

**Parents' perceptions of the s59 Crimes Act debate and law change
(the “Anti-Smacking Bill”)**

Sharon Page

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Children and Public Policy).

2011

Institute of Public Policy

Primary Supervisor: Dr Kirsten Hanna

Secondary Supervisor: Professor Jane Koziol-McLain

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those people who have helped to make my research possible.

Firstly, to my amazing supervisors, Dr Kirsten Hanna (Institute of Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology) and Professor Jane Koziol-McLain (Interdisciplinary Trauma Research Centre, Auckland University of Technology). Thank you for your continued encouragement, advice, support and constructive feedback.

I would like to thank the early childhood centres who so willingly helped me with the recruitment process. I also acknowledge and thank the five parents who gave their time to be interviewed for this study. I am grateful that you have shared a part of your lives with me.

I would like to thank all those who read drafts at different stages, especially to Jane Smith.

I would also like to acknowledge AUTECH who approved my research project on 16 February 2011 (Reference number 10/299)

And finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support and encouragement. And special thanks to my parents and my fiancé Mike for keeping me on track and for your continuous love and support when I needed it!

Abstract

On the 9th of June 2005, a private member's Bill to repeal section 59 of the Crimes Act was drawn from the ballot and after much public debate it came into effect as law on 21 June, 2007 as the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007. The Act's purpose was to "make better provision for children to live in a safe and secure environment free from violence by abolishing the use of parental force for the purpose of correction" (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2007). The present research aimed to investigate parents' perceptions of whether and how the so-called 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children.

A theoretical framework is presented to understand the nature of parenting and how public debate and law change may be seen to influence parental choices in disciplining their children. With a historical and sociological perspective of childhood, and drawing particularly from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective, the macrosystem and exosystem form the key theoretical framework for investigating how the public debate and law may affect parents. Gershoff's (2002b) process-context model, Straus' (1991) cultural spillover theory and Garbarino's (2005) cultural justification theory, as well as Xu et al's (2000) model of the predictors of the use of physical punishment are explored.

This exploratory study used a qualitative descriptive methodology. Individual interviews were conducted with a small sample of five parents, using an interview guide approach. The questions focused around parents' disciplinary techniques, approaches to discipline, and influences both before and after the debate and law change; what they know and think about the public debate and law change; how it has affected relationships with their spouse and children; and where they seek advice on parenting. The interviews were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Overall, the five participants found the debate strong, polarised, emotional and confusing. Their understanding of the debate and the law seemed to be filtered through their personal stance towards physical punishment. The law did not change their attitude towards and use of physical punishment, although parents reported that it changed the way they talked about smacking and where they would be comfortable smacking. Parents were unsure about what they would do if they saw a stranger in public smacking their own child, and they had not heard a lot about how the law was actually working, apart from a few cases that the media had highlighted. Parents seemed to rely mainly on friends and relatives to get advice on their parenting, and did not often seek professional advice.

This study highlighted the need for further research to understand the impacts of the public debate and law change on parents. The study also highlighted a need for a campaign to educate parents on what the new law actually means, and also a need for more advice and support to enable parents to adopt more positive parenting techniques.

Chapter One: Introduction

“If a community values its children it must cherish their parents”

(Bowlby, 1952, p. 84).

Overview

Parenting is important. It has long been understood that the relationship parents have with their children profoundly affects the child’s development and how they will behave as adults (Karen, 1994). Within the realm of parenting, the area of discipline –and in particular the use of physical punishment– has been an area that researchers have avidly researched. Discipline is described as the “guidance of children’s moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children to take responsibility for themselves when they are older” (A. Smith, Gollop, Taylor, & Marshall, 2004, p. 10). Discipline can be positive (e.g. praise for good behaviour) or negative (e.g. punishment for doing something wrong) (A. Smith, Gollop, Taylor, & Marshall, 2005). Discipline can be categorised as power-assertive or inductive. Power-assertive methods use aversive consequences like threats or withdrawal of privileges without explanation, and physical punishment; inductive methods use reasoning, explanation, logical consequences and limit setting (A. Smith, et al., 2005).

Physical punishment (or corporal punishment) has been defined as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling the child’s behaviour” (Straus & Donnelly, 2005, p. 3). This is the definition adopted throughout this study. Physical punishment may take the form of spanking or smacking, slapping, grabbing or shoving a child. However, there is some ambiguity around what constitutes smacking, for example, whether it is a slap on the bottom or hand, or hitting with an instrument such as a spoon or belt (Straus & Donnelly, 2005).

There is a large body of literature investigating the effects of physical punishment on children, some supporting positive effects of mild physical punishment within good parenting (for example Baumrind, 1996a; Larzelere, 2000; Larzelere & Merenda, 1994), but others arguing that the use of physical punishment does not produce positive outcomes (for example Durrant, Rose-Kransnor, & Broberg, 2003; Gershoff, 2002a). While these arguments are certainly relevant, it is not the purpose of this thesis to contribute to the arguments for or against physical punishment. Rather, the study explores parents' perceptions of whether and how a law change in New Zealand which essentially banned the use of physical punishment for correction influenced parents' views and practices in relation to discipline.

The repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961

On the 9th June 2005, a private member's Bill to repeal section 59 of the Crimes Act was drawn from the ballot and on the 27th July came before New Zealand Parliament for its first reading. This section of the Act allowed a defence if parents were charged with assaulting their children and that the use of force by way of correction was deemed reasonable in the circumstances. The original purpose of the Bill was to amend the principal Act to "abolish the use of reasonable force by parents as a justification for disciplining children" (Bradford, 2005, p. 1), but it was quickly named by media the "Anti-Smacking" Bill. The vigorous public debate which followed highlighted that physical punishment was an emotionally contested topic. Although this was the first time a Bill of this nature came before Parliament, it represented a long-fought battle dating back several decades.

James and Jane Ritchie documented over several decades that physical punishment is a widely used disciplinary practice in New Zealand, and advocated consistently from as early as 1978 to repeal 'section 59' (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, 1993, 1997). The beginning of their public campaign for repeal began in June, 1978, when they made a submission to the

Parliamentary Select Committee on Violent Offending urging a repeal and noting that the source of violence in society is due to an “endorsement of corporal punishment in child training” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997, p. 112). The following year, with the momentum of the International Year of the Child they presented at a major conference on the rights of the child and law, and wrote to the Minister of Justice urging for a repeal of section 59 (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). Their book “*Spare the Rod*” (1981) presented what has been described as the first comprehensive New Zealand critique of corporal punishment, which argues for legal reform (Wood, Hassall, & Hook, 2008). Alongside the Ritchies, and aided by research, many child advocates have worked toward promoting children’s rights to physical integrity and the right not to be hit (Taylor & Smith, 2008; Wood, et al., 2008). Other notable landmarks in the journey toward repeal were the appointment of the first Commissioner for Children, Dr Ian Hassall, in 1989; and the prohibition of corporal punishment in all New Zealand state and private schools in 1990. The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) in 1993 imposed an obligation on New Zealand to comply with articles that protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence¹ (United Nations, 2005). The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors each country’s compliance and their reports to New Zealand over a number of years strongly urged repealing the Act (Wood, et al., 2008). In 2003, New Zealand was ranked with the third highest rate of child abuse per head of population in the OECD, with 1.2 deaths from maltreatment per 100,000 children, double the OECD average of 0.6 (UNICEF, 2003). A more comprehensive account of significant landmarks can be found in Wood et al. (2008).

The Bill was highly contentious, as evidenced by the number of public submissions received by the Justice and Electoral Select Committee, which totalled 1,718, with the

¹ “Article 19: State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence” (United Nations, 2005, p. 11)
“Article 37: State parties shall ensure that: ... no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (United Nations, 2005, p. 15)

majority (1,471) from individuals (mainly opposed to repeal) and 247 from organisations (mainly supporting repeal) (Justice and Electoral Select Committee, 2006). Finally, the Bill was passed through Parliament on 16 May 2007 with a vote of 113 to 8, and came into effect on 21 June 2007 as the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007. The Act's purpose was presented as amending the principal Act to "make better provision for children to live in a safe and secure environment free from violence by abolishing the use of parental force for the purpose of correction" (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2007). In other words, the use of force for the purpose of correction is no longer justified² and parents no longer have a legal defence for the use of physical punishment to correct their children (Wood, et al., 2008). New Zealand was the first English speaking nation in the world to remove the defence of force for the purpose of correction (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). See Appendix A for the full wording of the Act.

Topic and Purpose

Researching how parents learn and change their parenting techniques is particularly complex. Hoghughi (2004) asserts that although there is a large literature base on parenting, the diversity of parenting practices, the complex and changing contexts and the individual characteristics of children and their parents make it hard to build a grand system theory of parenting. Belsky (1984) argued parental functioning is influenced by the personality of the parent, the characteristics of the child and the contextual sources of support or stress.

Furstenberg (1985) proposed a similar idea that family processes are a product of internal

² The Act outlines that "1) Every parent of a child and every person in the place of a parent of the child is justified in using force if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances and is for the purpose of: a) preventing or minimising harm to the child or another person; b) or preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in conduct that amounts to a criminal offence; c) or preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in offensive or disruptive behaviour; d) or performing the normal daily tasks that are incidental to good care and parenting.

2) Nothing in subsection (1) or in any rule of common law justifies the use of force for the purpose of correction."

interaction and shaped by the external environment. Perhaps the most influential theory of the complexities of human development, which is of particular relevance to parenting, is Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective. He describes individuals as affecting and being affected by their immediate setting, as well as the larger contexts (or systems) in which these settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Several other models and theories incorporating an ecological perspective have been proposed to attempt to understand the context in which physical punishment in particular is used, and the predicted outcomes for children. Chapter two will explore Gershoff's (2002b) process-context model, Straus' (1991) cultural spillover theory and Garbarino's (2005) cultural justification theory.

This study is concerned with the interaction between parents and their context, in particular law and public debate, so it is appropriate to use an ecological perspective. In Bronfenbrenner's model, the outer layer, the macrosystem, is described as the consistencies of the culture or subculture, and belief systems or ideologies which underlie these. The macrosystem includes law and beliefs about violence and physical punishment. The next layer inward is the exosystem, the systems which indirectly influence the individual. The exosystem includes the mass media and ensuing public debate. Because the systems are affected by and affect each other, it is hard to target the cause of changes. It is hard to target whether the law precedes attitude change, or whether a shift in attitudes precedes law change. For example, in Sweden, physical punishment of children is banned. Sweden has a very low tolerance toward physical punishment, reflected by law and other social policies (like extensive provision of parental support and education which promotes positive parenting) (Durrant, et al., 2003). It has been argued by some that the law change in that country brought about a change in attitudes towards physical punishment (Durrant, et al., 2003). However, Roberts (2000) argues that support for physical punishment was declining before the law change, and it was this declining support that led to the law change, and not vice versa.

There has thus far been only limited research into parental understanding of the public debate and law change in New Zealand, and about parents' approaches to their parenting in its wake (such as Children's Commission, 2008b; Lawrence & Smith, 2008; Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Wademan et al., 2007). The Children's Commission (2008) study and the Wademan et al., (2007) study used quantitative surveys to gain information on the impact of the law, and the Lawrence and Smith (2008, 2009) studies used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore parents' perspectives on discipline over the period the law was being passed. Chapter 2 describes in more detail what was learnt from these studies.

This study will attempt to extend the research into this topic by using a qualitative framework to explore in more depth how parents were affected by the law, three years after the law was passed. This study will explore parents' perceptions of whether and how the 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. These perceptions will be probed using questions regarding their approaches to discipline; the techniques they use; influences on their parenting both before and after the debate and law change; what they know and think about the public debate and law change; and how it has affected relationships with their spouse and children. In addition, the research will explore whether and where parents sought information and advice on alternatives to physical punishment.

This research will be conducted using a qualitative descriptive methodology which is useful when research is aimed at understanding situations as they naturally occur, and for getting straight descriptions of phenomena, finding people's perceptions of the *who*, *what* and *where* of events (Sandelowski, 2000). This study is exploratory because it will be investigating a little understood phenomenon, trying to generate hypotheses for further research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Potential Significance

Physical punishment is a very common disciplinary practice in New Zealand. In 2009, a Citizens Initiated Referendum asking the question “Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?” elicited a response of 87% of those who voted responding no (Fox, 2009). Two surveys of 1000 adults found that parents have also shown strong but declining support for the statement ‘there are certain circumstances when it is alright to smack a child’; in 1998, 89% agreed with this statement, while in 2000 56% agreed (Carswell, 2001). Although support is declining, surveys suggest that support for physical punishment is stronger in New Zealand than in Sweden. This study could be significant by investigating whether and how changes in the macrosystem and exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) influence parents and their parenting techniques.

There is potential significance for policy and practice, particularly around understanding and perceptions of the law, which may reveal unintended consequences of passing such a law. In Sweden, Haeuser found that in 1981 (two years after physical punishment was banned) parents were predominantly permissive, with few demands placed on their children, and they were not punished much (physically or otherwise) (Haeuser, 1988). But by 1988 permissive parenting was out of favour because advice from experts changed, and parents now imposed rules and limits on behaviour, but never used physical punishment in public and only rarely at home. Janson (2005) cites the concerns of some authors (like Baumrind 1991, and Larzelere and Johnson 1999) that following a smacking ban parents may adopt a permissive parenting style and fail to confront their children firmly enough to induce compliance. But Janson argues the research confirms Swedish parents have adjusted well (Janson, 2007).

In New Zealand, parents must now use alternatives to physical punishment. However, unlike in Sweden, the law change was introduced without an accompanying, widespread education campaign on such alternatives³. As a result, some parents may be unaware of the range of alternatives and may struggle to adjust their parenting (if indeed there has been an adjustment). There is agreement of a need for widespread culturally sensitive efforts to teach parents positive parent management strategies and not merely exhort them to stop smacking (Hassall, 2007; Schluter, Sundborn, Abbott, & Paterson, 2007). This study will investigate whether parents felt the need to seek advice on alternatives to physical punishment, as well as where they accessed information. Hence the study also considers whether there is a need for a public education campaign to help parents understand the law change and alternative parenting techniques.

Scope

This study focuses on parents' perceptions of the law change and its effects on their parenting. It is framed within a particular research tradition and theoretical framework which acknowledges the complexities of parenting and the myriad of influences that affect it. That is, while the thesis focuses on influences of law and public debate, it is acknowledged that these are just a couple out of many influences.

This study asks parents about their attitudes and their practices. Research has shown that belief and practice about physical punishment can be seen to be correlated, although the research is not conclusive, as many factors affect a parent's decision to use physical punishment.

³ The SKIP (Strategies with Kids- Information for Parents) project was initiated in 2004. However, it was a small effort, and received most of its funding and reach in 2004-2006, before the law changed. It is estimated to only have reached a small group because of limited funding and limited access to low socio-economic families (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). It could also be argued that ambivalent public support for the law change led to an avoidance by Government of a large education campaign about the law change (Taylor & Smith, 2008).

This study involves an in-depth exploration of the perceptions of a small group of parents; I make no claim that the sample is representative of parents in New Zealand. However the study may help to generate some insights into the effects of the law and probe potential questions that could be investigated further.

Structure of thesis

Chapter 2 presents a literature review, where a theoretical framework will be explored about parents and the influences on their parenting, in particular the law and mass media. It will explore some of the major theories of child development and parenting styles, in particular focusing on the role of physical punishment as a parenting technique. It will draw on comparisons with Sweden and the effects of law change in that country. Critiques of the literature will illuminate the need for more study in this area. In Chapter 3 the methodology and methods adopted for this study are explained, including methods and processes for data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 draws conclusions and considers the relevance of the findings to New Zealand.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The present research aims to investigate parents' perceptions of whether and how the 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. The literature review that follows outlines a theoretical framework to understand the nature of parenting and how public debate and law change may be seen to influence parental choices in disciplining their children. Firstly it will be acknowledged that childhood is a social construction, and some theories on child development and the effects of physical punishment will be briefly outlined. The focus will then turn toward a general understanding of the influences on parenting, and specifically how the law and public debate are said to influence parenting, exploring and contrasting the New Zealand context with Sweden. The major evidence supporting this notion is the example of Sweden, which will be explored in some detail and contrasted with the New Zealand context. As a result of this review of the literature it will be evident that the present study is both timely and necessary to illuminate the effects of the anti-smacking public debate and law change on parents' perceptions about their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children.

Historical and Sociological Perspective of Childhood

Over many generations, philosophers and scientists around the world have pondered over the best way to raise children, based on epistemological and philosophical foundations about what it means to be human and the role children play in society. These foundations provide a way to conceptualise the very nature of parenting, childhood and ultimately attitudes towards and practices in using physical punishment, as well as reactions to law changes about such practices. For example, although children were traditionally seen as the

property of their parents, law and policy in the last hundred years has recognised these parental rights are not inviolable, with law emphasising the paramount welfare of the child, and the role of the state supporting parents through education, health and benefits (Landsdown, 1994).

Amongst Western European thinkers in the field of sociology, the very concept of childhood itself is argued to be a historical and social construction (Jenks, 2004; Prout, 2005). This social construction is culturally and structurally specific (Prout & James, 1990) and “remains imbued with significance that encodes what children *mean* to adults” (Gittins, 2004, p. 38). Although scientific formulas are often proposed as neutral, it is argued that concepts of childhood cannot be socially or politically innocent (Prout & James, 1990) because they are determined by adults’ social and economic goals (Mayall, 2000). Two competing conceptualisations of children were described by Qvortrup as ‘human beings’ or ‘human becomings’ (Qvortrup, 1994). As a ‘human being’ a child now is just as important as their future self as an adult. The child as a human being is a social actor, actively participating in and being able to influence their contexts. The child as a ‘human becoming’, on the other hand, is seen as a developing adult whose status now is less important than what they will become; the child is not yet competent and needs constant guidance from adults.

A brief summary of some historical beliefs is now presented to illustrate the changing concept of childhood: In Western thought, the modern concept of childhood is said to have emerged between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries when children were previously depicted as ‘little adults’ but moved from work to education and became temporarily removed from the ‘adult world’ (Prout & James, 1990). From the sixteenth and seventeenth century Calvinists came the idea of children as ‘little demons,’ born into depravity with the potential for sin and corruption, needing adults to break their will and use discipline to develop their potential for good (Donnelly, 2005; Kolar & Soriano, 2000). During the

Enlightenment, ideas arose of the child either as an innocent and ignorant *tabula rasa* (blank slate) or as inherently destined for a spiritual and moral life (Donnelly, 2005). The eighteenth century Romantics saw children as ‘noble savages’ who needed a child-centred environment to develop without restraint because they were natural and free and essentially good (Kolar & Soriano, 2000). To the Victorians of the nineteenth century, children were ‘innocent beings’ with the potential for happiness and childhood was a time for fantasy and play (Kolar & Soriano, 2000). The twentieth century became dominated by expert and empirical knowledge from psychologists and educationalists, who pushed to see children as good and innocent ‘developing beings’ with unlimited potential, childhood being a crucial time to build stability and maturity for later life (Kolar & Soriano, 2000). Although not the focus of this study, other non-Western cultures also have different perspectives on childhood and childrearing (see for example (F. M. Chen & Luster, 2002; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Kavapalu, 1993).

Perceptions of children have changed. This brief sociological and historical exploration of childhood illustrates why questions of parenting and specifically physical punishment are particularly complex and cannot be removed from their historical and cultural context. Contemporary theories of discipline have their roots in different historical views of children. Leach (1994) outlines that from a Judeo-Christian perspective, negative discipline is based on an assumption that babies are born with original sin and are inherently antisocial requiring that virtue be forced on them. Positive discipline, on the other hand, sees a child as morally neutral and inherently social and so able to learn values and behaviours as they would learn other things (Leach, 1994). It is the intention that the present research begins to ask questions that explore the nature of parenting in New Zealand and how the law change is affecting parents and parenting. The focus of the review now turns to considering a theoretical framework of parents and the influences on their parenting, as well as the

predicted outcomes for their children. The aim is to begin to question why parents may or may not be affected by a law change regarding physical punishment.

Theoretical Framework of Parenting and Physical Punishment

Grand Theory

Researching how parents learn and change their parenting techniques is particularly complex. There is an absence of dogmatic pronouncements and attempts at grand system-building on parenting, although the literature base is very large (Masud Houghghi, 2004). This is because of the diversity of parenting practices, the complex and changing context, and the need to treat both parents and children as particular (Masud Houghghi, 2004). Much of the research on parenting focuses on two main questions: what are the patterns of parenting, and what are the developmental outcomes for children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to investigate the effects of physical punishment on child outcomes, it is appropriate to present a brief summary of the theoretical framework for understanding physical punishment as a disciplinary technique and what the literature shows about the outcomes for children. Researchers have argued that parenting changes over time because of the social and cultural settings which encourage or constrain particular practices (Bowes & Hayes, 1999; Kolar & Soriano, 2000). Therefore, the focus will then appropriately turn to understanding a wider framework of how context, and particularly the law and public debate are proposed to influence parenting.

Child Development Theories

There are four main theories identified in the literature which are helpful to understand physical punishment as a disciplinary technique and the proposed outcomes for

children: Sociocultural theory, attachment theory, social learning theory and an ecological perspective.

Sociocultural theory posits that through the context of social interactions with others, children come to know and understand their world (for example Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Children learn from others through scaffolding and guidance and internalise their experiences (A. Smith, 1998). Physical punishment can be used as a means to provide guidance away from unacceptable behaviour.

Attachment theory emphasises the importance of the first few years of life in building a strong affectional tie between the child and primary caregiver, which is crucial to learning, development and formation of identity (Karen, 1994). This secure base helps the child to feel safe, develop a conscience and internalise moral values and rules. When rules are internalised early, there is less need for ongoing external control like punishment (A. Smith, et al., 2005).

Bandura's **social learning theory** emphasises the importance of observational learning, stating that "most human behavior is learned by observation through modeling" (Bandura, 1986, p. 47). He explains that by observing others we form cognitive rules for behaviour and code the information to use as a guide for later action, thus learning by observing the consequences of others' actions. According to social learning theory, observational learning assumes that a lot of aggressive behaviour and power coercive techniques are acquired through imitating models of parents or peers (Parke & Slaby, 1983; A. Smith, et al., 2005).

The **ecological perspective** developed by Bronfenbrenner conceives of an individual within multiple systems which are interconnected and both affect and are affected by each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This will be explained more fully in a following section (page 21).

Outcomes of Physical Punishment

With child development theories in mind, the focus now turns to understanding the outcomes of physical punishment on children. Research literature on the effects of physical punishment on children's outcomes is not clear and is highly contested. It is noted by some that "hitting children is intertwined with religious beliefs, cultural views, government, law, and social policy" (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003, p. 99). The research undertaken and the recommendations made by professionals and researchers have typically fallen into one of three positions in regards to physical punishment: pro-corporal punishment, anti-corporal punishment and conditional corporal punishment (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003).

The '*pro-corporal punishment*' view is not frequently cited in research and academic literature, but it is evident in everyday life. It is often supported by religious arguments based on the understanding that corporal punishment can bring desirable consequences like respect for authority, good behaviour and socialisation (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003). Wide public support and high usage suggests it is morally acceptable, and it finds strength in religious tradition, parental rights, and arguments that it works well when used in a mild way (Taylor, 2005).

The '*anti-corporal punishment*' view regards corporal punishment as having both short- and long-term detrimental consequences. It aligns with a modelling and social learning viewpoint that sees violence as begetting violence, and questions the morality of inflicting pain (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003). Anti-corporal punishment arguments tend to be based on a human rights perspective, respect for human dignity, the right to physical integrity and protection under the law, and a focus on physical discipline as a form of violence (Newell, 1989; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Taylor, 2005). Those who hold this view argue that physical punishment is ineffective because it only results in short-term compliance sometimes, and that a fine line exists between physical punishment and abuse. Adherents see the best interest

of the child as paramount and hold that the Government must lead (not follow) public opinion in ending physical punishment (Taylor, 2005).

Finally, the '*conditional corporal punishment*' view sees the effects of physical punishment as either negative or positive depending on its context, frequency and intensity (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003). Authors such as Baumrind note that a "blanket injunction against disciplinary spanking by parents is not scientifically supportable" (Baumrind, 1996a, p. 828). Researchers like Larzelere argue that the meaning the child attributes to smacking moderates its effect, making mild forms of physical punishment beneficial in some conditions. For instance, mild physical punishment can enhance other disciplinary practices such as time out (Larzelere, 2000; Larzelere, Cox, & Smith, 2010; Larzelere & Merenda, 1994). It is also argued that "it is likely that any effects of parenting discipline practice are moderated by scores of variables related to the child, parent, family and broader context (e.g., culture)" (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003, p. 102). People from this position may argue physical punishment is part of a wider spectrum of disciplinary strategies utilised, and is often a last resort.

