternatives to physical punishment and encourage better communication between children and their parents. This will reduce the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment and, the possible escalation of physical punishment to child abuse. Positively promoting non-violent models of discipline is necessary to reduce New Zealand’s tragic child abuse and mortality rate.

**Research**

Family discipline does not occur in a vacuum. Further research is needed to ascertain the process, factors and influences by which children begin to adopt and justify their parent’s disciplinary actions. Further research is also needed which includes father’s views and influences on family discipline.

There is a need to start questioning the language used when discussing family discipline. Using the term punishment perpetuates and reinforces the traditional views that surround children and childhood. Discipline should guide,
train and instruct children to better internalise the messages of their parents, a goal which punishment does not achieve.

I would like to conclude this thesis with these words from two children in the study as they capture the essential themes of my research:

“No, we don’t get a say, children just suffer the consequences”

“Just treat us with respect”
References


Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*, 103-121.


Appendix A

Principal’s Information Sheet

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding to grant permission for pupils at your school to participate. If you decide to allow the participation of pupils at your school we thank you. If you decide not to there will be no disadvantage to you, or your school.

Who will be doing the research?
This study is to be undertaken by Terry Dobbs as part of her Masters Degree in Childhood and Youth Studies with the Children's Issues Centre at the University of Otago. Terry has had 15 years experience as a Care and Protection Social Worker for Child, Youth and Family Services and 3 years experience as a Specialist Evidential Interviewer for Specialist Services Child, Youth and Family Services in Central Auckland and Northland. Terry has also had 3 years experience supervising Social Workers in Schools in Northland for Ngapuhi Iwi Social Services. She will be supervised by Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor (Children’s Issues Centre), who both have experience in ethnographic and field based research.

What is the aim of the Project?
The aim of this study is to explore children and young people’s perspective on discipline. Terry will examine what children and young people think about the use of discipline, how they interpret disciplinary methods and what influences their views on parental discipline.

Who is participating?
Children and young people from schools in Kaikohe, KeriKeri, Dunedin, Napier and Auckland will be asked to participate in this study. They will initially be selected, in consultation with the Principal, from 3 different age groups (5 to 7 year olds, 9 to 11 year olds and 12 to 14 year olds) and will only participate once they and their parents have given consent.

Terry will ask you to select 10 children from each of the following age groups - 5 to 7 years old, 9 to 11 years old or 12 to 14 years old (depending on your school) - and approach their parents (or legal guardians). You will provide them with an information sheet, and if they are agreeable to their child’s participation in this study, you will provide them with a consent form to sign.

The criteria for your selection will be that these children and young people do not have any known or alleged history of child abuse and, in your opinion, will be able to participate effectively in the focus group discussions.

What will participants be asked to do?
The children and young people will be part of small focus group discussions with their own age group. Each group will consist of about 10 children or young people. They will not be interviewed individually. The 5 to 11 year old children will be introduced to a central character called Splodge in a story book. They will be asked to assist Splodge by answering some of Splodge’s questions. The 12-14 year old young people will be introduced to a character called Spike by way of a power point story book. They will be told that Spike has a homework assignment and be asked to assist Spike to complete this.
Both the children and young people will be asked to:

- Describe what discipline is
- Explain children and young peoples understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined
- Discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined
- Discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods

Each group discussion will take approximately 30-40 minutes. They will be audiotaped and the tape will be transcribed by a professional typist.

Should the children or young people talk about harmful personal experiences either during or after the focus group discussion Terry will discuss this with the child and follow up by informing your Social Worker in School or an appropriate agency previously agreed to by you.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the Project?**

You may withdraw the school’s participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to you, the school or its pupils. Terry will not interview any child or young people without parental consent or the consent of the child or young person. A copy of information and consent forms are enclosed.

**What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**

The information is being collected for Terry’s postgraduate University studies. Results of this project may be published, but any data included will in no way be linked to the Board or the School or the children and young people. Anonymity will be preserved at all times. The Board will be provided with a summary of the research at the completion of the project and the Board is most welcome to request a full copy of the results of the project.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only Terry and her supervisors will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**What if participants have any questions?**

If you have any questions about this project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either Terry or Professor Smith. Terry is happy to meet with you to discuss the project further.