A model to predict child outcomes

As illustrated above, the outcomes of physical punishment on children are highly contested. Gershoff proposed a model (Figure 1) which attempts to outline how multiple factors predict the use of and outcomes of physical punishment (Gershoff, 2002a, 2002b). Her model is based on a meta-analysis of 88 studies, and her model is extensively cited in the research literature. The model attempts to display how physical punishment may be associated with child outcomes, but also to emphasise the multilayered contexts that can motivate parents to use corporal punishment and moderate how it affects children. She argues that the social-cultural context (which includes legal statutes and public policy) can influence

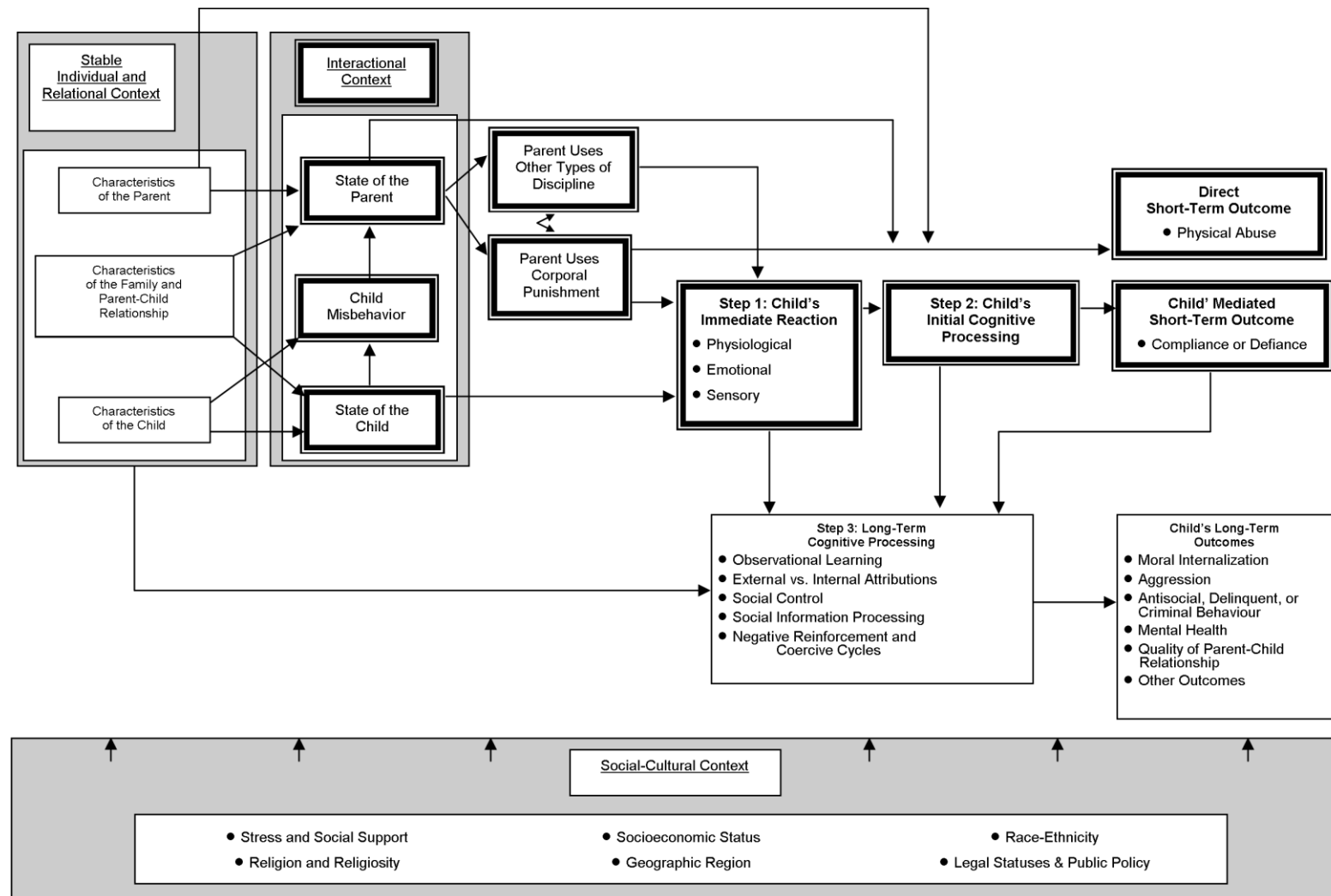


Figure 1: A revised process-context model of how parental corporal punishment may affect children's short- and long-term processing and outcomes.

Note: Variables boxed with double lines occur at the short-term interactional level; all other variables are long-term and/or stable variables (Used with permission, Gershoff, 2002b, p. 607).

various stages in the process as a predictor and moderator. She cautions that the majority of studies the model is based on (a) examined physical punishment and outcomes at the same point in time so causality cannot be concluded, and (b) relied on parent reports and adult recollections of the frequency of childhood physical punishment, which may be inaccurate.

Gershoff limited her definition of physical punishment to exclude abusive acts, and found the only positive outcome of physical punishment was immediate compliance of the child. On the negative side, smacking was associated with a decreased moral internalisation, poorer quality parent-child relations, diminished child and adult mental health, increased antisocial behaviour and delinquency in children, and increased antisocial and criminal behaviour in adulthood. It was also associated with an increased risk of abusing one's child or spouse or themselves being a victim of abuse.

Others have reanalysed Gershoff's results and have noted that some of the studies she analysed included measures of physical punishment that should properly be defined as abuse, although Gershoff had outlined she had tried to avoid including studies measuring abuse. These studies, they found, had more negative results than 'mild' physical punishment (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Cowan, 2002). Larzelere (2000) noted that 'mild physical punishment as a back-up' may not be detrimental and could reduce non-compliance and fighting. Although Gershoff's model and the accompanying critiques illustrate a seeming widespread consensus that overly harsh physical punishment has detrimental effects on children's outcomes, it appears the debate about mild physical punishment has not yet been resolved by researchers (Baumrind, et al., 2002; Gershoff, 2002a, 2002b; G. W. Holden, 2002). This highlights the extent to which the researchers' positions on physical punishment may affect the way they undertake their research, as authors such as Baumrind and Larzelere who could be described as supporting '*conditional corporal punishment*', and consistently publish studies that support their stance. Corporal punishment is still a highly contested topic

amongst researchers, with the Journal *“Law and Contemporary Problems”* dedicating its Spring 2010 edition to the topic of “Corporal Punishment of Children” (Coleman & Dodge, 2010).

Conceptualising the effects of law and public debate on parents

The focus will now turn to understanding influences on parenting and how the law and public debate can be conceptualised amongst a myriad of other influences. Perhaps the most influential theory of the complexities of human development, which is of particular relevance to parenting, is Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective. Gershoff’s model (described previously) incorporates elements of the ecological perspective in trying to provide an understanding of the influences on parenting.

Ecological Perspective

Bronfenbrenner describes an individual as affecting and being affected by their immediate setting, as well as the larger contexts (or systems) in which these settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). His ecological perspective conceived of the ecological environment as “a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). A key to his model is the notion of interconnectedness, both within settings and between settings. The growing human being is studied within immediate settings and larger contexts in which they are embedded, which are all changing and being affected by each other. He proposed a number of systems, which are illustrated in Figure 2.

The first system, the microsystem, is the immediate setting and the interrelations within it, the “Pattern of activities, roles, interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). Next, the mesosystem is the interrelations between two or

more in settings in which the person actively participates. The next layer is the exosystem, the systems which indirectly influence the individual, even though s/he is not an active participant in them. The exosystem affects or is affected by the person's setting and could include the mass media and public debate. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the outer-most layer as the macrosystem, the consistencies of the culture or subculture, and the belief systems or ideologies which underlie these. In the present study, this would include laws and beliefs about violence and physical punishment. The chronosystem (which was added at a later date by Bronfenbrenner), is a time dimension, which acknowledges that contexts change over time (Bowes & Hayes, 1999). Another important addition is the developmental niche, which postulates that individuals seek contexts which match their own characteristics (Bowes & Hayes, 1999). This may be an important consideration with parents, who may seek out social networks that support their parenting beliefs.

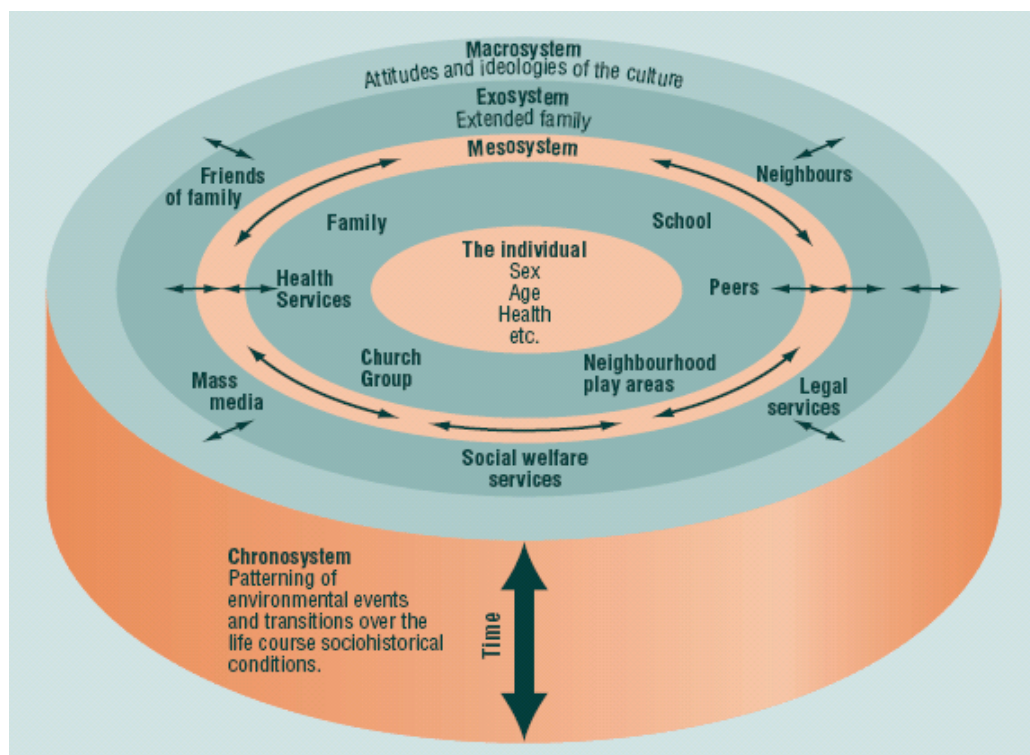


Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecology Model
(As depicted in (Bowes & Hayes, 1999, p. 9) Used with permission)

Because the systems are affected by and affect each other, it is hard to target the cause of changes. Bronfenbrenner argues for a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of basic science and public policy, and that “public policy is a part of the macrosystem determining the specific properties of exo-, meso-, and microsystems that occur at the level of everyday life and steer the course of behavior and development” (1979, p. 9).

Some researchers have applied systems theory, focusing on the family as a system. Furstenberg (1985) proposed that children are a part of a family system, which regulates the child’s development in response to its collective needs and interests. The family processes are both a product of this internal interaction, and set and shaped by the external environment over which there is limited control: the cultural, political, and economic institutions which establish the boundaries of the family system (Furstenberg, 1985). A systems view explains that parenting is the product of many interactions of multiple antecedents including the environment and experience as well as genetics and biology, and parents are both shaped by and shape their culture (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006). “Parenting stands at the confluence of many complex tributaries of influence; some arise within the individual, whereas others have macro-level determinants” (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006, p. 7). This study is concerned with the interaction between parents and their context, in particular law (macrosystem) and public debate (exosystem).

Law as a macrosystem

As described previously, it is hard to isolate the role that law change plays in relation to the broader ecological systems. The ‘cultural spillover theory’ of Straus (1991) and cultural justification proposed by Garbarino (citing his 1977 work) are referred to as key ways to understand the impact of the law (Bussmann, 1996). The emphasis is on the

normative process of transference of violence and corporal punishment (Straus, 1991; Straus & Donnelly, 2005).

Straus (1991) presented a macro-sociological theoretical model entitled the 'cultural spillover theory' which holds that violence in one sphere will spill over into other spheres, and can transcend the bounds of legitimate or criminal use of force. He argues this theory can help explain why different societies have different rates of violence like murder and rape, and argues violent crime is not merely a reflection of individual deviance, but may be supported by groups who share norms and values that support behaviours others would see as criminal. A society that has legalised forms of violence will increase the probability of criminal violence. Physical punishment and violent crime reflects a violent social climate, where crime increases, so do the demands to increase penalties like tougher laws and corporal punishment. He questions whether this process reduces or actually legitimises violence more (Straus, 1991). The argument that violence is a cultural norm may explain why places like Sweden, which, for example limits violence on television, have been more ready to accept law changes banning physical punishment (Haeuser, 1988). Gracia and Herrero (2008) conducted what they said was the first study to examine how beliefs about the necessity of corporal punishment are related to public perceptions of the extent of child maltreatment as a social problem. In their study of 2316 parents in Spain they found that support for physical punishment was related to perceptions that abuse is infrequent and a narrower definition of abuse as comprising only extreme cases. This may help to show how approval of 'mild' violence may spill over into perceptions of abuse and desensitise parents to the notion of violence (or vice versa).

Garbarino (2005) describes the macrosystem as the contexts in which the other systems are set, the broad ideological, demographic and institutional patterns, and shared assumptions about how things should be done. Garbarino (2005) emphasises how the

macrosystem of violence is important in providing a climate of support for physical punishment and can give a vantage point in asking if it is seen as normal, natural or inconceivable. Garbarino (2005) describes historical change as when the 'might be' can become real, and may occur through evolution (a common reality that guides individual actions), or revolution (a small group of decision makers introducing dramatic change). This conceptualisation of historical change is useful in thinking about how the law change in New Zealand around physical punishment came about, and how this may affect parents' reactions to it.

Bussmann (1996) argues the law is more about being a way of communicating, and although it can influence behaviour, he argues criminological research shows it doesn't strongly guide or steer behaviour. He also argues that legal judgments might not prevent abuse, but can make the justification of violence more difficult (Bussmann, 1996). These conceptualisations can be helpful in understanding whether and how parents are affected by law change, and if they are able to describe the reasons why.

The ecological perspective provides a kind of social map that can help navigate the complexities of research, showing alternative conceptualisations and pointing to multiple strategies for intervention (Garbarino, 2005). It is helpful to conceptualise how the macrosystem could be seen to affect individual decisions in the microsystem, for example, how a law change could affect parents' decisions to physically discipline their children. Garbarino (2005) argues for a projective nature of the ecological perspective, proposing for example that by initiating greater participation in exosystems (like parents visiting day-care centres, or providing on-site day care at work), these exosystems can be transformed into microsystems. In the same way, changes in the macrosystem or exosystem may in some way affect parents' decisions in the microsystem. Some theories will now be presented that may

help to explain how the wider macrosystem and exosystem are translated into practices at the micro-level.

Cultural Belief Systems (Macrosystem)

One theory that can help explain how macrosystem concepts are translated into microsystem practices are ‘cultural belief systems’ or *parental ethnotheories* as proposed by Harkness and Super (1992, 1996). Parental ethnotheories are cultural understandings of mutually supporting beliefs, and are often “implicit, taken-for-granted ideas about the ‘natural’ or ‘right’ way to think or act, and they have strong motivational properties for parents” (Harkness & Super, 2006, p. 62). They are often implicitly related to behaviour without conscious decision making or sifting of evidence (Harkness & Super, 1996). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) emphasised that intergenerational cultural transmission of parenting beliefs and practices occurs when both behavioural (ritual and practices), and symbolic (ideas, beliefs and values) inheritances are passed on to the next generation. In order for law change to effect change at the micro-level, it could be argued that the very fabric of the cultural belief system needs to be questioned and critiqued to move from a taken-for-granted belief to a conscious decision to reform the belief.

Cashmore (1999) explains that beliefs about what is acceptable or abusive can vary across time and are also culturally determined, and can even vary across subgroups within cultures. Some practices may be seen as acceptable to one culture, but to outsiders seen as abusive or neglectful, indulgent or harmful (Rodriguez, 2008). Culturally accepted attitudes about children and parents and what parenting and family should be are shaped by the ideas of parents, children and professionals (Agathonos-Georgopoulou, 1992). A researcher who conducted ethnographic research in Tonga argued for caution about ethnocentrism and judging some cultures as abusive, because even the international human rights laws and

conventions like UNCROC are supposedly independent of particular cultures, but in reality incorporate Western precepts, and even Western cultures are not homogenous in their beliefs about childhood (Kavapalu, 1993).

Several studies have shown that what is seen as abusive or acceptable varies across cultures. A qualitative study in Australia found a difference in the way that the use of physical punishment was conceptualised by Anglo, Vietnamese and Torres Strait Islander parents (Kolar & Soriano, 2000). Anglo parents expressed guilt over using physical punishment and saw it as ineffective, and Vietnamese and Torres Strait Islanders expressed confusion and fear about the implications of its use and how to adjust their parenting and that they may be labelled as child abusers, but still saw it as the most effective way of managing misbehaviour. A study from the Republic of Palau investigated whether 141 teachers rated vignettes as potentially abusive (Collier, McClure, Collier, Otto, & Polloi, 1999). The researchers explained that some normative practices in Palau may be seen as abusive in other cultures, such as tying the leg of a 3-year-old with a rope to a post when the parent cannot directly supervise the child, and smacking them with a 'skobang', a broom that may break the skin and leave scratch marks, for not doing homework or chores. Although some see this as parental control, others see it as abusive. Teachers reported that purpose, intent and extent of injury determined the acceptability of a practice. The authors conclude that physical punishment appears more culturally appropriate in Palau where 53.9% rated beating a child for not doing homework as abusive, compared to 88% of US subjects in a study they cited by McClure et al. (1996). These findings emphasise how cultural belief systems can be so deeply ingrained that they are perceived as 'natural' or 'right' to one culture, but 'abusive' or 'wrong' to another.

In order for a new law to bring about change, assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'right' must be brought into question if cultural belief systems are to be altered. Gershoff's

(2002b) model emphasised that the social-cultural context can influence various stages in the process of child-rearing as predictors and moderators. It thus also requires that researchers bear in mind that parenting behaviours and their effects may be modified by the specific cultural context in which they are embedded and whether they are seen as ‘normal’ or ‘abusive.’

Parental Belief Systems (Microsystem)

At a further micro-level system, parental belief systems are helpful in explaining how culture moulds personal beliefs and parenting. Valsiner and Litvinovic (1996) explain that “parenting is a multiple-criteria problem-solving practice guided by oversocialised affective-mental framing brought into it by the parents” (p. 56). They argue that parenting is a cultural phenomenon, a co-constructivist developmental psychology, where parents self-construct within a broader social world, negotiating their own interpretations of immediate situations with guidance from their cultural expectations. It is therefore important to be able to understand parental reasoning and the constructive process by which they utilise and change their existing internalised ideas and if these are traceable to structural predecessors like cultural patterns (Valsiner & Litvinovic, 1996).

Parental belief systems are “assembled at the crossroads of everyday experiences of parents and the ‘expert advice’ that is circulated through social communication channels” (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992, p. 393). Lightfoot and Valsiner define beliefs as “semiotically coded higher psychological functions that are constructed and internalised with cultural guidance” (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992, p. 395), and explain that people construct their own personal belief system from inductive knowledge (from child-rearing experience) and deductive knowledge (meanings and values of the collective culture) (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992). One input into parents’ organisation process can be social suggestions – “loosely

organised structures of social expectations that circulate in the social discourse of the time” (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992, p. 396) – from other parents, professionals and mass media, but they do not merely accept these suggestions. Using a medical metaphor, social suggestions are seen as carriers of collective cultural viruses that try to infect personal belief systems, but the individual must be susceptible to the influence and not contain psychological antibodies (conflicting beliefs) which block or neutralise the attack (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992).

The impact of law change and public debate will depend on the level to which parents are ‘innoculated’ against or willing to accept new information about parenting practice. Parental beliefs can undergo changes as parents assimilate new information, and parents of higher socioeconomic groups are more likely to be exposed to current developmental theories, and to have assimilated this information into their belief systems (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1980). McGillicuddy-De Lisi also argues that when the second child is born, the parents’ beliefs have the most potential for change, because what worked on the first child is challenged. These factors must be taken into account when trying to assess if a law change is able to have a substantial effect on parents’ belief systems to bring about a change in their belief and practice.

Relationships between Belief and Practice

Cultural belief systems and parental belief systems are based on an assumption that beliefs and practice are aligned. Thus, it is important that the literature determines whether parents’ stated attitudes and their practice are aligned, to be able to assess if changes in their belief systems will translate into changes in their parenting practice. Also, understanding how beliefs affect practice can give clarity to whether physical punishment is reasoned and deliberate or an emotional reaction caused by anger, and whether parents accurately report physical punishment because of perceived acceptance or not of the practice. Holden (1995,

cited in A. Smith, et al., 2005) described this as either a ‘cognitive-instrumental’ or an ‘affective reactive’ basis for physical punishment. He asserts that a positive attitude toward physical punishment that correlates with its use provides support for the ‘cognitive-instrumental’ use, but reports of negative emotions before its use supports the ‘affective-reactive’ model.

One US study that compared parents’ attitudes towards physical punishment, their behavioural intention (using vignettes) and behavioural reports of disciplinary techniques found high correlations among attitude, behaviour intention and reported practices, concluding that physical punishment was not just an emotional outburst, but a reasoned child-rearing practice (G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992). Another study found Canadian mothers were more likely to think physical punishment was necessary, was the best child-management strategy and less likely to believe it was harmful, and also reported using it more than Swedish mothers (Durrant, et al., 2003). The Canadian mothers were also more likely to believe spanking in a planned and calm manner was acceptable, but Swedish mothers were strongly opposed to it, and both said smacking in anger was unacceptable. They found a moderate correlation between attitudes towards physical punishment and its reported use. Another study comparing American and Japanese students found their attitudes toward and acceptance of the use of physical punishment were positively correlated for both samples (Chang & Katsurada, 1997). Furthermore, one study found that belief – rather than impulse – was highly correlated with the practice of physical discipline (Socolar & Stein, 1995). This cross-sectional survey found belief in smacking and belief in a negative approach to discipline were positively correlated (US Sample $r = .28$, $p < .01$; Japanese sample $r = .26$, $p < .01$), but were not negatively correlated with a belief in a positive approach. However, other researchers have suggested that mothers’ attributions and emotional arousal are more likely to predict their use of physical punishment. A. M. Smith and O’Leary (1995)

found that mothers' emotions and cognitions influence the harshness of their parenting, in that mothers who blamed the child for being emotionally aroused (e.g. crying) while receiving discipline will themselves be emotionally aroused to anger and thus be more likely to administer more harsh punishment; but mothers who feel guilty for their child's distress are more likely to be lax and not give harsh discipline, but do what they can to make the child happy. Wilkstedt and Murachver (2006), in their analysis of 50 Swedish and 50 New Zealand parents, found that parents in their study indicated their use of physical punishment was not planned.

It may be that some parents plan to use physical punishment as a last resort when other disciplinary strategies fail, and they may also react in anger and so both the 'cognitive-instrumental' and 'affective-reactive' models may be at work in the same parent in different situations. Saunders and Goddard (2010) outline that parents may initially use reason, then escalate to yelling, time-out or physical punishment which "cleverly diverts responsibility for the physical punishment from the parent to the children" (p. 166). It could also be argued this empowers (or burdens) the child to regulate punishment by establishing disciplinary intent, because the child can control their own behaviour on which the punishment is contingent (Baumrind, 1996a; Saunders & Goddard, 2010).

Thus belief and practice about physical punishment can be seen to be correlated, although the magnitude of the correlations and other confounding issues make it unclear how parents decide to use or not to use physical punishment.

Associations with the use of Physical Punishment

Researchers have expanded on the ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to attempt to model the factors which influence parents to use physical punishment. Belsky's process model of the determinants of parenting asserts that "parental functioning is

influenced by three major determinants: the personality/psychological well-being of the parent, the characteristics of the child, and the contextual sources of stress and support” (Belsky, 1984, p. 91). This can also be explained as various forces at work, in the individual (ontogenic development), the family (microsystem), the community (exosystem) and the culture (macrosystem) (Wiehe, 1990). Social support is positively related to ‘parental functioning’, through avenues such as emotional support (love and interpersonal acceptance), instrumental assistance (provision of information and advice, and help with routine tasks), and providing social expectations (serving as a guide about what is and is not appropriate behaviour). The marital relationship, social networks and employment can provide social support or stress, and social isolation is associated with dysfunctional parenting (Belsky, 1984).

Another way of conceptualising the factors that influence parenting are cultural, human and social capital, and other exogenous factors (Xu, et al., 2000), which are built on original ideas from the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Silva & Warde, 2010). Essentially, Xu et al.’s model expands on the ecological model, and Belsky’s concept of contextual sources of stress and support is divided into three categories of cultural capital, human capital and social capital; and parent and children characteristics are grouped together under exogenous factors. Xu et al.’s model sees child-rearing and the use of physical punishment as being strongly dependent on how parents use the symbolic meaning of cultural values and norms (cultural capital) as a resource to shape their parenting. *Cultural Capital* (macrosystem) includes things like religious preferences, religious attitudes, parental child-rearing values and parental role ideology. Xu et al argue that because the dominant cultural values and norms in the US have approved of physical punishment, it has been legitimately acted out and culturally justified. There is evidence to support religion (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995; Ellison, Bartkowski, & Segal, 1996a, 1996b; Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009; Ellison & Sherkat, 1993;

Frost, 2004; Gershoff, Miller, & Holden, 1999; Larsen, 1999; Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995; Wiehe, 1990; Wilcox, 1998), and ethnicity (Bluestone & Tamis-LeMonda, 1999; Cardona, Nicholson, & Fox, 2000; Chang & Katsurada, 1997; F. M. Chen & Luster, 2002; Day, Peterson, & McCracken, 1998; Flynn, 1994; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000; Rodriguez, 2008; Straus & Stewart, 1999) as affecting parents' use of physical punishment.

Human capital (microsystem) describes the skills and capital that enable parents to act in new ways, and although not tangible, can be indicated by educational attainment, employment and income, achieved socioeconomic status (SES) and mental health status. There is evidence to show that parental education level (Day, et al., 1998; Dietz, 2000; Flynn, 1994; J. R. Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997), marital status (Giles-Sims, Straus, & Sugarman, 1995; J. R. Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997), marital conflict, psychological characteristics, and alcohol and drug problems (Gollop, 2005), mental health (Bluestone & Tamis-LeMonda, 1999; F. M. Chen & Luster, 2002; Clement & Chamberland, 2009; Day, et al., 1998) and parent childhood history (Capaldi, Pears, Patterson, & Owen, 2003; Carlson & Buskist, 1997; Z. Chen & Kaplan, 2001; Clement & Chamberland, 2009; Cox, et al., 1985; Deater-Deckard, Gregory, Jennifer, Kenneth, & Bates, 2003; Flynn, 1996; Gagné, Tourigny, Joly, & Pouliot-Lapointe, 2007; Gollop, 2005; G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992; Kolar & Soriano, 2000; Muller, Hunter, & Stollak, 1995) are predictors of physical punishment. *Social Capital* (microsystem and mesosystem) is the relationships individuals have with each other, which could be informal support networks around childcare and other household helps. There is evidence that social capital affects the use of physical punishment (Day, et al., 1998; Dietz, 2000). Other exogenous factors such as child's gender (Day, et al., 1998; Dietz, 2000; Ellison, et al., 1996a; Giles-Sims, et al., 1995; Gollop, 2005; G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992; Straus & Stewart, 1999), child's age (Dietz, 2000; Ellison, et al., 1996a; Giles-Sims, et al., 1995; Gollop, 2005; G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992; Straus & Stewart, 1999), child's

behaviour (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1996), the parent's age (Dietz, 2000; Giles-Sims, et al., 1995; Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992; J. R. Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997), parent's gender (Day, et al., 1998; Dietz, 2000; Maxwell, 1993; Ritchie, 2002; Straus & Stewart, 1999) and parental perceptions and expectations (Clement & Chamberland, 2009; Gershoff, 2002a; Gollop, 2005; Larzelere, 2000; Wilkstedt, 2005), as well as the number of children in the family (Day, et al., 1998; Flynn, 1994) can affect the likelihood of using physical punishment. Although not prescriptive, these predictors of physical punishment are useful to understand how parents are affected by a large number of circumstances which can affect the likelihood of using physical punishment. These factors must be taken into account when considering how the law and public debate may be affecting parenting, and that any interventions to help parents change must be embedded in an understanding of the multiple contexts and challenges which parents face.

Parenting Styles

Another helpful theoretical framework in terms of understanding parenting is being able to categorise parents as exhibiting a particular style of parenting. Diana Baumrind's theory of parenting styles dates back to 1967 and has been widely used to understand parenting and its effects on child outcomes. She describes three parenting patterns as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive (Baumrind, 1971).

Authoritative parents attempt to direct their children through rational issue-oriented manners, with verbal give and take and reasoning, using firm control without being overly restrictive, using reason and power (which may include mild physical punishment) to achieve objectives, within the context of warm, engaged, rational parenting (Baumrind, 1971, 1996b). Children of these parents are generally more self-controlled, independent, competent, socially

responsible, have high self-esteem, and better moral development (Carlson & Buskist, 1997; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

In contrast, the **authoritarian parent** attempts to direct their children's behaviour and attitudes toward a set standard of conduct, which may be theologically motivated and formed by a higher authority (Baumrind, 1971). Obedience, respect for authority and preserving order and tradition are important, and punishment and forceful measures are used to curb self-will. Verbal give and take is not encouraged, but rather the child should just accept the parent's word as right. Authoritarian parents raise children who are more unhappy and distrustful (Carlson & Buskist, 1997).

The final category, **permissive parenting** is a parent who is non-punitive, affirming and accepting toward children and their desires and actions, consulting on decisions and giving explanations (Baumrind, 1971). There are very few demands for responsibility or orderliness and the mother presents herself as a resource for the child who can use as he wishes, with the parent not trying to shape or alter the child's ongoing or future behaviour. The child is allowed to regulate his/her own behaviour, with avoidance of control and externally-defined standards (Baumrind, et al., 2002). Children with permissive parents become the least self-reliant and curious, because they haven't learnt from adult guidance (Carlson & Buskist, 1997).

Maccoby and Martin (1983) outline that before Baumrind's three categories, Becker (1964) had proposed two variables, warmth and acceptance, and created a four-fold typology based on restrictive and permissive variables, classifying parents as: power-assertive (physical punishment, shouting, forceful commands and threats); or love-oriented or inductive (showing disappointment, withdrawal of love, isolation, praise, giving affection and reasoning). Based on these ideas, Maccoby and Martin (1983) developed two dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness, and developed a four-fold typology of parenting,

extending Baumrind's categories to include a fourth, the **indulgent-uninvolved parent**. This parent will do what they think necessary to minimise the cost in time and effort in their interactions with the child, as well as abrasive, unresponsive and unsupportive parenting. The focus is on avoiding inconvenience and responding in ways to terminate situations quickly, and children with these parents grow up confused and find it hard to build trust and strong relationships with others.

Parenting styles are useful tools to categorise parents and begin to make assumptions about the potential outcomes for their children. It can also be a good predictor of whether the parent is more likely to use physical punishment. Although these parenting styles are sometimes posited in a way that they seem mutually exclusive, studies have found that some parents may use a combination of authoritarian and authoritative techniques (Kolar & Soriano, 2000; Lawrence & Smith, 2009). Thus although the parenting styles are useful, they are not definitive.

Grid-Group Theories

Another way to conceptualise parenting styles is to use a grid-group theory, which comes from sociology and anthropology (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005a, 2005b), and builds on the idea of how cultural and parental belief systems impact on parenting style. Two social dimensions are conceptualised: grid (a need for and legitimacy of an external prescription to control behaviour); and group (the desirability of affiliation to others). This conceptualisation created four grid-group categories on which to classify cultures: individualistic, egalitarian, hierarchical and fatalistic. It is argued that these four categories are useful in understanding people's social preferences for physical punishment, and that their parenting styles and preferences derive from their cultural categorisation. The categorisation can also be used to predict responses to law change regarding parenting. It is proposed that cultural

categorisation can predict parenting style, for example, 'hierarchical' cultures have *authoritarian* parents (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005a, 2005b). For a more detailed description of the grid-group theory see Appendix B.

It has been concluded that:

“For better or for worse, we do not currently know how to manipulate the relative proportions of rival ways of life in our population. This means that sharp reductions in the use of corporal punishment lie beyond what public policy can currently accomplish” (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005b, p. 68).

This suggests that changing disciplinary strategies requires changing culture, which is difficult, and so macro-level efforts (like law change) may not hold much hope to change parents' disciplinary strategies sharply. It may be that parents' core beliefs and values support these strategies, and parents will maintain practices that fit in their culture even if there is empirical evidence that these practices have ineffective or negative consequences (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005a). Giles-Sims and Lockhart (2005a) argued that cultural change at a micro-social level is needed, not only macro-social banning, citing the work of Roberts (2000) who argued that it was cultural change in Sweden that led to a ban on corporal punishment, and not the ban that led to cultural change.

It is also important to understand the macro-culture may differ at the individual level. Kemmelmeier et al (2003) found that although individualism and collectivism at a cultural level was sometimes presented as opposing beliefs, it is possible at the individual level for both to be present without contradiction. Although authoritarianism is associated with aspects of collectivism of hierarchy and submission in-group, other collectivism concepts of closeness and interpersonal connection are unrelated. So authoritarianism and collectivism overlap on some levels but not all. At an individual level they found no relationship between individualism and authoritarianism. Ellis and Petersen (1992) analysed data from a cross-cultural sample of pre-coded relevant variables for 122 societies from all economic

development levels, geographic and cultural regions. They found physical punishment and lecturing were used more in cultures that valued conformity more than self-reliance. And they found support for the theory that cultures who stress self-reliance avoid coercive techniques because they want children to act on the basis of their own decisions, providing a more permissive parenting approach to allow greater freedom for children to govern themselves. An American study of 42 lower-class black mothers of 3-6-year-olds found that there was no correlation between authoritarian control practices and attitudes toward obedience, suggesting they are two relatively independent aspects of parenting and that mothers who took the child's perspective are just as likely to use power assertive techniques as mother who did not (Kelley, et al., 1992). These studies again reveal that although categorisations provided by the parenting styles and grid-group theories are useful to make generalisations, at the individual level parenting is not simplistic and parents may fit into more than one category.

The preceding section has attempted to outline some ways to conceptualise parenting and the many ways they are influenced. The ecological perspective provided a useful tool to understand how parents are located amongst multiple systems which both affect and are affected by each other. A change in law (macrosystem) and the accompanying public debate (exosystem) could be expected to have some effect on parenting at the microsystem level, provided it has provided enough impetus for parents to desire to change. The exploration of cultural belief systems, parental belief systems, alignment of belief and practice, predictors of physical punishment, parenting styles, grid-groups theories has attempted to outline some of the complexities of understanding how and why parents may choose to change their parenting technique because of the result of law change and public debate. The focus now turns toward evidence as to the effects of banned physical punishment internationally.

Effects of banned physical punishment internationally

Although several countries have banned physical punishment, only in Sweden and Germany have the impacts been measured in substantial ways (Children's Commission, 2008b), with the most research available on Sweden. It is important that when undertaking cross-cultural analyses universality is not assumed and ideological foundations of comparisons must be made clear (Garbarino, 2005). For the purpose of this review, the Swedish context will be described briefly to help provide a realistic basis for comparison with New Zealand. The Swedish corporal punishment ban will be explored to help formulate a framework of understanding how the law affected parents' attitudes and practices in discipline and how it may be expected to be affecting New Zealand parents.

Swedish context

Sweden is one of the social-democratic Scandinavian countries which has a reputation for being egalitarian and a 'model' welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 2002). There has historically been a positive relationship between the state and its people, with a relative political homogeneity reflecting a relative religious, ethnic and racial homogeneity (Bryson, 1992) and an emphasis on equality (Jutengren & Palmerus, 2002). The historical local level municipalities developed an early local-level democracy which helped secure a feeling of inclusion and to blur the distance between state and civil society, with the state not being perceived as hostile (Kangas & Palme, 2005). Kangas and Palme (2005) suggest that Swedes seem to be more prone to accept collectivism rather than protect their individual rights and freedoms, with an unusual "passivity" and subordination, and are surprisingly obedient to proclamations and messages from public authorities. Sweden has an emphasis on egalitarian principles, with Swedish family policy aiming to give families with children a living standard

comparable to those without children, through cash grants, social welfare and insurance benefits (Palmerus & Scarr, 1995).

Ethnicity and Religion

Sweden's ethnic make up is 85% Swede, 5% Finnish, 1% Assyrian (Statistics Sweden, 2010). The Church of Sweden, a Lutheran church, separated from the state in 2000, and statistics show that from 1972 where 95.2% of the population belonged to the church, currently around 71.3% belong to the church (Swedish Church, 2010). However, the religious affiliation is described as nominal (non-practising), as Sweden is described as one of the most secular and least religious countries in the world, with one of the highest levels of atheism (Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

The Swedish journey toward banning physical punishment

The journey toward the banning of physical punishment in Sweden has an even longer history than in New Zealand. Durrant (1996) explains that it was the “logical conclusion of an evolutionary process that unfolded over a period of decades” (p. 19). In 1949, in the section outlining permissible parental behaviour, the word ‘punish’ was replaced by ‘reprimand’ in the Parent and Guardianship Code (a civil code governing family law), but the legal defence for corporal punishment remained (Durrant, 1996). In 1957, the section that allowed the use of force in reprimanding children, by providing a legal defence excusing minor injuries, was completely removed from the Penal Code (Durrant, 1996; Newell, 1989). Soon after this, in 1958, corporal punishment was banned in schools, and in 1960 this ban was extended to cover other childcare institutions as well (Newell, 1989). In 1966 the parental right to use physical punishment was removed from the Parents’ Code. A poll in 1971 showed 60% did not know that physical punishment was no longer legally defensible (Durrant, 1996).

Because of this poll, a large public education campaign was launched in 1972 to teach parents about the legal status of physical punishment (Newell, 1989).

An incident in 1975 - where the father of a badly beaten 3-year-old was acquitted - highlighted that “it was not clear whether corporal punishment was not approved but permitted, or whether it was actually forbidden” (Durrant, 1996, p. 21), and led to a law change in 1979. The law change added a paragraph in the Parents’ Code to explicitly ban the use of corporal punishment by parents (Durrant, 1996). The following addition was made:

“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 physical punishment or other injurious or humiliating treatment” (Durrant, 1996, p. 21).

This law change carried no penalties but aimed to alter public attitudes, with the inclusion of ‘humiliating treatment’ aimed to counter concerns that mental abuse such as ridicule, threatening or locking up a child may result if parents couldn’t resort to physical punishment. The law in 1979 had very little parliamentary opposition and only one group of seven parents mounted a serious challenge based on religious grounds (Newell, 1989). Following this law change, there was a huge public education campaign, with 600,000 16-page colour pamphlets sent out so every household with a young child received a message explaining the law and providing alternatives to physical punishment (Durrant, 1996; Newell, 1989). Information was also distributed through medical offices and early childhood centres, and on milk cartons (Durrant, 1996). By 1981, 96% of Swedish families were aware that the law had changed (Ewerlof & Sverne, 1999, cited in Modig, 2009).

Although no large scale longitudinal studies have been done to demonstrate the effect of the law change, several studies have attempted to outline its impact (Durrant, 1996). Both Durrant (1996) and Newell (1989) cite the research of Professor Adrienne Haeuser in 1981 and 1988, with Newell referring to it as the largest-scale assessment of the effects of the ban,

and found support for her conclusions in his own visit in 1989 from Tor Sverne, (a judge who was the first Chairman of the Children's Rights Commission and played a central role in the Swedish reforms). Haeuser conducted interviews with national and local government officials and parents in Stockholm and four other areas (Haeuser, 1988). She did not find evidence to show child abuse had reduced, but did find one trend that changed between 1981 and 1988. In 1981 parents were predominantly permissive and children were not punished much (physically or otherwise). But by 1988 permissive parenting was gone because advice from experts changed, and parents now imposed rules and limits on behaviour, but never used physical punishment in public and only rarely at home. The only parents who used physical punishment were those under severe stress and if they did resort to it they did not think it was useful but was to relieve anger and frustration, and they frequently apologised afterwards to the child. Almost universally they resolved conflict with discussion, having a firm hold on the child's arm and insisting on eye contact. Although Haeuser found this discussion could escalate to yelling, it was seen as better than humiliation or violence. Homes with pre-verbal infants were child-proofed. She also found the law was discussed in parenting education classes attended by over 99% of parents, and as a compulsory part of 9th Grade English language classes. Haeuser concluded that the law reforms and the public education have stopped the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment.

Some argue that the law itself did not have a huge effect on attitudes and behaviours because attitudes were already declining well before 1979. Roberts (2000) argues that support for physical punishment was declining before the law change, and it was this declining support that led to the law change, and not vice versa. SIFO (Swedish Opinion Research Institute) (1981, as cited in Durrant, 1996; Newell, 1989; Roberts, 2000) showed parent opinions were changing well before the 1979 ban. In 1965, 53% felt physical punishment was 'sometimes necessary', which fell to 42% in 1968, to 35% in 1971, and 26% in 1979, then

rose to 29% in 1980, fell to 26% in 1981 and rose to 34% in 1995. Those who believed children should be brought up without physical punishment increased from 35% in 1965 to 60% in 1971 to 71% in 1981. Another study in 1994 found 11% were favourable towards light physical punishment, 22% were opposed in principle but might use it if provoked, and 56% were against all forms and would never use it (Lundgren, 1994, cited in Edfeldt, 1996). They found men were more likely to endorse physical punishment (16%) than women (6%), as were older parents (18%) compared to middle aged (10%) and younger parents (6%). They also found parents were more likely to say they would use it at home (35%) compared to in public (26%) which seemed to indicate social pressure from social or legal norms, and the lower social cost of smacking at home compared to in public.

Janson (2005) reported the results of studies over 1998-2001 that interviewed parents, children and young adults and replicated the study of Edfelt in 1985. He found while 51% of preschool children received physical punishment at least once a year in 1980, by 2000 it had dropped to 8%, and severe and repeated child maltreatment was estimated to be less than 0.5% in 2000. He analysed data from 1960 showing that there was a steady and parallel decline in positive attitudes to and use of physical punishment, and the decline was so steep it probably was one of the greatest changes in attitude and behaviour ever seen in Swedish adults, but these changes happened well before the ban in 1979, arguing the law itself had no effect on parental attitudes or behaviour. He argues the welfare state, high levels of parent education and a well-functioning maternal and child health care system may be the reasons for the successive changes.

Durrant (1996) argues that the law's effectiveness cannot be removed from its social context: a strong children's rights movement, a collectivist orientation and a focus on preparedness for parenting, which included students at all levels educated on responsible parenthood and free prenatal classes, baby-care courses and support groups at community

health centres teaching about parent training. Durrant et al. (2003) also explain that Sweden has a very low tolerance toward physical punishment, reflected by the law changes and other social policies (like extensive provision of parental support and education which promotes 'positive parenting'). Haeuser (1988) also noted that in Sweden, television is government controlled, and they implement some bans on television violence.

Although Janson (2005) cites the concerns of some authors (like Baumrind 1991, and Larzelere and Johnson 1999) that when corporal punishment is banned, parents may adopt a permissive parenting style and fail to confront their children firmly enough to induce compliance, research confirms Swedish parents have adjusted well (Janson, 2007). Palmerus and Scarr (1995) compared discipline amongst Swedish and American families and found Swedes used high levels of verbal coercion and low use of authority, while physical restraint and behaviour modification were used moderately, and reasoning was used rarely, but even more rare was the use of physical punishment. Compared to the American sample, Swedish parents used physical restraint more where the American sample used physical punishment more. The authors suggest parents have learnt to hold their children rather than spank them in order to obey. Janson (2007) asserts that Scandinavian countries emphasise mutual respect between parents and children, with comfort and empathy that other cultures may describe as permissive. These differences in parenting styles and opinions about 'permissiveness' highlights the importance of understanding the meaning associated with parenting techniques in different cultures as discussed previously.

Another cross-cultural study found that 71% of 102 Canadian mothers reported having used physical punishment at some time, compared to only 45% of 97 Swedish mothers (Durrant, et al., 2003). They found of those who used it, 67% of Canadians use it less than once a week compared to 95% of Swedes. While 52% of Canadian mothers saw it as their right to smack if necessary, only 21% of Swedes did. Surprisingly a large proportion

(86%) of Canadian mothers didn't see physical punishment as effective in the long term (compared to 88% of Swedes), but only 59% thought it was harmful to the child (compared to 86% of Swedes).

Durrant (2000) describes her 1999 study, where she found that prosecution rates had not increased and out-of-home placements were declining after the ban. She outlined that two main questions arise regarding the effects of the Swedish law change -implications for youth well-being (such as a lack of discipline resulting in social unrest), and implications for individual rights (such as parental prosecutions or child apprehensions?). Her 2000 study attempted to investigate social trends to address the question of whether legal sanctioning of corporal punishment is needed to socialise youth effectively. She did not attempt to establish causal relationships. She hypothesised that externalising (antisocial) behaviour and internalising (alcohol and drug abuse and suicide) would remain steady or decline following the ban. She analysed data from the early 1970s to mid 1990s to see trends before and after the ban. She found that rather than increased social unrest among Swedish youth, they were in fact functioning more adaptively than before the ban. Involvement in youth theft and narcotics trafficking declined substantially since the 1970s, as did consumption of alcohol and drugs. Suicide rates were lower among those raised after the ban than before, and the decline was in marked contrast to other countries like the UK, US and Canada where suicide rates doubled between 1970 and 1991, and where rates tripled in New Zealand. Durrant (2000) noted that the only equivocal findings were in youth assault rates, although she noted that finding suggested violence amongst young people had not increased, but convictions increased because of a redefinition of violence in the law and increased enforcement. She concludes the ban was not followed by chaos, but by improved functioning amongst Swedish youth.

Sweden's macro and exosystem could be described as being markedly different to that of New Zealand, and because the law was reformed a lot earlier than in New Zealand, the chronosystem at that time was different to how it is now. The focus will now turn toward New Zealand to begin a cross-cultural comparison.

The New Zealand Context

New Zealand could be described as being a politically liberal country which developed a large welfare safety net (Bassett, 1998). Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave (2004) summarised liberalism as having an emphasis on autonomous and rational individuals, where allowing individuals economic and personal freedom will produce well-being. Liberalism reluctantly allows for state intervention in limited situations. It is noted that right from the birth of New Zealand as a nation, it was marked by a deliberate attempt to keep all formal collective welfare activity to a minimum, an intentional lack of assistance to the needy, for fear of pauperism entering the colony, resulting in a denial of poverty and the need for assistance being perceived as personal failing (Cheyne, et al., 2004; Thomson, 1998). However, from the 1930s onward, New Zealand adopted more socialist and egalitarian principles and invested more into the welfare state model (Bassett, 1998) to the point where there is a large safety net of welfare in provision of health care, education, and benefits, but not to the extent of that provided in Sweden.

Ethnicity and Religion

The ethnic make-up of New Zealand is predominantly European 67%, with 14.6 % Māori, 6.9% Pacific Islanders and 9.2 % Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). The 2006 Census data shows that of those who stated religion, 56% showed affiliation with a Christian

religion, 35% stated no religion. Of Pacific Islanders who stated, 80% were affiliated with a Christian religion.

Parents' attitudes and practices in discipline

Although most studies and theories described previously originate from the United States, there is a substantial body of literature on New Zealand parents which seems to validate these international studies. Jane and James Ritchie began studying parenting in New Zealand in the 1960s after they recognised a lack of empirical information on parenting in New Zealand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1972). The first study in 1963 was based on a classic study of American child-rearing (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957), with semi-structured interviews conducted with 151 mothers demographically similar to national statistics, asking about general parenting as well as disciplinary actions and the principles upon which they were based. They continued the research and conducted similar studies into the 1990s (Ritchie, 1997, 2002; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, 1997). Table 1 shows an overview of what the studies have found.

The evidence from studies on New Zealand parents shows that since the Ritchies began tracking child-rearing in 1963, there has been a number of changes in attitudes towards parenting. Parents have become less favourable towards harsh physical punishment, and have also adopted a number of different disciplinary strategies in their repertoire.

In general, mothers of the 1960s relied heavily on negative discipline methods (scolding, shouting and smacking) and regarded positive methods with deep suspicion, seeing rewards as bribery and fearing praise may give children a swollen head; and explaining was seen as a waste of time because pre-schoolers can't reason (Ritchie, 1997). Some parents gave a religious and meta-physical commentary on sin to justify the need for physical punishment.

Table 1: Physical punishment use and attitudes in New Zealand

Reference	Year	Sample size	Use of Physical punishment %						Attitude toward its effectiveness %			
			Never used	once a year	once a month	once a week	daily or more	Once a week or more	Unequivocally effective	Few reservations	moderately effective	no good at all
Ritchie (1972)	1963	151 mothers	1	31	25	26	18	44	38	26	10	11
Ritchie (1981)	1977	119 mothers and 101 fathers	10	-	-	39	16	55	14	-	-	-
Ritchie (1997)	1978	156 solo mothers	-	-	-	-	-	68	-	-	-	-
Ritchie (1997)	1987	109 mothers, 86 fathers and 100 solo mothers	2	-	-	36	14	50	33	-	-	-
Maxwell (1993)	1993	1000 people	-	-	-	-	-	45	-	-	-	-
Ritchie (2002)	1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	15	-	40	33

Note: A dash indicates where data is not available

The 1970s saw a change in attitudes. Although physical punishment was being used more frequently, it was seen less as being unequivocally effective. The authors explain this may be because the ideology of punishment was so engrained in New Zealand society (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981), which could also be explained by Straus' (1991) cultural spillover theory. Parents were more likely to use praise and explain the reasons for their disapproval of certain behaviours, but were still less likely to give rewards like gold stars, but were willing to give ways for children to earn money. Only half of the mothers gave special treats sometimes (Ritchie, 1997). Although fathers and mothers showed similar use of physical punishment, Ritchie argues that, per child contact hour, mothers were much less likely to use physical punishment. She also noted fathers were more likely to see physical punishment as effective and believe it was the right thing (Ritchie, 1997).

A study of 156 solo mothers in 1978 found that compared to partnered women they were similar in use of reasoning, praise and rewards, but physical punishment was used more frequently, they felt less guilty about using it and felt it to be more effective (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997). This the Ritchies attributed to the stress of parenting alone and public perceptions of solo mothers as welfare bludgers; hence the use of physical punishment more as a means of appearing to be in control (Ritchie, 1997).

In a 1979 study of families of a Hamilton primary school, the most frequent answer to why parents used a smack was as a punishment for disobedience, and 96% of fathers and 89% of mothers agreed with the statement "that in certain circumstances it is all right for a parent to smack a child" (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981).

In the 1980s, mothers used physical punishment less often, more mothers reported it unequivocally effective, but more felt guilty. Two thirds made a point of using reasoning and praising (Ritchie, 1997). Fathers and mothers showed similar use of physical punishment and about equal opinions about effectiveness (just over a third),

one third of mothers and one quarter of fathers thought it was the right thing to do, but two-thirds of mothers and fathers felt guilty. Mothers were more likely to use praise and reasoning than fathers (Ritchie, 1997). Single mothers were more likely to use physical punishment more frequently, as well as other punitive measures like sending children to their room, showing they were parenting under stress (Ritchie, 1997).

Millichamp, Martin and Langley (2006) interviewed 962 26 year-olds from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study about their experience of discipline in childhood (dating back to their childhood in the 1970s and 1980s). Their study was consistent with the Ritchies' studies showing 80% of participants had received physical punishment at some point, and 77% on a regular basis. The most severe punishment identified in the 2006 study was smacking 29%, with 45% punished with an object, and 6% experiencing extreme punishment that resulted in injury or lasting bruises. In primary years (age 5-12) smacking was the most used discipline at 55%, followed by telling off 47%, yelling 36% and smacking with an object 35%.

In the 1990s, about half of mothers and fathers hit once a week or more. Sixty-five percent of mothers said they used it because they couldn't help themselves, 54% of fathers saw it as only thing a child understands (Ritchie, 2002). About 65% of mothers (59% of fathers) made a point of using praise for good behaviour (compared to 42% mothers and 22% fathers in 1970s). More parents also used rewards like gold stars and treats, and now more than two thirds made a point of reasoning (compared to 45% mothers and 18% fathers in 1970s) (Ritchie, 2002).

In 1992, Blampied and Kahan (1992) sampled 201 Christchurch adults and presented them with a case description on a noncompliant child and asked them for acceptable responses. The ranking of punishment from most to least acceptable was response cost (loss of rewards), social reprimand, time-out, overcorrection and physical

punishment. But this may have been due to the way the questions were structured and not representing an actual change in public attitudes.