Terry Dobbs  Professor Anne Smith
terryanne@xtra.co.nz  Children’s Issues Centre 
Mobile 021 1026241  University Telephone Number 03479087

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago.
Appendix B

Principal's Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. I have also read a copy of the Board of Trustees, pupils and parent's information sheets and consent forms. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage. I understand that:-

Our school and school pupils' participation in this project is entirely voluntary; I am free to withdraw our school’s participation from the project at any time without any disadvantage to the Board, School or pupils from our school;

That the personal data on the children [audio-tapes and transcript] will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed and that the personal data [names and consent forms] will be destroyed at the end of the study;

That the participants will be selected by me, the Principal, on the basis that they do not have a known or alleged history of child abuse or neglect and are in my opinion are able to answer the discussion questions;

I will invite the parents/legal guardians, if they are agreeable, to consent to their child's participation in this project. I will give them an information sheet and a consent form to sign. I will also be advising them that Terry is available to discuss the project further should they wish to;

That the selected children from our school will take part in focus group discussions and that the children in the focus groups will be asked to; Describe what discipline is, explain children and young peoples understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined, discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined and discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods;

I consent for the researcher to notify the Social Worker in Schools at our school or any other appropriate agency should any child disclose personal experiences during or after the discussion of a nature that the researcher believes may be harmful to them;

That the children will not be interviewed without parental/legal guardians consent and the consent of the child; that Terry Dobbs, her supervisors, Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor, and the person who typed the transcripts will have had access to the personal information of the children. I am aware that only Terry, Anne and Nicola will have further access to the personal information of the children once the transcript is transcribed;

That the results of the project may be published but the schools and children's anonymity will be preserved; That I will have access to Terry should I need to discuss this project with her or discuss any issues that may arise from this project for the school, parents or children.

I give consent for our school to take part in this project.
(Signature of the Principal)…………………… Date………………..

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago.

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Appendix C

Board of Trustees Information Sheet

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding to grant permission for your school to participate. If you decide to allow the participation of your school we thank you. If you decide not to there will be no disadvantage to the Board or your school.

Who will be doing the research?
This study is to be undertaken by Terry Dobbs as part of her Masters Degree in Childhood and Youth Studies with the Children's Issues Centre at the University of Otago. Terry has had 15 years experience as a Care and Protection Social Worker for Child, Youth and Family Services and 3 years experience as a Specialist Evidential Interviewer for Specialist Services Child, Youth and Family Services in Central Auckland and Northland. Terry has also had 3 years experience supervising Social Workers in Schools in Northland for Ngapuhi Iwi Social Services. She will be supervised by Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor (Children’s Issues Centre), who both have experience in research with children and young people.

What is the aim of the Project?
The aim of this study is to explore children and young people’s perspective on family discipline. Terry will examine what children and young people think about the use of parental discipline, how they interpret disciplinary methods and what influences their views on parental discipline.

Who is participating?
Children and young people from schools in Kaikohe, KeriKeri, Dunedin, Napier and Auckland will be asked to participate in this study. They will initially be selected, in consultation with the Principal, from 3 different age groups (5 to 7 year olds, 9 to 11 year olds and 12 to 14 year olds) and will only participate once they and their parents have given consent.

What will participants be asked to do?
The children and young people will be part of small focus group discussions with their own age group. Each group will consist of about 10 children or young people. They will not be interviewed individually. The 5 to 11 year old children will be introduced to a central character called Splodge in a story book. They will be asked to assist Splodge by answering some of Splodge’s questions. The 12 to 14 year old young people will be introduced to a character called Spike by way of a power point story book. They will be told that Spike has a homework assignment and be asked to assist Spike to complete this.

Both the children and young people will be asked to:
- Describe what discipline is
- Explain children and young people’s understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined
- Discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined
- Discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods
Each group discussion will take approximately 30-40 minutes. They will be audiotaped and the tape will be transcribed by a professional typist.

Should the children or young people talk about harmful personal experiences either during or after the focus group discussion, Terry will discuss this with the child and follow up by informing your Social Worker in School or an appropriate agency previously agreed to by the school.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the Project?**
You may withdraw the school’s participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to the Board or the School. Terry will not interview the children or young people without parental consent or without the consent of the child or young person. A copy of these information and consent forms are enclosed.

**What Data or Information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**
The information is being collected for Terry’s postgraduate University studies. Results of this project may be published, but any data included will in no way be linked to the Board or the School or the children and young people. Anonymity will be preserved at all times. The Board will be provided with a summary of the research at the completion of the project and the Board is most welcome to request a full copy of the results of the project.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only Terry and her supervisors will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**What if participants have any questions?**
If you have any questions about this project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either Terry or Professor Smith. Terry is happy to come to a Board of Trustees meeting to discuss the project further.