In 1993, Maxwell conducted a study as part of a phone political opinion poll of 1000 people with 90% Pakeha, 5% Māori and 2% Pacific Islanders (Maxwell, 1993). On attitude measures they found 87% agreed with the statement “there are certain circumstances when it is all right for a parent to smack a child”, but only 3% to ‘thrash’ a child, compared to 11% in 1981 (statistically significant difference cited in Ritchie 1981). On behavioural measures, parents reported that 88% had children who had misbehaved in the last week, but only 20% used smacking, and 3% push/shove/grab, 2% used a strap/stick/object, and no-one reported a severe thrashing. Maxwell (1993) concludes that attitudes about physical punishment in the home appear to be changing. A smack with a hand is still approved, but more severe punishment is no longer a part of the repertoire. Those younger parents, current parents and more highly educated are less likely to report and endorse more severe punishment than older parents, those who have never had children and who have a lower education. Parents were now also using non-physical punishment more often.

Carswell (2001) surveyed 1000 adults and found 80% agreed a smack should be legally allowable for disciplining a child, but only 15% agreed with the use of a spoon, 0.4% the use of wood, and 1.3% believed it was acceptable to smack the child’s head. In terms of severity, 75% of the participants thought a smack was ok if it left no mark. In terms of the age of the child, there was more acceptance of smacking with 2-5 year-olds (62%) and 6-10 year-olds (72%), followed by 11-14 year-olds (43%). Carswell (2001) also summarised the attitude change based on Ritchie (1981), Maxwell (1993) and studies carried out by the Department of Child Youth and Family (1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2000) which is shown in Table 2. Carswell (2001) notes that the studies used different questions and methodologies so the findings should be compared tentatively.

Table 2: Response to the statement “there are certain circumstances when it is alright for a parent to smack a child”

Year	1981	1993	1995	1998	1998	2000
Percentage agreed	89	87	69	57	52	56

Note: Based on Carswell (2001)

In 2005, a mail survey asked 1367 parents of children under 5 to rate the most effective way to guide their children to behave well (Littlies Lobby, 2005). They found 96% favoured praise and encouraging good behaviour, 94% leading by example, 76% giving rewards, 75% talking about what is right and wrong and 63% using time out, 56% taking away privileges and only 9% smacking when they do things wrong. Remarkably, 71% said smacking when they do things wrong was the least effective way to guide children to behave well.

The New Zealand Health Survey, carried out from October 2006 to November 2007, collected information from 12,488 adults (Ministry of Health, 2008). They only asked about the use of physical punishment in the past four weeks by the primary caregiver (and noted a possible social desirability bias because of the passing of the law during this time with some interviews before and some just after the law change). Children aged 2–4 years were the most likely to experience physical punishment, with almost 20% having experienced physical punishment by their primary caregiver in that time period. Table 3 shows a comparison of the Maxwell (1993) study and the Ministry of Health (2008) study, showing that although the use of smacking has declined, other disciplinary techniques have remained reasonably consistent.

Table 3: Parents' reported use of disciplinary techniques

Study	Number of Participants	Explanation or discussion	Told off	Yelled at	Sent to room	Made child miss out on something	Smacked with a hand	Ignored, distracted or redirected
Maxwell (1993)	1000	66	66	34	41	19	36	-
Ministry of Health (2008)	12,488	65	60	40	49	40	10	35

Note: The Maxwell study asked parents about disciplinary incidents in the last week, but the Ministry of Health study asked about disciplinary incidents in the last four weeks
A dash indicates data was not available

Lawrence and Smith (2009) used a multi-method approach with semi-structured interviews, diaries of disciplinary events over three days in a two-week period and the Parenting Daily Hassles scale focused on under five-year-olds, with 98 mothers, 16 fathers, 1 grandfather and 2 grandmothers taking part. The authors note that data was collected over the period December 2006 to July 2008, when the Act was going through Parliament and they note this may have affected parents' responses, but it is difficult to speculate if parents were more likely to stand up for their rights to punish, or less likely to report smacking for fear of prosecution. The sample was around 75% European, 10% Māori, and 2% Pasifika. They found 80% said their own experience as a child had influenced their parenting, compared to 58% referring to books and magazines, around a third mentioned current family, television/radio, current friends, professionals, their own professional background and under 20% mentioned religion, internet or cultural background. Family, early childhood teachers, friends, partners, books or written material and Plunket were sources of advice (in descending order), and although 40% had attended parenting courses, this was not particularly mentioned as a source of support. The most common disciplinary techniques used were time out (82%), distraction (77%), reward system (76%), praise (69%), withdrawal of privileges (60%),

reasoning (58%), smack (41%), shout (41%), ignore (38%), hugs and smiles (31%) and making the child apologise (18%). The diary ratings showed parents' attitudes correlated well with their behaviours, with an average of 77% using verbal instruction, 60% using praise, 59% verbal warning, 45% distraction, 43% reward, 42% explanation, 33% ignoring and 29% verbal reprimand, 28% time out, 26% withdrawal of privileges, and only 7% using some kind of smacking. Lawrence and Smith (2009) summarise that the diary entries support the finding that many parents are authoritative and combine clear directions, warmth and positive rewards to structure the situation, and if punishment is needed, it is generally a verbal warning or reprimand, time out or withdrawal of privileges, physical punishment was very rare. The authors also note positive methods were at least two or three times more likely to be used than negative methods. An interesting finding was that 53% used the same discipline technique in all circumstances, but the 47% who didn't often referred to public settings where the real or perceived reaction of onlookers made discipline particularly difficult. Parents also reported using different techniques depending on the child's age, personality or gender.

New Zealand Cultural differences

New Zealand studies have shown there are cultural differences amongst Pakeha, Māori and Pacific Island parents' attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. Carswell (2001) found more Europeans 82% agreed that it should be legally allowable to discipline a child with a smack compared to Māori (73%) and Pasifika (69%). However, Pasifika peoples were more likely than other groups to agree a wooden spoon was acceptable. Europeans were also more likely to think a smack was ok if it left a mark, but Pasifika people were more likely to see it as acceptable discipline for 15-17-year-olds. A national survey of 612 parents who were currently using physical punishment showed some interesting cultural differences between

Pakeha, Māori and Pacific parents (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). When asked about what influenced their parenting, all parents were equally likely to talk of their own parents and upbringing, but Maori and Pacific parents were more likely to talk about their own experience in caring for a child, and their immediate family, but Pakeha parents referred more to books and magazines. Across all ethnicities, the most common non-physical discipline methods used were time out and removal of privileges, and Plunket was the most common agency contacted.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1972) found that, although Maori were more likely than Pakeha to use physical punishment, they saw it as less effective. In-depth interviews with Maori explained this may be due to the impact of urbanisation, economic demands, diminished kinship networks, demands to acculturate to 'Pakeha ways', and because of the impact of colonial and missionary ideologies (Rickard, 1997). Similarly, Pacific Island families respect for authority was also reinforced by mission Christianity (Paterson, Butler, & Percival, 2006; Ritchie, 1997; Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1996). The Tongan way 'anga fakatonga' is hard to disentangle from what is Tongan and what was introduced (Kavapalu, 1993), and contemporary Samoan culture is so deeply intertwined with the church, that it is almost indistinguishable (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). Pacific Islanders were also affected by pressures of social and economic change, urbanisation, poverty and the nuclear family without extended family support (Paterson, et al., 2006). There are also marked differences in the parenting techniques between those Pacific-raised and New Zealand-raised (Abel, Park, Tipene-Leach, Finau, & Lennan, 2001; Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1996), and also between Samoan, Tongan and Niuean parents (Cowley-Malcolm, Fairbairn-Dunlop, Peterson, Gao, & Williams, 2009). One qualitative study of Samoan parents in New Zealand found parents were trying to make a conscious effort to break cycles of harsh discipline, noting education

and knowledge about alternatives that supported this (McCallin, Paterson, Butler, & Cowley, 2001).

Comparison of New Zealand and Swedish parents

One particular study has compared the attitudes of New Zealand and Swedish parents and found they differed greatly (Wilkstedt, 2005). Swedish parents are more likely to use distraction and reasoning, but New Zealand parents are more likely to use physical punishment and coercive verbal control. New Zealand parents value parents' rights more, and Swedish children's rights and showed more warmth and concern. She also found attitudes towards violence and valuing parents rights were significant predictors of physical discipline, and knowledge of child development and warmth and involvement were significant predictors of impulsive discipline.

Figure 3 has been created based on evidence of attitudes in Sweden around a question about if physical punishment was 'sometimes necessary' (SIFO 1981, as cited in Durrant, 1996; Newell, 1989; Roberts, 2000); and New Zealand based on a statement "there are certain circumstances when it is alright for a parent to smack a child" (Carswell, 2001). The comparison clearly shows attitudes in both countries have been declining in support prior to law change.

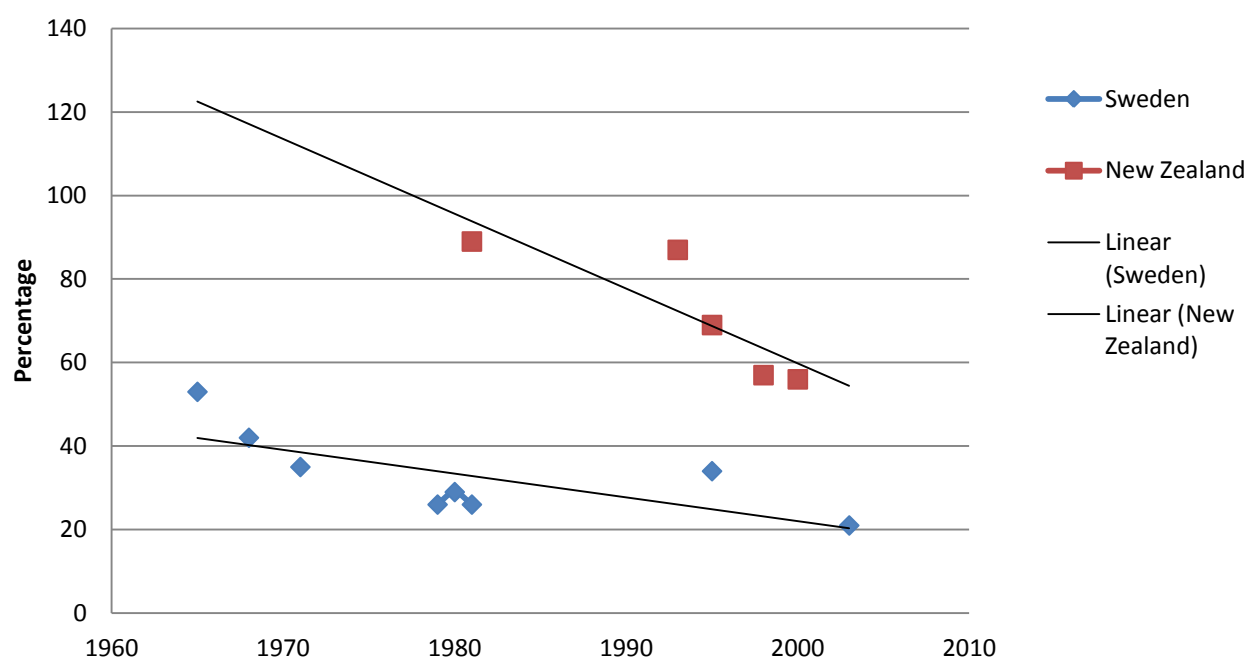


Figure 3: Comparison of New Zealand and Swedish Attitudes Toward Physical Punishment

Summary of New Zealand Parents

To summarise, it seems that over the last 50 years, parents' attitudes toward physical punishment in New Zealand has been gradually changing. There has been a reduction in the level of approval for harsh physical discipline (such as using implements or causing medium to severe injury, or giving a thrashing), with only a small percentage thinking this is now acceptable. Nonetheless there is still a reasonable acceptance of using an open hand to give a smack to the hand or bottom. It appears parents are making a distinction between what they deem to be reasonable and 'mild' and what they would term to be unreasonable and harsh.

Parents no longer see harsh physical punishment as an acceptable disciplinary strategy, but have instead turned to other discipline strategies such as discussing, telling off, time out, going without, yelling and distracting. It is also reassuring to know that

parents have begun to include other more positive disciplinary strategies in their repertoire, including praise and rewards.

Current New Zealand Research after the ‘Smacking Ban’

Since the law change, there has been a small number of studies in New Zealand that have investigated attitudes toward physical punishment and the impact of the law. In an attempt to understand contemporary New Zealand views of childhood and how these affect views about physical punishment, 91 submissions to the Select Committee on the Anti-smacking Bill were analysed (Debski, Buckley, & Russell, 2009). The results showed that people who valued children’s rights and saw children as innocent human beings were more likely to oppose physical punishment and support the Bill, whereas those who valued parents’ rights and who saw children as innately bad human beings were more likely to support physical punishment and thus oppose the Bill (Debski, et al., 2009). They also found women were more supportive of repeal and men more opposed to repeal (Debski, et al., 2009). They argue that to change attitudes about physical punishment there must be a focus on a deeper understanding of children’s rights, focusing on deeply held ideas and beliefs and taking into account ‘gender differences (Debski, et al., 2009). Wilkstedt and Murachver (2006)’s analysis of 50 Swedish parents and 50 New Zealand parents found that parents with a stronger parents’ rights focus were more likely to use physical discipline and were associated with using less warmth and involvement, placing less value on children’s rights and were strongly related to accepting violence in general. Parent who knew more about child development and had realistic expectations of their child’s capabilities were less likely to use physical punishment.

There has thus far been only a few studies that have investigated parental understandings of the law change, and about parents’ approaches to their parenting in its

wake (Lawrence & Smith, 2008; Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Wademan et al., 2007). The research has not sufficiently explored the effects of the law on parenting practice and whether and where parents are seeking information on alternatives to adjust their parenting.

Within a month of the law change, one group was already investigating understanding of the law and its expected impact with a sample of 164 surveys from Dunedin parents (Wademan, et al., 2007). They reported that the primary source for information about the recent law change was television (89%), followed by newspapers (48%), radio (48%) and word of mouth (47%). When asked about their understanding of the law, 80% felt they only had average or below average understanding, and 79% thought it would not change their approach to parenting much at all. Only 35% thought they would be able to use reasonable force to prevent undesirable behaviour, 40% said no, and 25% didn't know. Only 20% said the law did allow them to use reasonable force for correction, 58% said it did not, and 22% didn't know. Respondents were asked to respond to five situations about whether it was legal or illegal to perform certain actions. In all situations, respondents agreed with the 'correct answer' of the legal advisor for actions of: lift and remove and yell instructions at the child as lawful, and an open hand strike to head or face, to chest or tummy, and closed hand strike to the child as unlawful. The three remaining items showed significant variability in all situations: open hand strike to hand or backside, lift and remove by forceful restraint, and threaten to punish or strike the child. The legal advisor thought that an open hand strike to the hand or backside was probably lawful and this action showed the greatest contention and variability. Of the total 1905 answers that differed from the legal advisor, only 1 responded lawful when it was unlawful, and 1258 responded unlawful to what was actually considered lawful. They found 83% thought an open hand strike to hand or backside was unlawful in all five situations. They found that 30% of respondent said

they would consider smacking the child in at least one of the situations. Only one respondent was able to name all four scenarios outlined in the Act⁴, 44% could name only one, with 30% not knowing any of them. When asked if they agreed with the Act, 30% were in favour, 47% were against and 22% were undecided. Their conclusion was that there was a great deal of confusion about the law change.

One year after the law change, the Children's Commission undertook research to establish a benchmark to track attitude change regarding physical discipline and public knowledge of and attitudes toward the law (Children's Commission, 2008b). They did a telephone survey with a nationally representative sample of 750 people aged 18 and older. They found 89% agreed that children should be entitled to the same protection from assault as adults. They found 91% were aware of the new law, 92% knew it was illegal to assault a child, 84% knew you can restrain a child with force, 81% were aware police can decide not to prosecute and only 34% knew the law was being monitored and a report would be given to Parliament. Participants were taken through information about the new law, and after this was presented, still 84% agreed children should be entitled to the same protection from assault as adults. In one year, the attitudes in support had increased, with 43% strongly supporting it, 28% firmly opposed and 26% neutral. However, 58% agreed and only 20% disagreed that in certain circumstance it was alright for parents to use physical punishment with children. Also, 37% disagreed that physical punishment should be a part of child discipline, 32% were neutral and 30% agreed.

Some argued there would be an increase in notifications and follow up to Child Youth and Family (CYF) following the law change (Justice and Electoral Select Committee, 2006). A notification is made by any individual, such as parents, local

⁴ The four scenarios outlined in the Act are a) preventing or minimising harm to the child or another person; b) or preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in conduct that amounts to a criminal offence; c) or preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in offensive or disruptive behaviour; d) or performing the normal daily tasks that are incidental to good care and parenting

community schools, police and other agencies when a concern is expressed to CYF that a child or young person may be at risk of abuse, neglect or insecurity of care (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). Notifications are assessed by a CYF social worker who will make an initial assessment of the risk and plan an appropriate response or investigation. Since 2004 the total notifications for abuse, neglect or insecurity of care have been increasing annually as shown in Table 4. The figures show that when the Act came into force in June 21, 2007, there was an increase in the number of notifications, but the number followed up (40,739) actually was less than the previous year (43,845). Unlike critics or the repeal argued, however, the number of cases requiring further action has remained steady over this period. The number of notifications may also have been affected by many other factors, apart from the law change. Nonetheless, critics of the repeal argue that having a CYF social worker make inquiries, even if no further action is required, may prove traumatic to families, and that some parents are actually being inappropriately treated (Family First, 2010).

Table 4: Number of notifications received during the year ended 30 June

	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Requiring further action	41,599	46,541	43,845	40,739	49,224
Not requiring further action	8,889	16,198	28,082	48,722	61,573
Total notifications received	50,488	62,739	71,927	89,461	110,797

Two years after the law change, the Ministry of Social Development conducted a review of the Act, on how it is working in practice and whether there was any evidence of unforeseen negative consequences (Hughes, 2009). Family Violence notifications from the Police also rose significantly, with 3,389 (2003/4), 9,238 (2004/5), 19,535 (2005/6), 26,609 (2006/7), 35,445 (2007/8) and 51,135 (2008/9) (Hughes, 2009). These figures are included in the overall notification figures, and roll-

out by the Police of family violence training for front-line officers since 2006 accounts for some of the increase since 2005 (Hughes, 2009). Other public awareness campaigns like ‘It’s not OK’ and high profile child deaths may also account for the increase in notifications (Hughes, 2009). In summarising the Police data, Hughes notes that the one case classed as smacking in Apr-Oct 08 was in relation to an infant and the alleged perpetrator had a history of domestic violence. He also noted that the other 13 cases of minor acts of physical discipline were not inconsequential, the act was not just a light smack. He concludes that there appears to be no evidence that “parents are being subject to unnecessary state intervention for occasionally lightly smacking their children or of any other unintended consequences of the Act” (Hughes, 2009, p. 15), but acknowledges the data is not able to show if there may have been isolated cases where practice was different.

The latest report from the Police shows that in the three and a half years from 23rd June 2007 to 21 December 2010, out of 90 smacking events attended, only 4 smacking cases have been followed through to prosecution, with the other cases receiving a warning or no further action (New Zealand Police, 2011).

A Citizens Initiated Referendum asking the question “Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?” elicited a response of 87% of those who voted responding no. There was public criticism over the wording of the referendum question. Following on from the results of the referendum, the Government commissioned a report to help assure parents that good parents will not be criminalised for a light smack (Broad, Hughes, & Latta, 2009) (Howard Broad was the Police Commission, Peter Hughes, the Chief Executive of Ministry of Social Development, and Nigel Latta a highly respected Psychologist). The report included a review of New Zealand Police and CYF policies and procedures, and found that both organisations have effective guidelines for ensuring good parents are treated as

Parliament intended. This included a CYF policy that outlined if the concern is based on a light smack on the backside or hand with no harm to the child or other aggravating features, or history of harmful events, then it is very likely no action is required. They recommended more transparency, to help parents who are understandably anxious when they have to deal with Police and CYFs to inform them of what to expect, what their rights are, and what to do if they have questions; including developing a pamphlet to be given out by Police officers and social workers; and putting in place a new parent support helpline. The report investigated and detailed several cases identified by a lobby group, Family First, as treating a number of parents unfairly; and the report concluded the extra information obtained from agencies showed the responses were appropriate. However, Family First and *Investigate* magazine published details of some of these cases arguing the Broad et al. (2009) report did not adequately outline the unfair treatment of parents and argued misinformation was reported (Family First, 2010; Wishart, 2010).

Family First (who continue to advocate against the law), have commissioned polls through Curia Market Research annually since 2007 to track attitudes in reaction to the law with 1000 respondents in each poll (Curia Market Research, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). Table 5 shows a summary of changes in attitudes toward the law.

Table 5: Poll on attitudes toward the ‘Anti-Smacking’ Law

	June 2007	May 2008	March 2009	March 2010	March 2011
Agree with it	20%	20%	25%	33%	34%
Disagree with it	62%	73%	65%	55%	54%
Neither/Don’t Know/Refused	18%	7%	10%	12%	12%

Note 1: Poll showing answers to the question: “In 2007 Parliament passed a law that removes a defence of reasonable force for parents who smack a child to correct their behaviour, but states the Police have discretion not to prosecute if they consider the offence was inconsequential. What is your view of this law?”

Note 2: Statistical significance was not reported

Parents with children under 12 were asked if they had used smacking for correctional purposes in the last year; in 2009, 48% had; in 2010, 39%; and in 2011 44% (Curia Market Research, 2009, 2010, 2011). These polls seem to suggest that although there is a small decrease in disagreement with the law, there is also decline in parents using smacking for correctional purposes. In 2011, only 21% of parents with a child aged under 12 said they felt less confident dealing with unacceptable behaviour due to the law (Curia Market Research, 2011). When asked if their child had ever said they would tell authorities like a teacher, social worker or police if their parents smacked them, 32% responded yes, and 67% responded no (Curia Market Research, 2011).

New Zealand responses to other law changes

New Zealanders have not always responded favourably to liberal law change in the past. The Homosexual Law Reform Act came into effect on 8 August 1986, decriminalising sexual relations between men aged 16 and over. During the 18 months before the law was passed, it met with opposition on similar grounds that were raised in the ‘anti-smacking’ debate. The arguments against rested on moral and religious grounds, and opposition was shown by a national petition that claimed to have 800,000 signatures (although the petition was rejected by the Parliament Petition Committee). The arguments in favour of reform rested on issues of human rights, freedom of choice and an end to discrimination (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2009). Similar responses and arguments were raised when the Civil Union Bill came before Parliament in 2004, where 3383 submissions were received (2820 generally opposed and 465 generally in support), with the opposition resting primarily on religious and moral

grounds, and support on human rights grounds (Justice and Electoral Select Committee, 2004).

In 1994, New Zealand enforced a national mandatory all-age bicycle helmet law (only Australia and Israel have similar laws) (Gillham, 2010). Gillham (2010) cites research which showed injuries and deaths caused by cycling accidents went down following the ban, but research also showed cycle use went down. In reflecting on laws that affect families, some parents have referred to the education and promotion that followed this law change and emphasised that the laws that affect families need to be made widely known (Russell, 1996). It has also been argued the law is hard to enforce and several organisations are petitioning for law reform (Gillham, 2010). Although the law seems good in principle, there are some unintended consequences that cause some of the public to regard the law as impractical, such as bicycle share schemes needing hygienic systems for sharing helmets.

These examples show that New Zealanders have not always approved of law changes the Government has put in place when it affects their personal choices and relationships. It shows there are a variety of political, religious and morally divergent attitudes in the general public. It also shows that some unintended consequences may result from law change and the role the law plays in society is particularly complicated.

Barriers to Change

With this in mind, the focus now turns to identifying what barriers to change may prevent the law from being a catalyst for attitude and behaviour change. Saunders and Goddard (2010) who conducted cross-cultural research amongst Australian parents concluded that “a significant contributing factor in intergenerational transmission [of physical punishment] is the continuing acceptance and sanctioning of its use both legally and socially” (Saunders & Goddard, 2010, p. 169). The law change in New

Zealand may have sent a message that physical punishment is no longer legally sanctioned, but socially there may be many factors which continue to show support for physical punishment. When a progressive law like the Anti-Smacking Bill is passed in a country that traditionally has not been overly submissive (like Sweden), there are likely to be barriers to change.

Wilkstedt and Murachver (2006) identified a number of factors that may foster resistance to change: general acceptance of violence, modelling of poor control over violent expression at home, conceptualisation of parent-child relationship as centred on control, and inadequate knowledge of child development. Others have argued that while a focus on a children's rights perspective is important to bring about change, a greater understanding of the parent-child relationship and what discipline means to parents is necessary to help change their attitudes and practices (Brownlie & Anderson, 2006). Brownlie and Anderson argue that the use of physical punishment is inextricably caught up in deeply held practices and beliefs about parenting in general: about being held accountable for their children's behaviour, that parenting is complex and stressful, and that parenting can be taught. It is also linked to beliefs about children as objects needing to be socialised and having no responsibilities or rights of their own.

Religious affiliation is a high predictor of the use of physical punishment and can foster strong resistance to change. However, one study concluded that it is the belief in the instrumental value rather than religious belief per se that predicts the use of physical punishment (Gershoff, et al., 1999). Gershoff et al. recommend that in order to discourage the use of physical punishment, interventions need to respect parents' religious affiliation, but emphasise the effective alternatives and target parents' specific beliefs that see physical punishment as instrumental in achieving child-rearing goals. There are also suggestions that attitudinal change may be hard especially for parents of lower socioeconomic status and limited education who turn to the church for guidance

and support and receive strong reinforcement from the church for physical punishment (Wiehe, 1990). Interventions need to be sensitive to the religious organisations and the people who find their guidance and support from these organisations, working with them to bring about change.

Understanding parents' culture is also equally important. Fontes (2002) emphasises the importance of understanding the culture of parents in order to help change their parenting. He argues that although cultural groups are not monolithic, their childrearing is influenced by their cultural heritage and passed on through generations. In order to teach alternatives, interventionists need to appeal to what these parents desire for their children. Drawing on their cultural norms, and providing support from research, models of alternative practices can be built that are in line with their culture and these parents will be more likely to adopt these changes.

Other barriers may be more practical stressors that put more pressure on parents and may cause more 'emotive reactive' physical punishment. Biglan (1992) argues that the many pressures facing families with the changes in the larger social context from agricultural to urban modes of production, smaller families, women going to work and divorce are affecting parenting practices, and so any interventions to bring about change must take into account these many stressors. Parent educators noted how poverty, work stress, separation, solo and reconstituted families, and young mothers can exacerbate parenting stresses, and noted the idea of a personal contact who could work alongside parents and model alternatives (Russell, 1996). Others have argued that attempts to eliminate family violence and physical punishment require changes in the basic socioeconomic conditions of these families (Giles-Sims, et al., 1995).

Some parents have deliberately chosen to stop using physical punishment and their reasons are helpful in building a model about how other parents can be supported to stop using physical punishment. One study interviewed parents and identified the

contexts in which parents had made a concerted effort to stop and found five main reasons (Davis, 1999). Some parents emphasised an *experiential context*, where they were shaped by a poignant moment, a memorable spanking episode that gave them pragmatic concern and they now think of physical punishment as disturbing or ineffective. Another was *ideological*, where they made a fundamental change in their ideas about parenting rights and the use of force and began to see physical punishment as violence or abuse. The *regulatory* reason came because they were told to stop or they would lose services or rights like being able to foster children, and saw physical punishment as a punishable activity. The *relational* reason was when intimates like a spouse pressured them into stopping and so physical punishment became a troublesome issues. Finally the *biographical* reason was when they could point to their own harsh upbringing and saw physical punishment as a tradition to be broken. This study provides lesson about how to help other parents change their attitudes about physical punishment. Interventionists need to approach parents without stigmatising them but with empathy to avoid alienation and attempt to try to teach them about alternatives and the rationale behind them.

A New Zealand qualitative study was conducted with eight parents who indicated they had chosen to raise their children without physical punishment (Russell, 1996). Seven of the parents had been physically disciplined as a child, but influences such as radio, professional training, parenting courses, friends, books and parent support groups had enabled them to change their attitude toward physical punishment. These parents showed a general disapproval for violence of any kind, but acknowledged the complexities and saw self-defence as sometimes necessary. They noted the contradictory message being sent through society with an 'intellectual' message of non-violence, but media, entertainment and some sport bombarding the public with violent messages. Many described smacking as violence and an invasion of physical rights, and

although it was an easy option, alternatives were better. In spite of these beliefs, *all* these parents had smacked their own children, mostly lashing out through stress or anger, and rarely in a deliberate and controlled manner, with a level of discomfort when they had used it. One parent acknowledged the mixed message sent when she was teaching non-violence but had hit her child. The alternative philosophy they presented was that children are basically good and parents need to respect and listen to them, talk, explain, discuss and negotiate. Praise and rewards like star-charts were seen as effective. Some talked of avoiding all types of punishment, using limit setting, natural or logical consequences and others used mild punishment like time out or taking away privileges. Some parents admitted yelling, but had made a point of apologising. Some parents had discussed their no-smacking philosophy with friends but encountered hostility and said parents needed support and education to change, and a law change was also suggested to send a message rather than to prosecute parents. They also mentioned that religious and cultural reasons would make change hard as parents want to bring up children their own way (Russell, 1996).

Supporting Change

There is enormous pressure on parents regarding their child-rearing responsibilities, but generally little recognition when parenting is done well (Leach, 1994). Parent educators have recommended how important it is to encourage parents and let them know they are doing a good job (Russell, 1996). In New Zealand, parents are now unable to use physical punishment, and must use alternatives, but if they are not aware of the alternatives, there is a danger they will be unsure how to adjust their parenting accordingly. There is agreement of a need for widespread culturally sensitive efforts to teach parents positive parent management strategies and not merely exhorting them to stop smacking (Hassall, 2007; Schluter, et al., 2007).

Russell (1996) found that parent educators have emphasised how parents need positive feedback about their parenting, and being able to accept realistic and not have ideal 'super-parent' expectations placed on them (Russell, 1996). Major concerns have been expressed about parents' lack of adequate knowledge about child development. Russell (1996) also found parent educators emphasised that effective alternatives can be learnt, but often this required starting small and learning techniques thoroughly with lots of practice, and group work can be particularly important, as parents learn well from other parents. Parent educators recommend more free government parenting courses that are more visible, available through work places, community groups and schools. (Russell, 1996). Some researchers argue that parenting programmes should not merely focus on the solutions to particular problems, but on their underlying belief systems about children (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1980). Other research has found that parents seem to find the ongoing informal and incidental support from early childhood teachers less pressured and more respectful of their rights than one-off parenting programmes or organised information-sharing (Duncan, Bowden, & Smith, 2006). Findings suggested that parents who had more support were more likely to move away from negative techniques and toward positive ones (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). Because many families have access to early childhood centres, the authors recommend more early childhood teachers take on roles as parent support (Lawrence & Smith, 2009).

Around \$10.8 million was poured into the SKIP education campaign launched in 2004 and spread over three years to work with community groups to provide resources and training to parents of children under 5-years-old (A. Smith, et al., 2005). The SKIP programme was introduced to promote positive parenting, and recognises the need to change social attitudes and address perceived barriers to alternatives to physical punishment as precursors to change (Martin, Kerslake-Hendricks, & Gomes, 2004). However, in contrast to Sweden, New Zealand did not have an widespread public

education campaign after the law change to inform the public about the law and its provisions (Children's Commission, 2008b); the SKIP project was a small effort, and is estimated to only have reached a small group of parents because of limited funding and limited accessing low socio-economic families (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). It is also argued that the equivocal support for the law change led to the Government's avoidance of a large public education campaign about the law change (Taylor & Smith, 2008).

Conclusion

The literature review outlined a theoretical framework to understand the nature of parenting and how public debate and law change may be seen to influence parental choices in disciplining their children. With a historical and sociological perspective of childhood, and drawing particularly from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective, the macrosystem and exosystem form the key theoretical framework for investigating how the public debate and law may affect parents. Gershoff's process-context model, Straus' cultural spillover theory and Garbarino's cultural justification theory are helpful in understanding the use and outcomes of physical punishment. Xu et al's (2000) model of the predictors of the use of physical punishment, in particular, the cultural, human and social capital and other exogenous variables is a helpful framework to evaluate why some parents may be more likely to utilise physical punishment. In attempting to model how the macro level determinants affect micro level decisions, theories such as cultural belief systems, parental belief systems, parenting styles and grid-group theories were explored. Taking note of the Swedish context and the different macro-, exo- and chronosystem when the law passed is helpful to steer away from assuming universality and bring clarity about the ideological foundations of change in that context (Garbarino, 2005).

There is a reasonable body of literature on parenting in the New Zealand context and the macro and exosystem were explored in several ways, although there is still a dearth of literature following the law change. A law of this nature which generated strong public debate at its time of passing is something that needs to be monitored to determine whether it is achieving the aims set out when it was passed. The literature presented has explored some of the barriers to change and potential areas for intervention. This study will help to investigate parents acceptance (or not) of the law change and whether and how they are accessing information about alternative parenting practices, and if there may be a need for a large-scale public education campaign or more support for parents. Although there are a small number of studies that have investigated the effects of the law, the focus has been primarily quantitative, or they did not distinguish how or why the public debate and law change affected parenting (For example, the Lawrence and Smith (2009) study, which interviewed parents over the period of debate but did not question how it was affecting them).

A lot of the research reviewed has been within a quantitative framework, making generalisations over populations. Although it is useful to categorise countries or groups of parents and to summarise statistics and generalisations, questioning parents at an individual level may help to explain why these trends exist and reveal the complexities. The measures used may also be ethnocentric or religiously biased, and so an exploratory study with no set categories may help to uncover a depth of parents' own understanding in their own words.

The present study is thus exploratory because it is exploring a little known phenomenon. I will interview a small sample of parents using a qualitative framework to explore in more depth how the law is affecting parents. The literature reviewed has shown there are many influences on parenting and this research will attempt to explore how these influences interact with law change. The study is framed within an ecological

model, placing emphasis on the macrosystem (law) and exosystem (public debate) and will be open to information on areas such as parents' understanding of childhood, children's and parents' rights; parents' cultural and parental belief systems; parenting styles and grid-group categorisation; cultural, human and social capital; and other exogenous factors such as parent and child characteristics. Based on the literature presented, the study will aim to question parents at a deep level regarding their own parenting philosophies about the nature of parenting and discipline, and how their belief systems, culture, religion, and current circumstances affect these. The present research aims to investigate parents' perceptions of whether and how the 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. The next chapter will explore why the particular methodological framework has been chosen to investigate the topic and how this will aim to fill the gap identified in the literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Overview of methodological approach

The aim of this study is to investigate parents' perceptions of whether and how the 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. This was addressed by using a qualitative descriptive methodology which is useful when research is aimed at understanding situations as they naturally occur, and for getting straight descriptions of phenomena, finding people's perceptions of the *who*, *what* and *where* of events (Sandelowski, 2000). Sandelowski (2000) emphasises this approach is not highly interpretive, but aims to present data in the everyday language of participants, rather than in terms of a conceptual, philosophical or highly abstract framework. At the base of this approach is the idea that "language is a means of communication, not itself an interpretive structure that must be read" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). Therefore, this approach stays closer to the surface of words than grounded theory, phenomenology or ethnography (Sandelowski, 2000).

Qualitative descriptive studies fit within a framework that is post-positivist, and draws from interpretivism which attempts to understand what it means to be human, and the meaning people attach to the events in their lives (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Post-positivist research is typically qualitative, and is used to find information on little-known phenomena, uncovering the unexpected or exploring new avenues (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study is based on parents' perceptions, and so the interpretive framework is useful for attempting to explain human and social reality, looking at interpretations of the reality that are culturally derived and historically situated (Crotty, 1998). The epistemology (theory of knowledge) of interpretivism is human subjectivity, that people attach meaning to their words, thoughts and actions (Baronov, 2004), and create meaning as they constantly make sense of their worlds (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

Qualitative descriptive studies typically use minimally to moderately structured open-ended interviews to collect data (Sandelowski, 2000). Therefore, individual interviews were chosen as the method of data collection to allow the researcher to enter the other person's perspective, and assumes their perspective is important and is able to be made known to others (Patton, 2002).

Interview guide approach

Interviews were conducted using the interview guide approach as explained by Patton (2002). The interview guide approach includes listing questions to be explored, ensuring each interview covers particular topics, but allows free exploration, probing to draw out more information. This allows spontaneous questions and a more conversational style that is still focused on a particular topic. Because this study is exploratory, the interview guide approach allowed freedom to probe unexpected topics as they arose during the interview. It provided a framework to help develop and sequence questions and knowledge of where to pursue greater depth. The wording and sequence of questions could be decided during the interview. The strength of this approach lies in providing comprehensive data collection but also allowing a conversational tone. A weakness may be that, because the flexibility allows for different spontaneous questions to arise in each interview, this may result in different responses, and some topics may be inadvertently left out (Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) explains that questions need to be worded in a truly open-ended way so participants can express in their own words how they want to describe the topic, their thoughts, feelings and experiences, and what direction they want to pursue the question. Questions should only have a single concept, with probe questions to increase the depth and richness of answers, such as *when, who, what, where, how*. Clarification probes such as 'I'm not sure what you meant by ...' can help to bring clarification and

empower the participant to respond in their own words (Patton, 2002). The Interview Guide for this study is outlined in Appendix C. The Interview Guide included questions such as: ‘What disciplinary techniques did you use with your child(ren) before the public debate?’; ‘What do you remember about the debate that preceded the law change?’; and ‘What disciplinary techniques do you use with your children now?’

The interviewer could be described as the instrument, and is thus a very important factor in qualitative research. “The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The interviewer needs both skill and technique, but also needs to be genuinely caring and interested in the perspective of the participant (Patton, 2002). A pilot interview can be useful to reflect on difficulties encountered regarding the questions, time, pace, comfort zones, conversational flow, and to get feedback from the interviewee and make modifications based on reflection (O’Leary, 2005). To help develop interviewing skills and to test the research questions, a pilot interview was conducted before data collection began. On reflection and discussion with my supervisor, some of the questions were altered slightly, but the overall framework of the interview guide provided a wealth of information. To continue to develop interviewing skills and facilitate reflexivity, I kept a reflective journal during data collection and met with my supervisor for comments and advice.

Although an interview can produce a large amount of data, it can be limited by the emotional state of the interviewee, their reaction or rapport with interviewer, recall error or self-serving (or socially desirable) responses (Patton, 2002). It has also been noted that participants may be unwilling or unable to share particular information, especially if it is very personal or controversial (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Interviews rely on people to give honest and open answers, and so they need to feel liked, maintain their dignity and protect some level of privacy (O’Leary, 2005). To

overcome some of these weaknesses, it was important in the interview to first develop a rapport with the participants and begin with more descriptive questions to develop trust and confidence before addressing deeper questions (Patton, 1990). Patton (2002) suggests that starting with descriptive, straight forward questions that require minimal recall and interpretation and are easy to answer helps build rapport. In this research, as part of setting up for the interview and testing the digital recorder, participants were asked to share a memory of their child to help establish rapport before the interview began. Patton (2002) also argues that demographic questions should never begin an interview, but be left till last or intertwined with other descriptive questions. For this study, a demographic questionnaire was filled out by participants before the interview to aid in sample selection, as detailed in a following section. Another particular disadvantage of interviews may be lack of information because participants have not reflected on the topic and feel unprepared to respond (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It was hoped that by allowing some time between the initial contact (including a participant information sheet) and the interview, participants had time to reflect on the topic.

Some researchers have cautioned there are limitations with self-report data because of memory lapses or wanting to appear a good parent to the interviewer, especially with sensitive topics such as physical punishment (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). It has been acknowledged that a disconnect between self-report and observation is common in all areas of psychological study, not just gleaned information from parents (Rubin & Mills, 1992). Despite this disconnect, there is still a wealth of information and understanding to gain from asking parents about their children and their relationships, helping to unravel the ‘mystery’ of parenting (Rubin & Mills, 1992). Some have noted that retrospective reports of parents of older children found they did not accurately remember child-rearing practices from long ago, and were underreporting

the frequency of unpleasant child-rearing behaviour (G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992). Research has consistently shown that parents are most likely to use physical punishment with their children between the ages of 3 and 5 (Dietz, 2000; Ellison, et al., 1996b; Giles-Sims, et al., 1995; G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992). This study has therefore tried to interview parents who currently have younger children aged between 3 and 5 so as not to require distant memories. Some researchers also argue that because spanking children is taken-for-granted and a mundane event it is likely most instances are forgotten, and retrospective recall will underestimate how often it was used (Giles-Sims, et al., 1995). They recommend asking questions relating to one day or one week previously rather than one month or one year, and argue that diary methods give more complete data, but are applicable only to a small sample of participants (Giles-Sims, et al., 1995). It has also been argued that asking about spanking experienced as a child will also underestimate chronicity because of “too lengthy and removed recall periods and selective memory” (Giles-Sims, et al., 1995, p. 171), and a study showed that many spanking instances from their own childhood are forgotten by most adults (Straus & Donnelly, 1993).

Sampling and recruitment methods

Qualitative research typically uses small samples because of the amount and quality of rich and in-depth information gathered (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) explains there is no rule about sample size, as it depends on considerations about the purpose of the inquiry, what information is being sought, and the time and resources that are available. A realistic strategy must be considered as it is easy to underestimate the time required to undertake qualitative research, in particular in data preparation, collection, organisation and analyses (Flick, 2004). What is important is a clear description, explanation and justification for the selected sample (Patton, 1990).

I aimed to recruit up to 12 parents from an early child care centre, according to the following inclusion criteria:

- 1) Parents who have a child aged 2 to 5. Research has consistently shown that parents are most likely to use physical punishment with their children between the ages of 3 and 5 (Dietz, 2000; Ellison, et al., 1996b; Giles-Sims, et al., 1995; G. W. Holden & Zambarano, 1992).
- 2) Parents must have lived in New Zealand over the period of the public debate and law change (June 2005 to June 2007).
- 3) Parents must be comfortable discussing these issues in English.

Selection criteria were based on theoretical purposeful sampling, which involves choosing participants according to the terms of the theoretical framework of the study (Silverman, 2005). In other words, purposeful sampling aims to select information-rich cases to enable in-depth exploration that will illuminate the study's questions (Patton, 1990). There is flexibility in being able to increase the sample as new factors emerge and unexpected generalisations may lead to seeking out deviant cases to test the generalisations (Silverman, 2005). Merkens (2004) also notes that after an initial phase of data collection when hypotheses are being formulated and are still vague, they can be tested by seeking further data which can help to crystallise the hypotheses. Therefore, the sampling plan for this study was to first select parents who have a child in crèche (2-5 years of age) as well as an older child (aged 5 to 8 years). This sampling would allow consideration of parenting during the high risk ages both before and after the start of the public debate (May 2005) and law change (June 2007).

I also aimed to choose a maximum variation sample, which Patton (2002) describes as being used when a study aims to capture and describe central themes that cut across a group where participants are largely heterogeneous. Samples are intentionally chosen with great variations to maximise the strength of heterogeneity so that common patterns

that emerge - core experiences and shared impacts- are more obvious. This sampling technique also enables detailed case descriptions of individual cases which highlights the uniqueness of each case (Patton, 2002). I aimed to intentionally choose a sample with variation in demographic variables such as parental age, ethnicity, religion and education.

The aim was to initially choose a sample of around six parents to maximise variation based on the theoretical framework outlined above. As the data collection began, the sample could be extended up to 12 parents to seek further data to crystallise themes. The upper limit of 12 participants was based on the time resources available due to the nature of the study as part of a master's thesis. The sample was also a convenience sample, as participants were recruited through early child care centres in my city to limit travel costs, and because this is a place where parents of children in the targeted age bracket can be easily sought.

Although parents were invited to bring a support person with them, the interviews would still be conducted as individual interviews and the support person would not be involved in answering interview questions. This was to help one person to talk about their perceptions without another person's ideas influencing their own. None of the participants asked to bring a support person with them.

Recruitment Procedure

The aim was to recruit participants from one early childhood centre, which was based in an urban area in a North Island city. The centre manager was approached initially through a phone conversation to ascertain appropriate processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). After the initial phone conversation and follow-up e-mail briefly outlining the nature of the study, I arranged a meeting. Along with my supervisor, I met with the Manager and another key staff member who agreed in principle with the

participants being recruited from their centre. They provided valuable feedback about some aspects of the research design which were incorporated into the final design. They also indicated that their centre was ethnically diverse, and so may provide a more diverse sample. Demographics provided for the 42 children enrolled in their centre are compared to regional and national statistics and shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Ethnicity Statistics based on 2006 Census figures (Statistics New Zealand, 2006)

Ethnicity	NZ	Region	ECE
European	67.6%	56.5%	64.3%
Māori	14.6%	11.1%	7.1%
Pacific peoples	6.9%	14.4%	11.9%
Asian	9.2%	18.9%	16.7%
Middle Eastern	0.9%	1.5%	0%
Other	11.2%	8.1%	0%

On the advice of the crèche manager we approached a possible Maori Liaison to see if she would be available to discuss the project and approaches to Māori parents. She suggested that the crèche manager, although non-Māori, was already well placed to advise in this respect.

The following recruitment method was developed in consultation with the crèche manager: The crèche manager indicated that there was only a very small sample of parents who met the proposed inclusion criteria (above), and so it was agreed to send out an e-mail to every parent with a child enrolled at their centre. The inclusion criteria thus changed to the following:

- 1) Parents who have a child enrolled at an early childhood centre
- 2) Parents must have lived in New Zealand over the period of the public debate and law change (June 2005 to June 2007).
- 3) Parents must be comfortable discussing these issues in English.

The crèche manager sent out an e-mail with a brief outline of the nature of the study to all parents of children in crèche (Appendix D). To help alleviate parents feeling

targeted, it was clear that the e-mail was being sent to all parents of the centre. The e-mail was Carbon Copied (CC) with my e-mail so I had a copy on file, and parents could easily reply. To protect their privacy, the e-mail was sent Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) to parents so that neither I nor other parents had access to their e-mail addresses. To avoid any conflicts between the crèche manager and the parents, the only contact she had in regards to the study was sending out the initial e-mail on 22nd February (and reminder e-mails if we did not get enough responses). The initial e-mail had the information sheet and consent form attached. Parents who were interested in participating in the research were asked to contact myself directly via e-mail.

When a potential participant made contact with me, answers to any initial questions and concerns were provided through e-mail or telephone. If necessary, I had planned to arrange to meet participants in person to discuss queries or concerns, but this need did not arise. Parents were given up to two weeks to indicate their intention to participate. Two reminder invitations were e-mailed (on 4 and 11 March) when there was insufficient response to the first e-mail.

The plan -if there had been more respondents willing to participate than needed- was to send an e-mail outlining the fact there were more respondents than I was able to interview and they would be asked to fill out a short demographic questionnaire to aid me in selecting a sample, first including parents with children within both age ranges (2 to 5 years and 5 to 8 years) and then supporting a sample diverse in parental age and education. They would be informed that if they were not chosen for the study, the demographic questionnaires would be destroyed. However, only three parents responded from the centre after the two reminder e-mails had been sent out. So in consultation with my supervisors, I made a request to the Ethics Committee to extend my recruitment methods in two ways and gained approval for the extensions. Firstly, snowballing was used to ask the participants interviewed if they knew other people who

fit the criteria and might be interested in participating in the study. They were asked to give them a copy of the information sheet containing my contact details so they could contact me directly. Secondly, in addition to the first early childhood centre, I approached another early childhood centre to assist with recruitment. The same recruitment method as described above was used with the second centre, with an e-mail sent to all parents of the centre (13 April), and one reminder e-mail sent (22 April) when there was not sufficient response. The second centre was unable to give demographic statistics for children enrolled at their centre. I only had one participant come forward from the snowball method, and one from the second early childhood centre. In total, I had five participants who were interviewed for this study. A demographic summary is shown in Table 7, with pseudonyms for the participants to protect their privacy, but to enable the reader to track their interview responses in the following chapters. Amongst the sample of five participants, all were New Zealand European, none reported a religious affiliation, annual household incomes ranged from \$40,000 to over \$90,000, all had a minimum of a Bachelors qualification, and all were employed.

Table 7: Participant Summary Table

	Amanda	Belinda	Carol	Dianne	Edward
Age Group	36-40	41-45	36-40	41-45	41-45
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Family Structure	Single Parent	DeFacto	Separated	Married	Married
Age of Child 1	10 months	3 years	4 years	3 years	4 years
Gender Child 1	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age of Child 2		5 years	5 years	5 years	
Gender Child 2		Male	Female	Female	

Interview Procedure

Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient for the participant and myself. When participants met for the interview I first reviewed the information sheet and signed consent form with them and answered any questions. With the consent of the participant, interviews were recorded using two digital recorders. Using digital recorders during interviews allowed me to be more attentive to the participant and observe non-verbal communication as well. It is highly recommended to test the recorder before the interview and also to have a test with the participant to ensure their voice is clear in the recording (Patton, 2002). Before each interview began, therefore, as a way of developing rapport and ensuring the recorder was working correctly, I asked the participant to share a memory about their child. This was recorded and played back. The interview then proceeded according to the Interview Guide described earlier (Appendix C).

Patton (2002) recommends note taking as it can be helpful during interviews to stimulate early insights, help locate quotations easier and can also be useful as a back-up if the recording device fails. During the interviews, I took notes on some key phrases and major points that were also helpful to stimulate probing questions. I developed a system to ensure my thoughts and reflections were distinct from what the participant said. Immediately after the interview the recording was checked to see if a problem was detected and if extensive notes of the interview contents should be taken (Patton, 2002). The digital recorders worked well, and so I did not need to do this. Patton (2002) also recommends that following the interview, a quick reflection can be helpful to evaluate how the interview went and any emerging insights that were evident. Immediately following the interview, I took notes in my reflective journal and after the first interview

met with my supervisor to reflect on the transcript and the interview process before commencing the second interview.

Respecting the norms of reciprocity, it was important to give something back to participants for their involvement (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and so they were kept informed about progress and offered a summary of the final report (O'Leary, 2005). On completion of the interview, participants were given a small koha (\$20 petrol vouchers) in appreciation for their participation. Parents were also given an information sheet compiled by Barnados New Zealand which provides a summary of the law and what it means (Barnados, 2007). They were also offered copies of two booklets published by the Children's Commission which provides alternative methods to smacking (Children's Commission, 2008a; Pritchard, 2006). When the recruitment was completed, I arranged morning tea for the staff of the early childhood centre as a thank you for being a part of the study.

Data Management and Analysis

Recorded interviews were transcribed using a word processor (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Patton (2002) emphasises that the raw data from interviews are the actual quotations, and so care was taken to ensure data were transcribed accurately, and grammar was not corrected. A master copy of the data (tapes and transcripts) was stored securely before analysis was undertaken (Patton, 1990). Patton (2002) recommends the researcher does their own transcription to be familiar with the data and become deeply immersed in it as this is the first step toward analysis. Patton (2002) outlines that it can also be helpful to go back to the interviewee with the transcript if there are points of clarification needed and this also communicates how serious their interview is being taken. Following the transcription, the participants were given the opportunity to review, comment on and alter the interview transcript before data were analysed. All the

participants reported that the transcripts were a true and accurate recording of the interviews. Analysis also took place contemporaneously with transcription.

For a qualitative descriptive study, as described by Sandelowski (2000), the analysis strategy of choice is qualitative content analysis, which allows the data to be presented in the terms of the participant. “The expected outcome of qualitative descriptive studies is a straight descriptive summary of the informational contents of data organised in a way that best fits the data”(Sandelowski, 2000, pp. 338-339). Data analysis was therefore framed in a qualitative descriptive framework (Sandelowski, 2000) based on the methods described by Patton (2002). “Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorising the primary pattern in the data” (Patton, 1990, p. 381). Analysing data from qualitative interviews involves “reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Core meanings are described in patterns (descriptive) and themes (categorical or topical) (Patton, 2002). A careful recording of the analytical procedure and process can enable the reader to judge the accuracy of the analysis (Patton, 2002).