Terry Dobbs                     Professor Anne Smith
terryanne@xtra.co.nz            Children's Issues Centre
Mobile 021 1026241              University Telephone Number
                                03 4795087

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago
Appendix D

Board of Trustees Consent Form

We have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. We have also read a copy of the children’s and parent’s information sheets and consent forms. All our questions have been answered to our satisfaction. We understand that we are free to request further information at any stage.

We understand that:
Our school’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary; we are free to withdraw our school’s participation from the project at any time without any disadvantage to the Board, School or the pupils from our school;

We understand that the research data on the children [audio-tapes and transcript] will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed and that the personal data [names and consent forms] will be destroyed at the end of the study;

We understand that the children will be selected in consultation with the Principal;

We understand that pupils from our school will be part of focus group discussions. The focus groups will be asked to discuss the following questions: Describe what discipline is, explain children and young peoples understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined, discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined and discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods.

We consent for the researcher to notify the Social Worker in Schools at our school or an appropriate agency should any of the children disclose personal experiences during or after the discussion of a nature that the researcher believes may be harmful to any child.

We understand that the children will not be interviewed without parental consent and the consent of the child.

We understand that Terry Dobbs, her supervisors, Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor, and the person who typed the transcripts will have had access to the personal information of the children. We are aware that only Terry and Anne and Nicola will have further access to the personal information of the children once the transcript is transcribed.

We understand that the results of the project may be published but the schools and children’s anonymity will be preserved. We understand that we have access to Terry should we need to discuss this project with her or discuss any issues that may arise from this project for the Board, parents or children.

We give consent for our school to take part in this project.

.............................................................................   Date ..............
(Signature of Chairperson on behalf of the Board of Trustees)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago.
Information Sheet for Parents / Guardians

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to allow your child participate. If you decide to allow your child to participate we thank you. If you decide not to allow your child to take part there will be no disadvantage to you or your child of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

Who will be doing the research?
This study is to be undertaken by Terry Dobbs as part of her Masters Degree in Childhood and Youth Studies with the Children’s Issues Centre at the University of Otago. Terry has had 15 years experience as a Care and Protection Social Worker for Child, Youth and Family Services and 3 years experience as a Specialist Evidential Interviewer for Specialist Services Child, Youth and Family Services in Central Auckland and Northland. Terry has also had 3 years experience supervising Social Workers in Schools in Northland for Ngapuhi Iwi Social Services. She will be supervised by Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor (Children’s Issues Centre), who both have experience in ethnographic and field based research.

What is the aim of the Project?
The aim of this study is to explore children and young people’s perspective on family discipline. Terry will examine what children and young people think about the use of parental discipline, how they interpret disciplinary methods and what influences their views on parental discipline.

Who is participating?
Children and young people from schools in Kaikohe, KeriKeri, Dunedin, Napier and Auckland will be asked to participate in this study. They will initially be selected, in consultation with the Principal, from 3 different age groups (5 to 7 year olds, 9 to11 year olds and 12 to14 year olds) and will only be asked to participate once you have given consent.

What will participants be asked to do?
Your child will be part of a small focus group discussion with their own age group. Each group will consist of about 10 children or young people. They will not be interviewed individually. The 5 to 11 year old children will be introduced to a central character called Splodge in a story book. They will be asked to assist Splodge by answering some of Splodge’s questions. The 12 to14 year old young people will be introduced to a character called Spike by way of a power point story book. They will be told that Spike has a homework assignment and be asked to assist Spike to complete this.

Both the children and young people will be asked to:
• Describe what discipline is
• Explain children and young peoples understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined
• Discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined
• Discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods

Each group discussion will take approximately 30-40 minutes. They will be audiotaped and the tape will be transcribed by a professional typist.
Should your child talk about harmful personal experiences either during or after the focus group discussion Terry is obligated to discuss this with your child and follow up by informing your Social Worker in School or an appropriate agency previously agreed to by the school.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the Project?**
You may withdraw your child from participation in the project at anytime and without any disadvantage to you or your child. Terry will not interview any child or young people without parental consent or the consent of the child or young person. A copy of your child’s information sheet and consent form are enclosed.