The analysis was done inductively. “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Inductive analysis can help to form patterns, themes and categories that are then confirmed by deductive testing to affirm the appropriateness and authenticity of the analysis. So the analysis was not based on pre-determined categories to code the analysis, but it was influenced by the literature, theoretical framework, interview schedule, and the observations and analytic insights that emerged during data collection (Patton, 1990, 2002; Schmidt, 2004). I used the specialist software programme NVivo

to help manage the analysis of the data, and followed guidance from Bazeley (2007) to orient myself to the programme and how to utilise it for my analysis.

I followed the content analysis process as described by Patton (2002). The first step was to read through all the data and make notes of how different parts of the data could be coded, like creating an index of topics, and then these were confirmed with a second read through and made into a formal coding system. This inductive analysis was based on two ways of identifying concepts. The first was to identify indigenous concepts (categories that arise from the participants words) by making an inventory of key phrases, terms and practices special to the group being studied (Patton, 2002). Secondly, sensitising concepts (categories brought in by the analyst) were also brought to the data based on literature and theory and provided a general reference point and key directions to pursue, but rather than dominating the analysis, they facilitate the reader's understanding (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) describes that when the finding will be finally presented, the categories will be used to frame the results, but the participants own words will be used as examples so the reader can form their own opinion. I used NVivo to create 'nodes' which enabled me to keep track of how I was coding parts of the interview transcripts.

Following the identification of these codes, convergence was used to see how these codes fit together, looking for recurring regularities, using internal homogeneity (how it holds together internally) and external heterogeneity (are the differences between categories bold and clear). I used NVivo to group and merge the codes appropriately. I worked back and forth between data and classification to verify the meaning and accuracy (Patton, 2002). To help ensure the analysis was not distorted, I looked for alternative explanations and patterns rather than just trying to confirm patterns (Patton, 1990).

During the interviews I had written notes in a reflective journal, which were used in the analysis to check that the main observations were reflected in the analysis. I used the nodes from NVivo to create a matrix, which created a table for easy comparison so that I could compare both within and between subjects answers to the interview questions and themes that had emerged. To ensure I had correctly coded the interviews, I went through each entire interview a third time and created a table which showed simply their answer to the question, and in another column other things they had talked about which were not directly in answer to the question. I found it helpful to write up a short summary for each participant so I could see clearly how their individual story was portrayed. As I continued the analysis, I continued to ensure the analysis was inductive by referring back to the original transcripts to see that what they had said lined up with how I presented my analysis. I also referred back to original research aims, the literature and theoretical framework to deductively ensure I was analysing what I had intended to.

Measures of Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, rather than reporting on statistical significance, reliability and validity, information is reported as having substantive significance and as showing a measure of **trustworthiness** (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests this can be done by showing how solid, coherent and consistent the evidence is, using triangulation and showing how it deepens understanding, is consistent with other knowledge, and useful for its intended purpose (Patton, 2002). An important way to strengthen the study design is through triangulation, which can be through different data sources, investigators, theory or methodological triangulation (Patton, 2002). For this study, triangulation of investigators was achieved by having two or more people (that is, student and two

supervisors) analyse the same selected portions of data to confirm coding (Patton, 2002).

According to Patton (2002) research **credibility** depends on rigorous techniques and methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the paradigm. To ensure rigorous techniques and methods, the data collection and analysis processes were described with sufficient detail to allow transparency so others can judge the quality of the results (Patton, 2002). Alternative explanations were explored inductively (looking for other ways to organise the data) and logically (thinking about other logical possibilities) to consider the weight of evidence and the best fit of the data and its analysis (Patton, 2002). By demonstrating possible alternatives and dealing openly with the complexities that negative cases pose, it shows intellectual integrity and humility and lends credibility to the findings (Patton, 2002).

Ethical and legal considerations

This study protocol was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (Appendix E). The ethical principles of informed consent, minimising harm and ensuring confidentiality are described in this section, followed by application of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi to the research (AUT Ethics Knowledge Base, 2007).

Voluntary participation and informed consent

It was important to maintain an ethical relationship with the early child care centres and participants by ensuring full information and approval before implementation of the research. In the first instance, potential participants were made aware of the study through the centres, with an information sheet containing enough information for participants to be fully informed of the study and their involvement in it

(Appendix F). The information given only provided enough detail to adequately inform participants as to the nature of the research topic without potentially biasing responses by outlining a potential hypothesis or researcher expectation. When they were informed, they were referred to me to discuss and sign a consent form (Appendix G). A check was made that the participants fully understood the information about the study before proceeding. It was made clear that participation was voluntary, and up until the completion of data collection, study participants could withdraw without needing to give a reason, by contacting myself.

Minimising harm

As the research involved parents and discussion of their personal lives and a particularly controversial topic, it was important that the research did not harm participants. Parents may have felt discomfort or embarrassment about sharing their perceptions if they thought they were different to those of the researcher or of general social norms. I attempted to assure participants the study was exploring parents' perceptions and there were no expected or 'right' answers. They were encouraged to share their own perceptions and that these would not be judged as right or wrong. I worked hard to present a neutral, accepting and non-judgmental response to all information given by participants.

On completion of the interview, participants were able to debrief with me and were referred to resources where they could gain additional information and support about parenting and issues that arose during the interview if they requested it. All participants were given an information sheet from Barnados (2007) which outlined what the new law means and gives additional sources of parenting information. They were also given two booklets produced by the Children's Commission (Children's Commission, 2008a; Pritchard, 2006). AUT Health, Counselling and Wellbeing had

agreed to provide counselling to participants in the event that they became distressed as a result of participation in the research.

Participants were informed that they could choose not to answer questions, and could choose to terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Participants were also told that they were welcome to bring a support person(s) with them to the interview, but none of them did. They were assured that all information they revealed would be reported in a way that would ensure their individual identity and that of other people mentioned would remain confidential.

I gave careful consideration as to how to deal with possible disclosures regarding the inappropriate use of physical discipline and the obligation as a researcher to ensure the paramount safety of children. If any disclosures were made which gave cause for concern regarding participants' or their children's safety, consistent with child protection best practice, I was prepared to consult with my supervisors to discuss those concerns. If it was agreed with my supervisors that referral to another organisation such as Child Youth and Family (New Zealand's child protection service) was required, participants would have been informed before any information was given to such third parties. This limit to confidentiality was described in the participant information sheet (Appendix F). In this study, the situation did not arise.

There were minimal identifiable risks to myself as a researcher. I informed my supervisor of all scheduled interview times and places and was instructed to check in following each interview. My supervisors debriefed with me after the interviews.

Confidentiality

Although anonymity was not able to be given during this study, all data were de-identified using a participant identification number and pseudonym (for transcript data). The consent forms and participant details for interview contact were kept separate from

the study data to protect participants' privacy. In the final report proper nouns were replaced by pseudonyms, and the specific early child care centre where participants were recruited was not mentioned to help protect privacy.

Data were stored securely at the Institute of Public Policy offices in written and electronic form and will be kept for six years before being shredded or deleted. Any electronic copies of original data are to be deleted from other storage (such as my computer) on the completion of the study. I was the only one who had access to the consent forms, which were stored securely in a different office at the Institute of Public Policy.

The Treaty of Waitangi

In order to honour the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, I familiarised myself with the *Te Ara Tika Guidelines* (Hudson, Milne, Reynolds, Russell, & Smith, 2010), as recommended by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

Partnership

Partnership and protection were aimed for by consulting with Maori before the research design was finalised in order to make the study accessible and culturally appropriate to Maori participants. As mentioned previously, I consulted with an early child care centre for feedback on the research design, as well as approaching a Maori Liaison.

Mutual respect and benefit was encouraged through the design and implementation of this study as parents were encouraged to share information about their perceptions in order to help add to the research evidence about the impacts of the 'anti-smacking Bill.' I am not a parent myself, and so the data obtained from these parents provided information I would not be able to access by myself. The information

gleaned from this research may help the government appreciate parents' perceptions of the impact of policy and legislation on individuals and help professionals working with parents to have a greater understanding of parents' perceptions of how the new legislation is affecting their parenting, and enable them to work better to help parents adopt alternative parenting techniques.

Participation

The role of participants in the research project is primarily the sharing of information about themselves and their parenting, and their perceptions of how the public debate and law change was affecting these areas. As the study is exploratory, the parents were asked open-ended questions which empowered them to share their perceptions with no pre-determined categories.

Protection

Participants were protected from deceit, harm and coercion in this research. There was not any deliberate deceit with this study as parents were told that the nature of the study was to investigate their perceptions of the public debate and law change, and there was no particular hypothesis being tested, as the study is exploratory. Participation was completely voluntary, and up until the completion of data collection, study participants could withdraw without needing to give a reason, by contacting myself. Support people (such as whanau) were encouraged to contribute and be involved in the study (including being involved in interviews if appropriate). As the research involved parents talking about themselves and their children, it was important that the research did not harm participants. Some of the content discussed in the interviews may have made the participants emotionally or socially uncomfortable. I watched out for any signs of emotional distress or discomfort during the interviews. The

participants were assured that the research was not assessing their parenting, but seeking information about their perceptions as a parent. It was hoped that by outlining that I was not a parent, it would help to counter the power as a researcher by taking on a role as a “least-adult”. Every participant was coded using an assigned identification number. All the demographic and administrative data was stored separately in locked cabinets for the time required for the study and linked via identification numbers only. All reports of the research will ensure no information is reported that could identify the individual participants or any other individuals mentioned. The supervisors did not know the identity of the participants.

Summary

The qualitative interviews based on an interview guide approach gave a substantial amount of data that was transcribed and analysed using qualitative descriptive methodologies and content analysis. The aim in interpreting the data was to go beyond merely describing the data to making sense of it, attaching significance, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons and making inferences (Patton, 2002). Based on the analysis, I decided that the best way to present the finding was to provide a brief overview of each participant, then provide a systematic run through of answers to the interview questions, and finally to present a number of themes that had emerged from the interviews. These results are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the interview data. The chapter begins by outlining a general story for each participant. After this, data will be reported based on the interview questions. Following on from this will be presented a number of additional themes that came out of the interviews.

Summary of the Participants

The following summaries are written in the voice of the participants, wherever possible using their words to compile a summary of their interview answers.

Amanda is a single parent with a 10-month-old. Amanda has always been opposed to smacking in philosophy and practice, despite feeling isolated and alone amongst her peers, who are pro-smacking and see her as a soft parent. She sees her parenting role as being a caregiver, providing necessities, taking care of her children's psychological and emotional needs, and she doesn't think parenting should be a battle for control. Overall she found the section 59 debate very strong, emotive, polarised and fear mongering, with many people angry about the law, particularly on the grounds of parents' rights. She heard a lot of debate about reasonable force which was subject to self-interpretation, but didn't hear any debate about what is acceptable or unacceptable smacking. She saw the Parliamentarians as united, and the voice of children was silent in the debate. She was smacked as a child and remembers the pain, and has chosen to parent differently. She has sought parenting advice from friends, family, her doctor, Plunket, and the internet. Her understanding of the law is that it means parents no longer have the right to use force, they are not free to smack or use violence, but at the same time it's not about going to court for smacking. She doesn't think the law will change

attitudes, and is unsure what she would do if she saw a stranger smacking their child in public. She talked about parents feeling watched and judged; she felt that parental support is lacking, or is powerful and mafia-like.

Belinda has a partner who helps her raise her two children aged 3 and 5; she has always been and always will be a non-smacker. She sees her role as a provider, protector and guider, to help her children become good citizens, according to her and her partner's morals and ethics. Overall she found the debate was healthy, good for awareness, and a smart move. Her children were born during the debate. She reported that both before and after the debate she identified herself as a structured parent, using time out, rewards and consequences. She was smacked as a child, and describes her parents as liberal and unstructured, but she chose to parent differently by watching and talking to other mothers. She is afraid of being abusive and remembers the terror of when she was smacked and when others talked about being severely beaten and so does not allow herself to smack. She has sought parenting advice from many friends, family, her doctor, Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers, books and magazines and Plunket. Her understanding of the law is that it means it is illegal to use smacking or illegal to use unreasonable force. She doesn't think the law will change attitudes, and is unsure what she would do if she saw a stranger smacking their child in public.

Carol is a single mother who raises her two children aged 4 and 5 on her own, and sees smacking as a last resort. She sees her role as a facilitator, provider, and to help her children become good members of society. Overall she found the debate was scaremongering, sensational, ridiculous, with red herrings and distractions, nitpicking about what smacking means and wasn't sure it would achieve its stated outcome. Her children were born during the debate and she had thought she wouldn't smack, but now as a parent she is "firm but fair", uses reason and explaining, praise and time out, but will resort to yelling or the occasional smack if she needs to when things have escalated

or she needs an immediate response. She was smacked as a child, but notes things were different back then, in particular around community support which she is now lacking. She has sought parenting advice from close friends, relatives, her doctor, ECE teachers, books and magazines, her ante-natal friends and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The law is not clear but in essence means parents can't give a smack that leaves a mark or lasting impression, and she is unsure what she would do if she saw someone smacking their child. She talked a lot about the challenge of parenting, being a single mum with not much social support, and a lack of community. She talked of how smacking is a hush hush conversation and you 'confess' to close friends otherwise you would feel watched and judged.

Dianne is married and, with her husband, raises their two children, aged 3 and 5, with smacking as an acceptable form of discipline. She sees her role as a parent as being intuitive, providing guidance, modelling acceptable behaviour, and moulding the child within boundaries, to be happy with themselves and other people. Overall she found the debate polarised, emotional, sensationalist, with not much intelligent argument, and felt patronised being told parents don't know how to parent. Her children were born during the debate. She sees parenting as almost hard-wired and her own upbringing was highly influential, although she picked what strategies she thought were effective. She is very intuitive and follows her instincts, and uses rewards and consequences, focusing on the positive and not the negative and using smacking because "it says more than a thousand words". She has sought parenting advice from friends, relatives, ECE teachers and books. She understands that the law says it is ok to smack your child, just don't beat them black and blue, but has heard of a couple of cases being taken to court, and so is unsure if her understanding is correct. She doesn't think the law will change attitudes and may push abuse and smacking underground. She also talks about how sometimes

parenting can be frustrating and you are angry and in love with your children, and it is good to know other parents feel similar.

Edward is married and, together with his wife, raises their 4-year-old son. He sees his role as a parent as setting boundaries and encouraging their child to extend himself in a positive environment within safe boundaries. He has always had an anti-smacking philosophy, relying on the removal of rewards and time out, and setting expectations of what will be coming. He was influenced by watching examples of good and poor parenting, through being smacked as a child, by seeing primary school friends who were abused, and seeing corporal punishment in high school as ineffective. Edward perceived the debate to be a lot about personal liberties, missing the fundamental issue of whether it is right or wrong to smack a child. He understands that the law means essentially “no force should be used or no unreasonable force should be used against a child”. The law sets a minimal social expectation of what is fair and acceptable, but having Sue Bradford (a “left wing radical”) at the forefront made the law itself seem radical and it took effort to see what it was really about. Although the law didn’t change his attitude toward physical punishment, he is now more likely to intervene or report someone (from 2/10 to 4/10 chance). Surprisingly, after being adamant that smacking is wrong, he admitted three or four times smacking his child (a light tap on the hand) when it was a situation of danger or needing an immediate response from his child- “it’s not discipline it more attention grabbing”. He has sought advice from other friends who are seen as good role-models. He hasn’t attended formal parenting sessions, and rather talked of learning by ‘osmosis’, but if there were behavioural problems he would know places to ask advice.

Before the public debate

All of the participants indicated that they did not have children in 2005 when the debate began, and four of the parents had children born over the debate period (2005-2007). The participants had all thought about parenting before they became parents, and so they were asked to report on their attitudes toward parenting before the debate.

Disciplinary techniques and general approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment

Participants were asked two questions about what they had thought about discipline before the public debate: “What disciplinary techniques had you thought about using with your children before the public debate (ca 2005)?” and “How would you describe your approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment before the public debate (ca 2005)?” Because the answers given to these two questions tended to overlap, the following section presents the answers to both of these questions.

All of the parents had thought – to a lesser or greater degree – about how they would parent when they had children. The four parents who were anti-smacking had always been adamant they would not use smacking with their children. Carol, who became a reluctant smacker, had thought that physical punishment didn’t have a place.

“I looked at physical punishment as being um, not having a place. I know that whenever I would observe it it didn’t sit well with me” (Carol).

Amanda talked about how she wouldn’t use smacking, and would find other techniques that would work. Belinda talked about wanting to be structured, unlike her mother, and have routines to give herself space and time to sleep. Carol mentioned that before she was a parent, she had not had much exposure to other parents, which meant she hadn’t thought extensively about how she would parent. Dianne had absolutely thought about it, and from watching other parents with their children had formed ideas

of how she would parent. Edward had thought about the need for discipline and boundaries, creating expectations, removal of rewards and time out.

Influences on attitudes towards discipline and physical punishment

Participants were asked “Who or what do you think shaped or influenced your attitudes toward discipline and physical punishment back then?” All of the parents mentioned their own upbringing had an influence on their attitudes before the debate. All remembered being smacked as children. They all talked about not reproducing their upbringing, but taking from it what was effective and leaving what was not. Three parents also mentioned smacking was common-place when they were children and it was just the way things were done, but times have changed.

“I think mostly the way I was brought up you know ... I guess you think well the times have changed a lot so I know it’s gonna be different but you don’t create a picture in your mind of w- what it’s now gonna look like” (Carol).

“ I guess I wasn’t too judgemental of my parents but going yeah I’d agree with that but maybe not with that and it’s just sort of seemed like you pick and choose from what your parents have modelled, and even though people choose you start to realise that some things are really genetically hard wired ((laughs)) into you” (Dianne).

Amanda and Belinda, who have an anti-smacking stance, mentioned the pain or hurt from the smack, or the terror of knowing you would get a smack, and both talked about how they didn’t think smacking had been an effective technique when they were children.

“But the only thing I remember is the pain I don’t really remember any lasting, you know and this was literally, well you know they never used anything to smack us it was just a hand, so it wasn’t as though it was bruising or brutal pain or anything. All I remember is thinking, ok so I’ve got a smack and it hurts” (Amanda).

“We were smacked once in a blue moon so I’ve seen how easy it is to raise kids without smacking. I mean we were smacked it was very few and far between so I have seen other discipline techniques work growing up you know the most the most awful punishment for us, was um having to do the dishes for a whole day

...so I think there's ((laughing)) much more effective punishments than and that I remember I don't remember what I got smacked for" (Amanda).

"They weren't particularly harsh parents ... they weren't abusing me I suppose that is one thing so I'd say that is to an extent that was positive parenting that it would have influenced me like I definitely feel like that's reflected to some extent on my parenting" (Belinda).

"...[talking about physical punishment]: they did um it was what they what they used um wasn't very often but occasionally ... I remember the terror not the actual, and not once he'd struck me, it was um the terror of that I'm going to be spank smacked... I don't feel that that's necessarily an effective way of parenting. Yeah that was a common way used in the day and I'm sure that they my parents just you know took it as being the way you did it" (Belinda).

Amanda talked about her personal belief that smacking would teach children that "it's ok to hit someone to get your own way." Amanda also said her feminist beliefs were a key influence in shaping her attitudes, talking about the power relations between her parents, as she would have to wait until dad got home to be smacked, and this seemed to take the power away from her mother. Belinda also mentioned how her mother never smacked, but they would need to wait until dad got home to be smacked. Belinda mentioned a fear of being abusive because of what she saw in the media and remembers friends in her childhood who were abused, and so using the analogy of starting on soft drugs and moving to harder ones, she would not allow herself to smack. She also mentioned that being an older parent she talked with other friends who were older to find out how they did it. Dianne, who was pro smacking, had definitely thought about parenting and had set ideas from observing other children and the way their parents responded.

"The way you see kids, the way that kids behave and how they are. I have a fairly high intolerance for children with bad manners ... just seeing the way that kids currently were made me go no I want my kids to do this and this and to be a bit more pro-social ...so other kids behaviour and the way that parents dealt with it"(Dianne).

Edward mentioned seeing examples of poor parenting or examples of role model parents which helped him to formulate what techniques he thought were effective. He

also mentioned memories of primary school class mates who were abused, and seeing corporal punishment in high school as being ineffective, which led to his belief physical punishment was not an effective or necessary disciplinary technique.

“I guess probably from that you kind of come to the realisation that, I guess somewhere through growing up is maybe, the preteen years or maybe during the early teen years was probably a realisation that you know this whole physical punishment things doesn’t necessarily work it just hardens people to be rougher and tougher and disrespect people which just doesn’t seem to be right” (Edward).

During the debate

What parents remember about the debate that preceded the law change

Participants were asked “What do you remember about the debate that preceded the law change?” Overall, it seems the debate was confusing and it was hard to work out what the proposed law was actually about. The parents described the debate using words such as strong, emotive, polarised, scaremongering, ridiculous, nitpicking, full of red herrings and distractions, not intelligent, not particularly useful and avoiding the fundamental issue.

“I don’t know if this is helpful or not but I remember watching a documentary on the Springbok tour and how they said it’s kind of split families, how polarised people were. And like I kind of see this was kind of along the sort of same lines you know people felt so strongly about it” (Amanda).

All of the parents mentioned what they thought the real purpose of the debate around the law was about:

“Like how are we going to progress um to be better parents and how do we stop abuse at that really heavy level” (Belinda).

“I keep calling it anti-smacking but my friend who was in charge of the campaign said it’s not the Anti-smacking Bill it’s the removal of ahh something around defence um oo it’s the removal of the right to use force as a parent” (Amanda).

“I remember feeling a little bit apprehensive as whether or not this was gonna be this was gonna be the trigger to stop all the real serious violence against

children like all the child deaths and I just remember thinking I'm not sure that that's gonna I'm sorry not sure that that's gonna achieve that stated outcome... I think the intention was you know the stated objective was to prevent harm to children and to break the cycle of violence and um to stop at the very first incidence of harm to children so that then we wouldn't get to an escalation point" (Carol).

"Those arguments at least in my own mind failed to address the fundamental issues of is it right or wrong to be smacking a child" (Edward).

"make it a safer place for kids" (Dianne).

However, three parents mentioned that in some way the debate was good for awareness, and got people thinking about how they parent. Belinda also thought it wouldn't be a problem for healthy parents.

"So I thought that was really healthy in a way, the debate..." (Belinda).

"to me it seemed like a smart move to actually make some debate about it, around it and even the bill itself, I couldn't see that was gonna be a problem for, you know for a healthy parent and I just saw it as a problem for some people who are abusive" (Belinda).

"And I understand that it was a necessary debate but I just don't know that it was particularly useful. I don't know, it's really hard to say, to really measure whether the debate itself - I think debate is always good, I think cos it makes people think about what they're doing and how they're doing it" (Dianne).

All the parents heard about the debate through the media, through avenues such as television, newspapers, talkback radio, websites and e-mail. Three parents also mentioned conversations with friends. The media was seen as being particularly biased and not presenting the whole argument, making it hard to interpret what the law was actually about.

"Definitely media yeah just totally media response and the media never represents things necessarily how they are so it's like they attempt to have a one sided sensationalist way of actually presenting the case it's a not a very fair way of representing it so you know it was really hard to judge it for that reason I suppose" (Dianne).

All of the parents mentioned in some way how the label "The Anti-Smacking Bill" made it confusing as to what the law was actually about. They described how some of the debate had concentrated on defining smacking, and was seen as confusing or nitpicking, and missed what they thought was the real reason behind the debate. The

term ‘reasonable force’ (which was in the original section 59 wording) was mentioned by three parents. Amanda heard a lot of debate about reasonable force which was subject to self-interpretation, but didn’t hear any debate about what is acceptable or unacceptable smacking.

“The nitpicking about well what does it mean to smack, is it a pat is it a whack is it, and also I remember feeling a little bit apprehensive as whether or not this was gonna be, this was gonna be the trigger to stop all the real serious violence against children like all the child deaths and I just remember thinking I’m not sure that that’s gonna, I’m sorry not sure that that’s gonna achieve that stated outcome” (Carol).

“I think smacking is quite a simplistic label for probably a whole lot of behaviours that fall under that gambit and yet if someone says it’s my right to smack but what does that actually mean? I mean I didn’t see anything that ever came out about the discourse of what’s acceptable smacking versus unacceptable. They just kept talking about the use of reasonable force I think, from memory. What is reasonable- I mean there’s such a- it’s so subject to self interpretation I just think it’s quite unhelpful” (Amanda).

Four of the participants talked in some way of the rights discourse that was evident in the public debate. Amanda, Belinda and Edward (all anti-smackers) all talked about how parents’ rights to raise their children stood out as the strong and dominant voice in the debate, and Amanda talked about how children’s voices were silent during the debate. Carol, however, talked about how she saw the rights of children were highlighted through the debate.

“It was still like you were taking my right... the whole parental rights thing was a lot stronger... I think children have a lot of rights actually and I think that the children’s voices were quite silent during this whole debate” (Amanda).

“I remember you know I think there was a strong push towards trying to help people understand that that children have their own rights as citizens and so rather than them being something that is owned by the parent and therefore the parent can do with them what they want to them” (Carol).

Amanda talked about how some argued about the “nanny state” taking away the rights of parents, and Dianne described how she felt the reason for the legislation was patronising.

“And just a little bit a it does feel a little bit patronising that maybe you know we don’t know how to parent and is that the right avenue to go through to

actually have a good effect have a positive effect and make the make it a safer place for kids” (Dianne).

Edward also made comments about how having Sue Bradford (a “left wing radical”) at the forefront made the law itself seem radical and it took effort to see what it was really about, and may have prevented some people from actually looking at the purpose of the legislation itself.

“Because Sue Bradford had come from quite a radical background so this created a connotation this was radical legislation when really it should have been mainstream legislation ... if the figurehead proponents of the legislation had come from a more mainstream background rather than a perceived left wing radical background how that may have influenced the debate ... it’s kind of like well I like the legislation I don’t like Sue Bradford though but as to how many people are separating the issues clearly in their mind or letting one influence the other...it probably did take a while to see through that to say well actually is the legislation itself sound because so often the name was being pulled into it ...So I guess if there is something to be learnt from it if we are trying at a societal norms changing legislation who the proponents of it are if you can get the right proponents of the legislation does that then have the potential to improve the chances of successfully bringing the legislation through” (Edward).

Although the nature of the public debate meant Parliamentarians were constantly putting up opposing arguments, one parent saw the Parliamentarians as being united. She may have been referring to the closing days where Prime Minister Helen Clark and leader of the National Party, John Key made compromises to allow the law to be passed. Amanda saw this unity as an indicator the law must be important.

“I do remember that um the Parliamentarians were quite united in their support for it which was quite odd you know to see parties unite. John Key supported it, Helen Clark supported it, so it was quite, that was quite good. I remember thinking you know it shows how important it is” (Amanda).

What the new law says

Parents were asked “Can you describe for me what the new law says about the use of physical punishment?” All of the participants answered the question with a vague, uncertain understanding of the law. Interestingly, those who took an anti-

smacking stance interpreted the law as being more anti-force, but those who approved of smacking in some degree saw the law as allowing some light smacking.

Amanda and Belinda who were clearly anti-smacking saw the law as meaning parents were no longer able to use force against their children, but Amanda didn't think it was about taking parents to court for smacking:

"As far as I understand it's it and this is the whole thing I keep calling it anti-smacking but my friend who was in charge of the campaign said it's not the Anti-smacking Bill it's the removal of something around defence. Um, oh, it's the removal of the right to use force as a parent like you can't, something along those lines, so it's not just that you can't smack it's actually saying you don't have the right as a parent anymore to inflict, sort of um physical violence on your child and hide behind the fact that you're their parent" (Amanda).

"... because I think the whole purpose of the act was to actually, um, not give parents the free reign to kind of smack and use other forms of violence as part of the parental role" (Amanda).

"... but at the same time the Act I don't believe was ever about you know putting people in front of the police or the courts for giving their child a smack but at the same time I wouldn't smack my child" (Amanda).

"I don't really know the specifics of it. I understand, my perception is that the new law says, um, hmm, yeah, I know it's tricky here, um the anti-smacking I think it's something to do with unreasonable force but I can't remember whether that was before the Anti-smacking Bill or since the Anti-smacking Bill that it's illegal to use unreasonable force or something or it maybe it's just smacking full stop so in which case I'm not sure on the details of it" (Belinda).

Carol and Edward, who allowed some form of smacking in their parenting, both talked about the law saying parents were not able to use a particularly harsh force against their children:

"((laughs)) probably not, um, so you can't use force on a child and that, and that means you know ((laughs)) a sort of smack that leaves a mark um ((laughs)) um that's real kind of um very um colloquial term I guess" (Carol).

"No, um I know there is some mention around reasonable force which seems to be a um, namby pamby back down to appease the civil libertarians, um but essentially saying that there shouldn't be any form of physical force there seems to be this word unreasonable in there which just blurs the waters ... Um so I think it's probably my simple interpretation um, that says no force should be used or no unreasonable force should be used against a child" (Edward).

Dianne, who saw smacking as a legitimate parental technique, seemed confident at first about her understanding of the law, but then wasn't too sure if her impression was accurate.

"Ok well I don't know what it actually is um, my impression is that um, it is ok to smack your, I mean it's they're not saying don't smack your child they're saying just don't beat them black and blue and the um but that being said because it's been labelled as an anti-smacking law, there's um this real there's this sort of interpretation that you must not touch your children and um so and I but I don't think that's what the law stipulates but um I think there has been a couple of cases come up in court where somebody and this is another thing because when it comes up in court it's in the papers because you know there was so much contention around the Bill and um then it's like well should that person be punished or not, for you know disciplining their children the way that they chose at that time. Um, yeah, but you know my understanding is that it is not telling me you can't touch your children it's just that you can't beat them up, if, basically yeah that's my impression and you will be, but then again when there are those cases that did come in up in the media I was like yeah I don't know if that's actually my impression of that is it true then if the person actually ended up in court for it" (Dianne).

Parents' thoughts about the law

Participants were asked "What do you think about this new law?" All the parents had some positive and some negative things to say about the new law. It was seen as being good for the government to set clear parameters to protect children from abuse, setting a minimum expectation of what is acceptable, and was seen as an indicator that something is wrong.

"I suppose if we were just a little village it might be different but because there's this huge population I think that there is a concern I mean they kind of have to in the sense of like it's our responsibility as a nation isn't it to protect our children not just two people that have given that child brought the child into the world" (Belinda).

"...so to have a law that um maybe closer to allowing there to be police or CYFS or whoever it is to actually make sure children are being protected in whatever way they can" (Belinda).

"I definitely think that there need needs to be something to protect children from harm um, this would be one tool in a modified format" (Carol).

"I generally think it's a positive thing I think it's disappointing that it's necessary to legislate in this way, um, but not I don't see it as being a, I think it

is a positive thing all round and it just sets a minimal social expectation um of what is fair and acceptable behaviour” (Edward).

“I think it’s an indicator I think it’s an indicator that there is something wrong and that something needs to change but I don’t know that it’s the right way of doing it, the most effective way of doing it” (Dianne).

“...absolutely the kids you know kids do need some protection cos there is some heinous stuff happening out there and um it should be criminal”(Dianne).

But Dianne was concerned that the government may be overly interfering in how parents raise their children, which was seen as patronising, and rather the government should focus on providing support at the ground level to help parents.

“That’s the state’s role not so much to tell parents how to do their job but you know there to look after kids if things are going wrong certainly they can have agencies in place and you know on the ground level to work with families and I think and a lot of it’s on a cultural level as well when I be or a religious level however is the most effective way to actually encourage people to be positive and proactive with their kids rather than kind of going to war with them”(Dianne).

“... Rather than laws telling parents how to do their job, um, it’s a bit patronising because I mean you can’t make one rule to fit all because there are certainly different cultures there there’s so many different ways of bringing up children there’s a million different ways of bringing up children” (Dianne).

And Carol was concerned the law wouldn’t actually help parents in a moment of rage to decide not to abuse their child.

“...But I don’t think that that’s where it was meant to be directed at I think the legislation was about these people that are that have serious deficiencies in their skills and their support network in bringing up children and a law for those people is not gonna get them through that 10 minutes of rage ((laughs)) to prevent them necessarily from doing that um it just maybe brings it in behind closed doors more” (Carol).

Three parents mentioned that they didn’t think the law would change people’s attitudes.

“But I think on such an emotive thing I don’t know if you really would have changed people’s ideas in any way” (Amanda).

“... I suspect people who have firm views either way probably have quite similar views still. I find in my peer group people’s positions have not changed, if they were pro smacking before they’re still pro smacking now” (Amanda).

“... You know I think the people that were probably anti smacking before this will probably be anti smacking anyway. I don’t know if this Bill has changed people’s minds necessarily” (Amanda).

“I don’t know if it’s, I don’t know if it is different I think, I’m more aware of it as a community I’m more aware of it as a society and I hope that the rest of our country is. Like I think that’s been really good but I don’t know if I actually would have changed my parenting skills or disciplinary tactics because of it” (Belinda).

“Because the thing is some, a lot of these issues are so deeply inbred” (Dianne).

Although the law doesn’t seemed to have changed attitudes towards using smacking or not, parents talked about how it has changed they way they talk about it, or where they would feel comfortable smacking their child. Two parents commented that they thought it would bring smacking behind doors or ‘underground’ or it becomes a hush-hush conversation. And one parent commented that parents may not be honest if they were having problems or feel they could ask for help to stop smacking.

“we talk about it in coffee groups and things and it’s kind of almost a bit like it’s a hush-hush kind of conversation that you have, and you know usually you’re in a group setting and it’s one parent just kind of breaks the ice and breaks the taboo and sort of says yeah well I smack his hand if his hand comes up at the bench and um you know reaches for the knife you know chopping knife or something like that and so you find that ((laughs)) it’s usually one brave parent that kind of admits to still smacking their children and that’s when others feel that they can talk about it” (Carol).

“I don’t think it’s gonna stop people doing you know what they already are doing, that it’s just gonna push it probably push it deeper underground if you like so that people will try and hide it more” (Dianne).

“I do wonder what would happen to someone who said look I’ve smacked my first two children I don’t want to smack the third I’m just not sure about how to go at disciplining them. I don’t know where the spaces are to have those conversations at the moment. I think there is perhaps a bit of fear for parents because there has been change in law to perhaps admit that they don’t know other forms of discipline or they don’t, they haven’t stopped smacking” (Amanda).

Four of the parents remembered hearing that parents had gone to court because of smacking. One remembered John Key (as Prime Minister) coming out and saying parents would not be prosecuted for a light smack.

“I think it’s a shame that one of the first test cases was one that was bordering on the ridiculous you know like so obviously my perception and it might not have been the first case but the first one that was really reported in the media was the case of the father flicking the child’s ear um I think that’s a real shame because I think for a lot of people it would have been like see how stupid this was um particularly because of the way the father described the physical action” (Carol).

Amanda, Belinda and Carol all mentioned spontaneously they were not sure what they would do if they saw a stranger in public smacking their child, and Edward mentioned that he would be more likely to intervene.

*“if you had a strong sense of community and you respected community somebody would say hey are you ok or can I help or um but because we’ve become so isolated and having to fend for ourselves on everything you know anyone kind of commenting on that you just say you know f** off it’s my business or you wouldn’t feel right in approaching that” (Carol).*

“I guess if there is a change [because of the law] it would probably be around the willingness if you’re in a situation involving other people’s children if you’re witnessing something I think I’ve always been a fairly willing to step forward person but within limits that that willingness to step forward or make a comment, the boundary of that has probably been moved ... I might have stepped forward in say two incidents out of ten now I might feel it’s necessary to step forward in four out of ten” (Edward).

Amanda and Belinda mentioned how there had been so much hype with the debate, but now a few years later there didn’t seem to be much coverage of how the law was actually working. Amanda talked about possible ways to get the message across to parents by using a shock advertising campaign, having an interview on the *Breakfast* television programme, or an article in the *Women’s Weekly* magazine.

Since the debate and law change

Disciplinary techniques and general approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment

Participants were asked the following questions: “What disciplinary techniques do you use with your children now?” and “How would you describe your approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment now?” The answers given to these

two questions overlapped, so the following is a summary of answers to both questions. As none of the parents had children before the debate, comparisons made in the following section are referring to what they had thought about parenting before the debate as detailed in the previous section.

Amanda continued to have an anti-force, anti-smacking philosophy, being firm and fair, using a firm voice and reinforcement theory, but not resorting to yelling or smacking. Belinda continued in her anti-smacking stance by using rewards, consequences and time out.

Carol talked about how she used many strategies: being “firm but fair”, using reasoning and explaining, praise, distraction, time out, and a sense of realism by allowing her children to see that she has a “tipping point.” Carol also talked about occasionally resorting to yelling or even smacking. This was surprising as she had previously talked about physical punishment not having a place and it not sitting well with her.

“And you know I have smacked my children probably twice and it on reflection it’s been more about me just being over the top um, frustrated tired angry just unsure what to do or things have escalated to a point where it’s kind of like you can’t get it back down” (Carol).

“...I appreciate that smacking and yelling are more about rather than trying to achieve an objective with the child it’s more about me letting off steam probably or me taking the option that is easiest to do, quickest to do” (Carol).

“... reaching behind in the car and smacking someone that’s just going over the top brings immediate quiet into the car so if that’s my objective then that’s effective” (Carol).

Edward showed a similar pattern, where he made very strong arguments against physical punishment as being a form of violence and not showing respect, but later he admitted to using smack on the hand when the child was in danger or he needed his child’s immediate attention. Edward also used a number of other techniques to set appropriate boundaries, accentuating the positive and not the negative. Strategies used

are time out, removal of privileges, a countdown, and creating expectations of what was expected.

“I think there’s a lot of probably three or four times where I have used a smack and normally that’s been in a carpark where we’re about to run in front of the car, where we’re at the beach and wanting to go rushing off in an area you don’t want them to and it’s been more of a, I guess it’s not discipline it’s more attention grabbing. I need you to take note stop and take notice” (Edward).

“... the only time if I felt the child is getting themselves into danger I need your attention I need it now how am I going to get that attention a call a shout other things haven’t worked or if potentially there is no time to do something else you’ve got to get that right now” (Edward).

Dianne had a wide range of strategies, relying on her intuition and common sense to tailor her parenting to each child, setting boundaries and moulding the child’s behaviour. She had rewards and consequences, trying to focus on the positive rather than the negative, and she is comfortable using smacking occasionally.

“then there’s days when they push it a little bit too far, they find the boundary ((laughs)) mum goes kaboom, that happens um and the odd there is the odd smack on the bum. I don’t see any problem with that because often more often than not that says more than a thousand words and they get it straight away they don’t necessarily know or understand why but they know not to do what they did. But I don’t, I try not to do it as a regular thing cos I know if I use time out all the time they become, they become sort of immune to it, it just has no meaning to them after a while if I was to smack their bum all the time that it would have no meaning after a while so it’s kind of like trying to constantly adapt to them and where they’re at and what stage they’re at” (Dianne).

Changes in approach and attitudes

Participants were asked “Do you think your approach or attitudes have changed since 2005?” All of the parents said their fundamental attitude towards physical punishment had not changed as a direct consequence of the debate and law change, although, all mentioned that they were more aware of their techniques and in some cases more self-conscious.

“No I hope if anything my approach will be consistent because I remember having such kind of strong debates with friends and they all said wait till you’re a parent. But now that I’m a parent I don’t think it’s changed I still don’t see

smacking as really a particularly helpful way of disciplining and I've never felt even close to wanting to smack her" (Amanda).

"I don't know if it's different I think I'm more aware of it as a community ...but I don't know if I've actually would have changed my parenting skills or disciplinary tactics because of it ... I'm hoping um that I'll continue to be a parent that doesn't need to use that sort of punishment" (Belinda).

"It certainly makes you more self conscious about what you do and it's whether or not if somebody's looking at you it's really bizarre but you feel like big brother's watching ((laughs)) ...so there's a two-edge double- edged sword because part of me kind of feels more um strong about how I believe about how I wanna bring up my kids but also there's this sort of edge of self consciousness in terms of like how other people would perceive what I do" (Dianne).

Amanda, Belinda and Edward also felt in some way validated by the new legislation in their anti-smacking stance.

"it probably serves to reinforce what I say there's always been that personal value base there and the current legalisation is supportive of these so I probably in the back of my mind it reinforces that it's the right values base to come from" (Edward).

The participants also talked about other influences (apart from the debate and law change) which impacted on their parenting over the period of the debate (2005-2007). Amanda was influenced by television programmes such as *Supernanny* and *Nigel Latta's Politically Incorrect Parenting Show*, and her ante-natal classes. Belinda didn't think there was anything in particular that changed her attitude toward parenting. Carol talked specifically about how when she had children her idea of parenting changed. Edward didn't feel he could comment about changes because he had not been a parent before. Dianne talked about a book she had read that helped her to understand that sometimes feeling frustrated and angry with your children is a common response. She was also aware her ideas about parenting had changed when she became a parent.

"Although there within that those thoughts and those ideas there's still the essence of um who I am and what my morals are and how I would cope and do cope with my kids it's just the way that I'd cope with them is probably different to the way I thought I would have done" (Dianne).

Relationships

The effect of the law on raising children with others (e.g. spouse, partner)

Participants were asked “Is there anyone else who helps you to raise your child(ren) (e.g. spouse)?” Following on from this, participants were asked to comment on if they thought the law had affected their relationship with this person.

Amanda has her mother living with her and she helps to raise her child. They have similar views on not smacking, but overall her mother is not as firm about discipline. So the law has not affected their relationship. Belinda raises her children alongside her partner. They have similar views on not smacking, and she says he is more of a pacifist than she is. The debate did highlight smacking for them and brought it into discussion, but because they have similar views there was not any conflict. Carol is a single mum whose children have occasional contact with their father, and although she allows herself to smack them on occasion, she has made it “black and white” for him and asked that he does not smack them because he doesn’t have a close relationship with them. Dianne raises her children with her husband, and they share the view that smacking is a valid disciplinary technique, and so there has been no conflict because of the law. Edward is married and, together with his wife, raises their son. As his wife’s first language is not English and she had only been in New Zealand a few years when the debate happened, she wasn’t aware of the debate and it isn’t something they have talked about. He did not say if his wife had ever smacked their child.

Children’s knowledge of the law

Participants were asked “Do your children know about the law change?” All the children of parents in the study were aged five or under, and Amanda only had a 10-

month-old, so it was unlikely the children would know about the law. Only Belinda explicitly said her child knew about the law. When asked, she gave a quick ‘no’, but then realised her five-year-old son did know something about it.

“No definitely not no oh, oh I say that but now I remember it um yeah Peter [pseudonym] did come home and say something he’s just started school and um he did come home and say something like that that ... he sort of implied it well he said something like well it wasn’t just you’re not allowed to um, he said something like no one’s allowed to, oh now what did he say, he made it sound as if he somebody had relayed that message to him that is was, that you could get, he was sort of implying that you could get locked up.”

Interviewer: *“So how did you react to that as a parent?”*

“I think I said that’s kind of true or um, yeah you’re right like I think I sort of endorsed it really or yeah sort of went yeah you’re pretty much right there.”

Interviewer: *“So do you think that with him having that understanding will affect the way that you parent him?”*

“Um ultimately probably yeah it could I mean certainly, certainly yeah when he’s a bit more really aware as an older boy um it probably will yeah well just that just that if ever I if I ever threaten to spank him or be physical then he, I could imagine he’d probably come back with that it’s not allowed or it’s not on” (Belinda).

Carol mentioned she had heard of cases where children had turned around to their parents and said you can’t smack me. Carol and Edward also mentioned the school and crèche had programmes which talked about what ‘meanies’ do and the message that we don’t hit each other, but not specifically about parents smacking their children.

Effects of the law on other relationships

Participants were asked “Can you explain if the law has affected any other relationships?” Belinda, with her partner, had talked to the grandparents about their clear expectations in relation to discipline and the grandparents respect their ethos and wouldn’t smack the grandchildren. Carol’s mother is distant and only sees the children about once every six months, so she is not involved in their upbringing other than being “good time grandma”. Dianne’s parents and in-laws live in the city and so the children

have high exposure to them. They are very supportive and they seem to be more “soft around the edges” as grandparents are expected to be, and have healthy negotiation about how they parent, so the law has not had a negative effect on their relationship.

Amanda was the only parent to mention how the law had negatively affected her relationships with friends. She found herself feeling isolated and alone with her friends who were pro-smacking.

“I was very for the legislation I thought it was going to do good things but in my friend group and you know these are largely educated people I was in the absolute minority so I remember feeling quite, um, I remember having feeling I had very strong views on it and I was very comfortable with my position but I remember feeling quite alone with those views in relation to my friendship groups and sort of peer groups and even some family members” (Amanda).

“... I still feel as though I’m in the minority even in our ante-natal group it came up once and I kept very quiet” (Amanda).

“... I do feel as though um I do feel as though some friends see me as a softer parents than perhaps what they are ... and so I kind of feel as though because I’m anti-smacking and I don’t I haven’t got a routine for her she’s kind of free-styled it the whole way they see me as quite soft and I do think my views on kind of anti-smacking have sort of created that they probably think oh she this child’s gonna run rings around her” (Amanda).

Belinda had a friend who used smacking and they had some talks about it, and her friend was a bit worried about it affecting her, but their friendship was not affected by the difference of opinion. She also mentioned other friends who she thought were amazing parents and they used smacking, but it wasn’t something she would allow herself to do.

Carol talked about how close friends confide in her and she feels that they need support and not judgement.

“if we have a chat around coffee for and somebody will say oh, oh I gave a smack to such and such and it’s almost like anytime anyone confides in you that they’ve smacked their child it’s confiding because it is kind of illegal ((laughs)) so it’s like a confession. As a mother my automatic response always and I’ve had two close friends three close friends say to me. My first reaction is always to protect the well-being of the mother because I know these people they are good people I know you know the re- I know their parenting style in a normal average day I see it and I know the space you get into when you feel like you just have to lash out, and the worst thing you need to do I mean the fact that they’re

*confiding shows that they've reflected upon it and they feel really s** for doing it they don't need you beating them up as well and I and I know there's no risk of these people you know putting them in a drier or you know whatever it is that that's been done to children and so you kind of just wanna help make them feel a bit better to get- to build it up build themselves up so that when they pick up their children from child care that day they're not still dwelling upon it that they've lifted themselves up cos you can't be positive with your children if you're feeling absolutely s**" (Carol).*

Dianne talked of how she discussed it with friends and some had different opinions but they were mature enough to allow for the difference of opinion.

"I think most people are mature enough to go well you know everybody's got their own way of doing things and um they do it for their own reason they've got their own story that they bring to parenting um like history um but at the end of the day it's kind of like you're talking politics with people. And you don't want to polarise or alienate your friends you want to be there to support them so I would say no to that I mean I've never had a discussion with anybody that's kind of like you know sort of forced people apart. I've never had that experience. It's always been more of on an understanding note" (Dianne).

Edward mentioned that the only real effect on relationships is that he is more likely to make a comment if he thought something was inappropriate.

Parenting Advice

Sources of advice on how to raise and discipline children

Participants were asked "Have you ever sought advice on how to raise and discipline your child(ren)?" All of the parents mentioned they had talked to friends and family about parenting. Three parents mentioned talking with their doctor, three mentioned early childhood teachers, three mentioned books, two mentioned Plunket, and the internet, SKIP brochures, and the Citizen's Advice Bureau was also mentioned once each. In general it seemed parents sought advice more on an informal basis from people they knew.

Dianne mentioned she had read a book called *Buddhism for mothers* and had found Nigel Latta's book *Mothers raising sons* very useful. Carol had read some books and while not mentioning the specific books, she did say *"I like some of the books that*

are out there that kind of acknowledge that there isn't one approach and that trying to do the best you can is good enough." Belinda mentioned reading books and magazines to browse for ideas *"magazines I've read lots of those, lots of those kiddy magazines the free ones they get they're everywhere Treasures I think ...so that's been quite helpful reading occasionally but it's more like I've just picked up a book and had a look rather than thoroughly reading it."*

Amanda was disillusioned because the advice she was given from some agencies seemed to only support one way of doing things and there wasn't support when that didn't work, but her doctor gave great support and advice. She also noted that she had been given some SKIP brochures from a friend who worked at the Ministry of Education, and found these very useful, but wouldn't have known about them otherwise.

"There was lots of advice on how to breastfeed, not so much on what to do if you can't ((laughs)) So I was a little bit disillusioned with the kind of whole parenting fraternity to help you when you're a baby because there's lots to support certain positions... my experience of the breast feeding mafia is they are so powerful there is one view" (Amanda).

"...Plunket were great and said well as a baby she's two hours down one hour up ...so I desperately tried to get into that ... whereas the doctors was like oh for God's sake just chill out and you know she doesn't want to sleep she's fine, she's not unhappy she's not crying, don't worry about it and so she's been quite a good barometer in terms of this. Groups like Plunket are very much your babies should all do this, whereas she was great saying oh well she's not unhappy don't worry about it" (Amanda).

Belinda had helpful advice from Plunket workers, friends, relatives and early childhood teachers.

"my partner's sister I've asked her a lot of advice yeah or we've sat down and she's discussed and we've kind of broken down issues that she's having with her children, and vice versa but she's a bit further on than me so her children are a bit older so she does have quite a lot of experience" (Belinda).

"...other friends that we'll just discuss various ways or you know someone will say oh hey I've found that this worked or I did this and this happened and so just by discussion, kind of having an understanding of ways of working or things not really to say that aren't so helpful for the situations" (Belinda).

Carol found helpful advice from early childhood teachers and ante-natal group friends.

“I’ve been fortunate that from my [ante-natal] group I have two really good friends and we’ve kept regular contact ... the ones that I’m close to and may know me well they know the context and I know them um you ask the question or they’re the ones you ring up and say oh my God, I’ve had a terrible day and they’d be the ones that would say bring your kids round an hour and have a drive or coffee somewhere... you have to have developed a friendship I think with those people before you start talking about things that are less kind of black and white things that are more based around your particular morals and values and smacking and discipline would be one of those I think because there’s too many you open yourself up to judgment then” (Carol).

Dianne talked to ECE teachers informally, as well as close friends, and found Nigel Latta’s book *Mothers raising sons* very useful; but mainly she liked to rely on her intuition and common sense. Dianne had also previously mentioned how her parenting was shaped by observing other children and the way their parents responded.

Edward occasionally talked with friends or watched how others parented; making evaluations about what is good or poor parenting.

“Probably looking around at some friends. Friends rather than family, with their kids and there’s a couple of people I think of as really good examples really good role models of parenting probably what I’ve indirectly looked at .. role models of parenting and purely subjective I guess of why I’ve looked to those people and thought they’ve done a good job as parents it’s nice to think that I might be doing something similar to them. And converse there are a couple of examples where you’ve seen people and you look and you sort of cringe oh don’t quite like that” (Edward).

Suggestions for other sources of parenting advice

All of the parents were also able to list a number of other places where they could potentially go for advice, for example referring to television programmes (like *Supernanny* and *Nigel Latta’s Politically Incorrect Parenting Show*), doctors, psychologist, Plunket, and the Citizen’s Advice Bureau. Some of the parents mentioned that although there seemed to be some support and advice for parents, there was also a gap where they wanted advice but were unsure where to find it.

Amanda talked about a number of ideas about how to reach parents with information on what the law actually means, and practical advice on how to parent without smacking.

“I think that maybe a lot more literature so for example when you when you first go to the doctor when you’re pregnant they give you a pack and it’s got all sorts of pamphlets... I think at the moment there’s a whole lot of stuff about physical abuse of children but there’s nothing kind of in the middle ground saying ok in this country you can’t actually smack here are some other ways that you might like to consider I can’t remember seeing one of those in my pack” (Amanda).