**What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**
The information is being collected for Terry’s postgraduate University studies. Results of this project may be published, but any data included will in no way be linked to you, your child or school. Anonymity will be preserved at all times. You will be provided with a summary of the research at the completion of the project and you are most welcome to request a full copy of the results of the project.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only Terry and her supervisors will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**What if participants have any questions?**
If you have any questions about this project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either Terry or Professor Smith. Terry is happy to discuss this project further with you.

Terry Dobbs  
terryanne@xtra.co.nz  
Mobile 021 1026241

Professor Anne Smith  
Children’s Issues Centre  
University Telephone Number  
03 4795087

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago.
Appendix F
Consent Form for Parents / Guardians.

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. I have also read a copy of my child’s information sheet and consent form. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:–
My child’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

I am free to withdraw my child from the project at any time without any disadvantage to them or myself;

I understand that the research data on my child [audio-tapes and transcript] will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which time it will be destroyed and that all personal information [names and consent forms] will be destroyed at the end of the study;

I understand that my child will be part of a focus group discussion. The group will be asked to discuss the following questions: Describe what discipline is, explain children and young peoples understanding of why, when and how children or young people are disciplined, discuss how children and young people feel when being disciplined and discuss their views on appropriate discipline methods.

I give consent for the researcher to notify the Social Worker in Schools at our school or an appropriate agency should my child disclose personal experiences during or after the discussion of a nature that the researcher believes may be harmful to my child.

I understand that my child will not be interviewed without my child’s consent.

I understand that only Terry Dobbs, her supervisors, Professor Anne Smith and Nicola Taylor, and the person who typed the transcripts will have had access to the personal information of my child. I am aware that only Terry and her supervisors will have further access to the personal information of my child once the transcript is transcribed.

I understand that the results of the project may be published, but my anonymity and my child's anonymity will be preserved.

I understand that I have access to Terry should I need to discuss this project with her or discuss any issues that may arise from this project for myself or my child.

I give consent for .................................................. to take part in this project.

(Name of child or young person)

................................................................. (Date)....................

(Signature of parent or legal guardian)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Otago.
Appendix G

Children's Information Sheet

I am writing a report for my University work. It's like homework. My report is going to be about what children think about rules and family discipline. I don't know what children think about this. So if you agree I would like you to talk with me about what you think about these things. Sometimes adults don't always know what children think. So this report will help to let adults know what children think.

You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to and you won't get in to trouble. If the others in the group want to talk to me and you don't want to, that's okay too. You still won't get into trouble.

When you talk to me there will be other children and young people talking to me at the same time so that might make it easier. It's not like a test - there are no right or wrong answers. We will be reading a storybook that will help us talk about what we think about rules and physical discipline.

If, when we are talking, you want to stop talking or go that's okay. If you don't want to answer any of the questions that's okay too. When we are talking I will put the tape on so that I can remember what everyone's said for my report. But at anytime you can tell me to turn it off and I will.

The words on the tape will be typed by a lady who is good at doing this sort of thing. The tape and the copy of your words from the tape will only be seen by me, my teachers (Anne and Nicki) and the person who has done the typing. After we have finished with the words and the tape they will be locked away for 5 years then destroyed because those are my school rules.

When I write my report I might write about some of the things you have talked about but I won't use your name so people won't know they are your words.

If you have any worries after our talk you can come and talk to me. I will keep everything private but if I think that you might not be safe I might have to tell some other adults who can help me make you safe.

Your parents have said its okay for me to talk with you today but if you don't want to talk with me then that's okay too. I won't talk to you unless you say it's okay. You can ask me any questions you like before you say it's okay to talk to you.
I am writing a report for my University studies. My report is going to be about what young people think about family discipline and parent’s use of discipline. Adults do not always know what young people think. So this report will help adults know what young people think about these things.

Your participation in the group discussions is voluntary, which means you do not have to take part if you don’t want to. Nothing will happen to you if you decide you don’t want to be in the group discussions.

There will be about 10 other young people in the group discussions. So this might make it easier for you to talk.

To help us discuss family discipline and physical discipline we will be using a power point book. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions you will be asked. If you don’t want to answer some of the questions that’s fine.

When we are having our discussions these will be taped. If at anytime during the discussions you want to leave you can or if you want the tape turned off I will do that.

The words on the tape will be typed out by a professional typist and will only be seen by myself, my teachers (Anne and Nicki) and the person who did the typing. After we have finished with the transcript and the tape they will be destroyed.

When I am writing my report I may write about some of the things that you have talked about but I will not use your name or the name of your school.

If you have any concerns after our group discussions you can come and talk to me. I will keep everything private but if I think that you might not be safe I might have to tell some other adults who can help me make you safe.

Your parents have said its okay for me to talk with you today but if you don’t want to talk with me then that’s fine. You can ask me any questions you like before you take part in the discussions groups.
Appendix H

**Children’s Consent Form**

Terry has told me that:

- if I don’t want to talk to her today that that’s okay and I won’t get into trouble.
- she will be asking me questions about what children think about family discipline and rules.
- there are no right or wrong answers and that if I don’t want to answer some of the questions that okay.
- anytime I want to stop talking that’s okay and she will turn the tape off.
- she is writing a report for her University work.
- she will write about some of the things I’ve talked about but won’t use my name.
- the tape and the copy of my words from the tape will only be seen by her, her teachers, Anne and Nicki and the lady that did the typing and that the tape and the copy of my words from the tape will be kept private.
- if I have any worries about our talk then I can talk with her about that.

I agree it ok for Terry to talk to me today

I agree its ok for Terry to use the tape today

............................................. (I agree)  Day....................................

.......................................................... (I agree)  Day....................................

.......................................................... (I agree)  Day....................................

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.......................................................... (I agree)  Day....................................

.......................................................... (I agree)  Day....................................
Consent Form for Young People

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary which means I do not have to take part if I don’t want to and nothing will happen to me.

- She will be asking me questions about what and young people think about family discipline.

- There are no right or wrong answers and that if I don’t want to answer some of the questions that fine.

- Anytime I want to stop talking that’s okay and she will turn the tape off.

- She is writing a report for her University work.

- She will write about some of the things I’ve talked about but won’t use my name or the name of my school.

- The tape and the copy of my words from the tape will only be seen by her, her teachers (Anne and Nicki) and the typist.

- The copy of my words from the tape will be kept private.

- If I have any worries about our talk then I can talk about these with her.

I consent to Terry talking with me today and to the talk being taped.

....................................................                                                      Date:...........................................
Young people’s signature
**CAN WE HELP SPLUDGE?**

Nobody knows where Splodge comes from.
Splodge does not know much about our world.
Splodge is always asking questions.
Do you think you can help Splodge?

Today Splodge has been thinking about family discipline.
That's like family rules and what happens if you break them and stuff like that.
Splodge would like to know what you think because Splodge thinks that children know heaps about this stuff.

**Splodge's first question is:**

At home what are some of the things that children have to do?

At home what are some of the things that children shouldn't do?

What are some of the things that happen to children when they do things they shouldn't?

**Splodge wants to know:**

Do children always understand why they should or shouldn't do these things?

**I'm asking about:**

When children do things they shouldn't, do parents always act the same way?

Do all the children in the family get treated the same way when they do something they shouldn't?

Do parents sometimes let children do things they shouldn't?

**Splodge asks two hard questions now:**

What happens when children and parents disagree about what children should or shouldn't do?

What happens when children and parents disagree about the punishment?

How some parents train children to do things that parents have told them not to?

When children do things that they shouldn't how do parents act?

What do children do when they are being treated unfairly?

What do other children do at home when people are being treated unfairly?
Splodge is finding this really interesting.

Do sometimes children get smacked when they do something they shouldn't?
What is a smack?

Why do you think children get smacked?
Where do children get smacked?

Splodge asks you to think about:
Adults smack children but how come children don't smack adults?

It is O.K. to smack or not? O.K. to smack?

Splodge: Remember at the beginning that this group said that some other things happen to children when they are doing things they shouldn't.

What were these things again?

Splodge asks that we make a list and see how those things make children feel, what children have to do to have these things happen and let Splodge know whether these things make children behave better or not.

The last things Splodge would like to know are:

What's the best thing parents can do when children are doing things they shouldn't?

What's the worst thing parents can do when children are doing things they shouldn't?

When you are an adult, what will you do when children are doing things they shouldn't?

Is there anything else you would like to tell Splodge about the stuff we have been talking about?

Splodge has to go now.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME WITH MY QUESTIONS, BYE!
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APPENDIX K

Children's Certificate (Over page)
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT .......... HAS ACHIEVED A
HIGH STANDARD OF EXCELLENT TALKING

TERRY DOBBS
LISTENER

PRINCIPAL