“... It would be really nice to see someone like you for example interviewed you know on breakfast TV you know once your research is finished to say look I’ve found out this and this is what it [the law] means. ... even areas dare I say it like Women’s Weekly a one pager on ok so well none of us are smacking anymore what are we doing or you could even run a competition like Huggies could sponsor it you know best ideas for discipline without physical force” (Amanda).

“... it would be really good if there was a top ten ideas for disciplining children without you know what are good words to use I think it needs to get down to that level rather than just don’t hit your child give them hugs- that sort of stuff is not particularly helpful. Be really good to give parents some sort of tool box of you know these are strategies that actually work ... quite practical stuff like that” (Amanda).

Carol talked about there being a large gap in support for parents, and emphasised that even though demographically she would seem to not be in need, there is a need for all parents to be supported more than they currently are. She mentioned how parenting courses aimed at teenagers were good because teenagers could still remember what it was like to be a child. She also imagined that a possible solution could be to set up an independent portal, a parent help line where you could ring up to get information or referral to an agency on any parenting issue.

“there’s the youth line isn’t there I don’t know if there’s a parent line but you don’t want to feel judged and you don’t want somebody offering you a one size fits all kind of solution perhaps ... but maybe like a portal info line that wasn’t affiliated to any organisation so it wasn’t an 0800 smacking line or an 0800 it’s like a parent line and they can then redirect you to the relevant service place but guide you in what it is you might like to ask that organisation ... like a portal into and it’s like they would know all of the support agencies out there whether they’re big um national agencies like Plunket or whatever whether it’s a local um you know Parents Incorporated or whatever whether it points to needing referral to a psychologist or um whether there is an iwi-based something um I don’t know and I just don’t know what that would look like and I don’t know

whether there is um enough shared kind of databases to even know what exists out there” (Carol).

Other themes that emerged

While participants were answering the interview questions, they also made comments about other elements of parenting and the debate, which are now presented as themes. The main themes were around the challenge of parenting, the lack of community support, and the feeling of being watched and judged.

Challenge of parenting

Four parents commented on how hard it was to be a parent, and the expectations that seemed to be placed on them to be good parents. Amanda talked about how challenging and exhausting it was to be a parent, and Carol talked about the expectations placed on you as a parent.

“I’ve learnt it’s a pretty full role actually as a parent ... I mean once I did it [picked her up and moved her away] twenty times within about an hour and a half so ((laughs)) it’s exhausting but I would still rather do that than smack... I think it does show that parenting’s actually a hard job ... So I like the fact that there is more discussion of the fact that parenting is challenging ... you know it is a shock how demanding babies are” (Amanda).

“Parenting is so blimmin hard at the best of times” (Carol).

“...like that you get more and more exposed to all this best practice of child raising and so you you’re constantly feeling like no matter how much you do you think oh my God you know I should be doing this and I should be doing that and I haven’t written a journal for them and they don’t know how to write their name and you know so even just the basics of not smacking I mean I struggle sometimes to get my children to brush their teeth twice a day you know let alone all the pressures I’ve got of you know have they done 20 minutes of homework each night” (Carol).

“... But I think at most time adults um parents might think that they might think why did I have kids it’s too hard I want my old lifestyle back I know I’ve thought that from time to time I’d like to be able to sleep in now and again I want to be able to eat um eat a meal without it being fingered or someone somebody making a stupid noise” (Carol).

Carol had also talked about teaching her children a sense of realism and letting them see that their actions affect her and she has a tipping point. Belinda and Dianne talked about how sometimes parenting makes you furious, and there are moments when you lose it with your children.

“There have been times like I say when I’ve been so furious that I’ve actually had to put them in time out but sort of really be putting myself in time out because I need to calm down and work out what is a good strategy in this situation” (Belinda).

*“like in these moments where you do lose it with your kids and you do feel like a piece of s** and you kind of go and apologise to them” (Dianne).*

Amanda, Carol and Dianne also talked about feeling almost validated when they found out that other parents had days where they struggled and they were able to find support from them.

“You know we caught up once a week and we still do as a group even though the children are a bit older and that’s really nice you know and one of them goes God my baby screamed for three hours last night and you go Aah same you know and it is really nice to know it’s not just your child other people’s kids are doing it and so that’s quite reinforcing” (Amanda).

“they’re the ones you ring up and say oh my God, I’ve had a terrible day and they’d be the ones that would say bring your kids round an hour and have a drive or coffee somewhere” (Carol).

“I can understand that sensation that she had that kind of that absolute frustration you have with your children because you’ve never been so in love and so angry at the same time and um kids just ((laughs)) bring out the best and the worst I think in you sometimes especially when you’re tired and sleep deprived and the rest of it. So I think the more that I see of and you talk to other mothers and things like that and you start to realise that the feelings and senses that you have as a parent are actually very normal” (Dianne).

Lack of community support

One of the particular challenges of parenting that Carol seemed to talk about a lot was the lack of community support around her. As a single mother, parenting on her own, with no immediate family living close by, the lack of social support made parenting

particularly challenging, and she envisaged that parents in all areas of society are lacking community support.

“Parenting doesn’t come natural you don’t have your community around you you don’t even know your neighbours there you know there’s not the village raising the child anymore and there’s so much pressure on the individual ... I think there could be argument for every single person of why they need additional support and training and um information or whatever it is but I think the biggest thing is the community the sense of community” (Carol).

“...when you look at the demographics I would you know if you looked at me on a bit piece of paper as sort of statistic people would never say oh that’s a group that we would need to support in parenthood um but I think everyone needs support in parenthood” (Carol).

“... When I grew up, I grew up around, aunties grandparents cousins neighbours, so um I didn’t perceive my parents to be under pressure the same well the same pressures that we are so if I’m sick there is no one else to have them ... I don’t have a social life, I don’t go out every weekend you know like my parents did um the children aren’t at home alone like we were so ... I’ve conceptualised it as being quite different” (Carol).

“... I think at the end of the day you just are forced to get on with it and um and for me it’s that breakdown in community is um is really damaging you know I’ve got neighbours out the front and I just don’t trust them and if you don’t trust them I don’t want my kids playing with their kids I don’t want their kids coming into my house you know I’m a single mum on my own I don’t want I don’t trust that family and so it’s affecting everything” (Carol).

Amanda, also a single mother, talked about how much she valued the friendships from her ante-natal group and wondered how mothers survived without a support base like this.

“my ante-natal group we’re good friends still so, um we often check in with each other about who’s child is doing what and how we’re dealing with it and so I think they will be a really good support base... in fact I really feel for women that don’t form that sort of support base um with very young babies because I think it could be incredibly isolating” (Amanda).

Watched and Judged

Amanda, Carol and Dianne also talked about how as parents they have a sense like they are being watched or judged and are very wary that friends or strangers or professionals may be able to ‘dob’ them in.

Amanda talked about a Plunket visit where her child had fallen over the day before and had a bruise on her head, and during the Plunket visit:

"We explained it ((laughs)) and we all had a laugh about it that babies do this and then Plunket wrote it down and I thought ha ok that's interesting um, I know it's their job but I thought I wonder how many people don't go near institutions like Plunket because they're worried about the kind of the judgements on themselves as parents" (Amanda).

And she goes on to say how:

"I actually spoke to the Plunket lady and she said some people close the curtains when they see us coming up the driveway" (Amanda).

Carol and Dianne talked about this sense that they would be constantly watched or judged

"I remember kind of thinking gosh is it as a parent is it gonna be, that everyone's just constantly judging each other, and looking out" (Carol).

"... I just worry that it's like your everyday parent um and the way people you know as a parent I feel watched and judged and parenting is so blimmin hard at the best of times" (Carol).

"... you feel judged even to a much lesser degree if you even yell at them, or whatever um you hope that society is keeping an eye on each other and keeping each other honest and supporting each other but to what degree like smacking and all that yes, the way you talk to a child you know at what point you know when you work backwards at what point, um can you reasonably expect an intervention and at what point is as an observer should you intervene" (Carol).

"... And you feel judged anyway as a parent you know I don't need to have someone come up to me and say oh you didn't need to say that to that little girl you've hurt her feelings, as a parent you know five minutes later that you probably shouldn't have said why would you do that that's silly you know, you're constantly reflecting and judging yourself as a parent" (Carol).

"Am I gonna be judged for that and I started to get worried because I was gonna be a first time parent um how my responses to my kids in public would be perceived and then I think that the biggest thing that it was gonna do in my mind was certainly just kind of keep the disciplinarian stuff within um the walls of home" (Dianne).

"...it's really bizarre but you feel like big brother's watching" (Dianne).

Dianne mentioned when she found a brochure in her child's school bag about a parenting programme and her first reaction was that she had been targeted because she wasn't doing a good job.

"I found a brochure in her reading pack and it was like a positive parenting brochure and I thought am I doing a really bad job that ((laughs)) you know as a parent but of course like not thinking of course every other parent's probably got one as well and then I started thinking oh God maybe I need to do this course it's like you know ...so I was lying in bed thinking maybe I need to do this course maybe I need to you know be a bit more upbeat with the kids and it's not a major it's like I was talking to my friend who works my early childhood friend and she's like you're fine just chill out and I was just realising all this information is great but it makes you completely paranoid about the job that you're doing so I try and just kinda go you know trust yourself." (Dianne).

Conclusion

Overall, the five participants found the section 59 debate strong, polarised, emotional and confusing. Their understanding of the debate and the law seemed to reflect more on their personal pre-existing stance towards physical punishment. The law did not change their attitude towards and use of physical punishment, although the debate and the law did change the way they talked about smacking and where they would be comfortable using it. Parents were unsure about what they would do if they saw a stranger in public smacking a child, and they had not heard a lot about how the law was actually working, apart from a few cases that the media had highlighted. In determining their own practices, parents had reflected on their own upbringing, though not necessarily replicating it. They seemed to rely mainly on friends and relatives to get advice on their parenting, and did not often seek professional advice.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The following chapter offers a brief overview of the research question, theoretical framework and methodological approach of the study. It will then go on to explore the contribution the results have made to the research question, and the findings' importance and significance relevant to theory, research and practice. An interpretation of the results in relation to other research and its contribution to the field of knowledge will be presented. This chapter will also outline the strengths of weaknesses of the study. It will outline possible practical applications or implications and recommendations for future research.

The present research aimed to investigate parents' perceptions of whether and how the 'anti-smacking' public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. Individual interviews were conducted with five parents, using an interview guide approach. Interviews were analysed using a qualitative descriptive methodology and qualitative content analysis. The present study used a qualitative descriptive methodology.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

How parents formed their opinion about discipline and physical punishment

As noted previously, childhood is a social construction. The changing nature of approaches to discipline was evidenced in the results of this study, as parents referred to current trends in parenting as being different to when they were children. All of the parents mentioned their own upbringing had an influence on their attitudes before the debate, and they all remembered being smacked as children. They all talked about not

reproducing their upbringing, but taking from it what was effective and leaving what was not. Three parents mentioned smacking was common-place when they were children and it was just the way things were done, but times have changed. The contemporary parental experts referred to were Nigel Latta and '*Supernanny*'.

Although it is hard to judge based on the interview questions asked, the approaches to discipline described by the parents were consistent with an authoritative stance. Authoritative parents attempt to direct their children through rational issue-oriented manners, with verbal give and take and reasoning, using firm control without overly restrictedness, using reason and power (which may include mild physical punishment) to achieve objectives, within the context of warm, engaged, rational parenting (Baumrind, 1971, 1996). All of the parents in the study talked in some way about setting reasonable boundaries for their children, using rewards and punishment to mould them. Some parents' descriptions of their parenting style also contained elements consistent with authoritarian and permissive styles. For example Amanda talked about 'free styling' her parenting and being more of a friend to her daughter (possibly permissive) and Carol's lapse into yelling or smacking could be seen as bordering on an authoritarian style.

Cultural belief systems and intergenerational cultural transmission can form a framework for understanding why some parents talked about the way they decided to parent. Cultural belief systems are a form of social construction, where particular ways of parenting are taken for granted and seen as natural or right (Harkness & Super, 1992, 1996). Both Dianne and Edward talked about how parenting seemed to come naturally to them. Dianne talked about relying on her instincts and intuition, as well as her reaction to other children's behaviour and the way their parents dealt with it. Edward talked about learning by osmosis and seeing examples of poor parenting or examples of role model parents which helped him to formulate what techniques he thought were

effective, which he mentioned was a subjective judgment. Although it seemed to them that it was easy to judge what was good or bad parenting, this belief could be described as being part of their cultural belief system which seemed natural, but their perception had been moulded by the way they had been brought up.

Three parents talked about how smacking was normal when they were children, but that now times have changed. It would have been interesting to explore this idea further with participants, because it seems there is a general understanding that a cultural shift has been occurring. This is backed up by the literature, which has shown that in New Zealand there has been a trend away from harsh physical punishment and towards using more positive parenting techniques (Blampied & Kahan, 1992; Carswell, 2001; Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Maxwell, 1993; Ritchie, 2002).

It is interesting to note how violence in some spheres is condoned but not in others. This is in relation to the Straus' (1991) cultural spillover theory, where violence in one sphere may spill over into other spheres because people are desensitised to violence. Edward talked about how he was teaching his son that violence was not ok, but if he wanted to 'play fight' he needed the permission of the other person to do so. He also talked about how in rugby or at the local boxing club "walloping" each other is part of the game.

Davis (1999) proposed a model whereby parents who deliberately stopped using physical punishment had identified five different reasons why they had chosen to stop. Parents in the current study seemed to identify with two of these reasons: the *experiential context* and *ideological* reason. The *experiential context* is where the parents were shaped by a poignant moment, a memorable spanking episode that gave them pragmatic concern and made them think of physical punishment as disturbing or ineffective. Four parents talked in some way about the experiential context of their own childhood which affected the way they saw physical punishment. Amanda and Belinda

talked about the pain or terror of being smacked and how they chose not to use it because they saw it as ineffective. They both specifically detailed how smacking was seen as normal back then when they were children, although it was only needed on a rare occasion, and was not abusive. Carol had seen physical punishment as not having a place because when she had observed it, it had not sat well with her. Edward talked about memories of primary school class mates who were abused, and seeing corporal punishment in high school as being ineffective, which led to his belief physical punishment was not an effective or necessary disciplinary technique. All four of these parents had talked about experiential contexts which made them philosophically opposed to physical punishment. However it is interesting to note that Carol and Edward later admitted they use smacking occasionally in their parenting, but Amanda and Belinda clearly remained anti-smacking. Belinda talked about not wanting herself to be abusive, and relayed her memories of childhood where her peers were abused and she would not allow herself to attempt physical punishment in case it escalated into abuse. It appears that, for Belinda, the *experiential context* was so vivid she would not allow herself to repeat it. Amanda's strength in her approach may be backed up by her strong ideological reason.

The *ideological* reason was when a fundamental change was made in ideas about parenting rights and the use of force and physical punishment was seen as violence or abuse. Amanda and Edward talked about their ideological reason against smacking. Amanda's belief was that smacking teaches your children that "*it's ok to hit someone to get your own way.*" Edward had a similar philosophy, that smacking "*just hardens people to be rougher and tougher and disrespect people.*" Edward later goes on to admit that he would use a smack (tap on the hand) if it was an instance when he needed his child's immediate attention, or if the child was in danger. It appears that this reason

would override his underlying belief that smacking hardens people. He may class his use of smacking as different to smacking that hardens people.

Another interesting thing to note is if the parents use of smacking was *cognitive-instrumental* or *affective reactive* (Holden 1995, cited in A. Smith, et al., 2005). Dianne clearly used smacking in a cognitive-instrumental manner, as a strategy amongst others, but had also noted that if she had a hormonal day or clashed with her child a smack may be used, indicating it was also used in an affective reactive way. Carol tended to be more affective reactive, using smacking when she was frustrated or angry, or her child's behaviour was escalating, but mentioned that in some situations it was an effective way to get immediate compliance (possibly a cognitive-instrumental use). Edward seemed to indicate that he used it in a cognitive-instrumental way to bring about immediate attention from his child and did not mention an escalated emotional state on his part.

Parental belief systems are another framework for understanding why parents choose to parent in a particular way. Parental beliefs are assembled from inductive knowledge (from child-rearing experience) and deductive knowledge (meanings and values of the collective culture) (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992). Dianne talked about how her attitude toward parenting had changed when she had her own children, which could be seen as inductive learning. But Amanda talked about how she had held strongly to her beliefs and this did not change when she had children, even though it was a shock how demanding it was to be a parent.

The Debate (Exosystem) and the Law (Macrosystem)

The public debate was heard mainly through the exosystem of the mass media. This study aimed to see how this exosystem might be affecting parents' attitudes towards and practices in disciplining their children.

The debate was described as confusing and many parents talked about how the strong message heard through the media was not necessarily focusing on the core issues of what the law reform was actually about. Parents found the debate strong, emotive, polarised, scaremongering, ridiculous, nitpicking, full of red herrings and distractions, not intelligent, not particularly useful and avoiding the fundamental issue. All of the parents felt that the real purpose of the law was more about the government providing protection from abuse and violence, and harsh physical punishment. Some of them described it as confusing when the media labelled it the 'Anti-Smacking Bill', and one parent noted it was hard to see the real purpose with the 'left wing radical' Sue Bradford at the forefront of media attention. The debate was seen as being good for awareness and getting people thinking about how they parent. However, parents in this study perceived the debate to be so confusing that it did not present a strong enough argument for them to change their beliefs about whether smacking their children was right or wrong. Those who had an anti-smacking stance before continued to hold that stance, and those who felt smacking was in some way justified, continued to hold that stance.

The passing of the law could be seen as residing within the macrosystem, which also had an effect on parents. Although it is hard to separate the effect of the law from the debate, parents did talk about how they perceive things to be now that the law had been passed. The law was seen by some as setting a clear parameter to protect children from abuse, setting a minimum expectation of what is acceptable, and was seen as an indicator that something was wrong. Clearly, New Zealand has a reputation for having high child abuse rates, and parents recognised that law was in some way an attempt to help bring those rates down. But most of the parents didn't think the law would change people's attitudes, and it wouldn't help parents in the moment of rage to decide not to abuse their child.

Because parents were confused as to what the new law actually meant, they were also confused about what they would do if they saw a stranger smacking a child in public. Four of the parents remembered hearing that parents had gone to court because of smacking. One remembered Prime Minister John Key coming out and saying parents would not be prosecuted for a light smack. Amanda and Belinda mentioned how there had been so much hype with the debate, but now a few years later there didn't seem to be much coverage of how the law was actually working.

Pro, Anti or Conditional stance and reaction to the law and debate

The parents in this study seemed to be able to be classified as either being pro-smacking, anti-smacking or for conditional smacking (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003). Interestingly, those who took an anti-smacking stance interpreted the law as being more anti-force, but those who approved of smacking in some degree saw the law as allowing some light smacking.

One parent in the study could be categorised as being '*pro-corporal punishment*', which the literature shows is often based on religious tradition, a focus on parental rights rather than children's rights, and arguments that it works well when used in a mild way. Dianne saw smacking as a legitimate parental technique, and while she did not have a religious argument at its base, she did mention that it works well when used in a mild way; she didn't specifically talk about parents' rights, but about how she felt the government was patronising in trying to tell her how to parent. Dianne understands that the law says it is ok to smack your child, just don't beat them black and blue, but has heard of a couple of cases being taken to court, and so is unsure if her understanding is correct.

Two parents in the study had stated they had an anti-smacking stance, but also talked about how they had used a smack in certain circumstances. It is interesting that

this is consistent with the findings of Russell's (1996) study, where all parents stated they were opposed to smacking in philosophy, but they had all resorted to using smacking at some point in their parenting. It seems appropriate to group Carol and Edward into the category of '*conditional corporal punishment*'. The literature showed that this view sees the effects of physical punishment as either negative or positive depending on its context, frequency and intensity, and argues physical punishment is part of a wider spectrum of disciplinary strategies utilised, and is often a last resort. Both Carol and Edward talked about physical punishment as part of a wider spectrum of strategies, but had different ideas about why and when they would use it. Carol used it more when she was frustrated or angry and it was more about letting off steam, but it was also effective if she wanted an immediate response when negative behaviour was escalating. Edward admitted smacking his child (a light tap on the hand) when it was a situation of danger or when needing an immediate response from his child- "but this was more about needing to get his child's attention rather than as a punishment. Amanda had also talked about her friends who smacked if their children were in danger. Both Carol and Edward, understood the law to mean parents were not able to use a particularly harsh force against their children.

Two parents could be categorised as being '*anti-corporal punishment*', which the literature showed tends to be associated with a human rights perspective, focusing on the right to physical integrity and protection under the law and seeing physical discipline as a form of violence. Amanda and Belinda both talked about how parents' rights to raise their children stood out as the strong and dominant voice in the debate, though they didn't agree. Amanda and Belinda also both recalled the pain or hurt from being smacked as children, or the terror of knowing they would get a smack, and both talked about how they didn't think smacking had been an effective technique when they were children. Belinda mentioned a fear of being abusive because of what she saw in

the media and remembers friends in her childhood who were abused, and so would not allow herself to smack. Amanda and Belinda, who were clearly anti-smacking, saw the law as meaning parents were no longer able to use force against their children, but Amanda didn't think it was about taking parents to court for smacking.

Debski et al (2009) had found people who valued children's rights and saw children as innocent human beings were more likely to oppose physical punishment and support the Bill, whereas those who valued parents' rights and who saw children as innately bad "*human becomings*" (as described by Qvortrup, 1994) were more likely to support physical punishment and thus oppose the Bill (Debski, et al., 2009). In the present study, the discourse about parents' rights and children's rights were mentioned and partly backed up the findings of Debski et al (2009), but parents did not specifically mention the notion of children being innocent human beings or as innately bad.

Wademan et al (2007) found that just after the law change in New Zealand, parents were confused and unsure about what was actually lawful or unlawful. The same uncertainty seems evident in the current study, and so it seems that four years on, these parents were still confused and unsure about what the law actually means.

Lightfoot and Valsiner (1992) describe one input into parents' organisation process, social suggestions, which are loosely organised social expectations that circulate in the social discourse, from other parents, professionals and mass media. They explain that parents do not merely accept these suggestions, and may be inoculated against them because of their strong belief systems. It is interesting to note that Amanda talked about her friends trying to influence her to change her anti-smacking stance, but she became more adamant to keep it. Also, Dianne talked about how when she became a parent the 'lioness' in her came out and she was more confident in her 'pro-smacking' stance and wouldn't change even though she was now more self-conscious about her

parenting in front of others. It seems that some parents who have very strong beliefs are immune to social suggestions that they should change.

No parent in this study evidenced a change in their belief and practice about the use of physical punishment because of the public debate and law. This may be because of the way they interpreted the debate and the law. The debate included arguments both for and against smacking, and so parents on both sides heard arguments supporting and challenging their attitudes. It appears parents were able to pick up on the ideas that backed up their stance, and were thus able to justify their current position. The debate was seen by many as strong, emotive and polarised, rather than factual, and this may be some of the reason why the social suggestion was not strong enough to break through their strongly held parental beliefs.

Other effects from the debate and law change

Although the law doesn't seem to have changed attitudes towards using smacking or not, parents talked about how it has changed the way they talk about it, or where they would feel comfortable smacking their child. Two parents commented that they thought the law would bring smacking behind doors or 'underground' or it becomes a hush-hush conversation. And one parent commented that parents may not be honest if they were having problems or feel they could ask for help to stop smacking. Although all of the parents said their fundamental attitude towards physical punishment had not changed as a direct consequence of the debate and law change, all mentioned that they were more aware of their techniques and in some cases more self-conscious of their parenting in front of others. Amanda, Belinda and Edward also felt in some way validated by the new legislation in their anti-smacking stance.

Nonetheless, there did seem to be two main effects of the debate and law change. Parents changed how they talked about smacking. Parents talked about how it

had become a polarising conversation amongst friends, and one felt that she was isolated because of holding a different opinion, but others were able to negotiate an understanding of difference. It had also become a ‘hush hush’ conversation because parents were unsure if smacking their children was actually illegal and they were afraid that if they told anyone who wasn’t trusted that they may be doxed in to the authorities. It seems there is now more of an awareness on the topic of smacking and abuse because of the debate, but the confusion has made parents confused about if it is safe to talk about it or not. One parent mentioned that there didn’t seem to be a space for parents to ask for advice on how to stop smacking, because the parent would feel condemned for not changing.

Parents also talked about taking smacking behind closed doors or that abuse may now be driven underground. This could be seen in two ways. Firstly, this may mean that smacking is now becoming less acceptable in New Zealand society and so it will eventually become a practice that is no longer used. Or it could mean that the possibility of perceived stigma associated with smacking may result in parents isolating themselves and may reduce the likelihood of abuse being detected. It may also be a concern because those parents who are most under stress and lacking social support may also be more at risk of abusing their children.

Parents also talked about being a lot more self-conscious about how they are parenting, feeling like they are under constant surveillance from strangers and professionals. The clear lack of community and sharing of information, and the fear that parents seem to have of professionals and organisations like Plunket, seems to put parents in a hard place. It is clear that parenting is hard and that having friendships, support and advice can make the role easier. But some parents have become so isolated that the burden is not shared, and they may be reluctant to go to professionals for help because of the perceived judgement. Clearly something needs to change, where parents

are offered more support and less judgement. Two parents in the study talked about the 'nanny state' and how the legislation felt patronising because it sent a message that parents didn't know what they were doing. They also talked about how parents need support programmes in place to actually empower them as parents rather than go to war with them.

Trends in New Zealand have shown that parents have already moved away from harsh smacking and are adopting more positive parenting techniques (Blampied & Kahan, 1992; Carswell, 2001; Lawrence & Smith, 2009; Maxwell, 1993; Ritchie, 2002). The research seemed to show that, although declining in support, a majority of parents still believe an open-handed smack may be appropriate in some circumstances (Carswell, 2001). Some of the parents in the current study mentioned how times have changed and things were different 'back then' when they were children. This study supports the previous research which appears to be indicating a cultural shift which may or may not be related to the law change. As was noted in the literature review, it is hard to pinpoint how a cultural change takes place, distinguishing if it is the cultural change which leads to a law change, or a law change which leads to cultural change. It appears that in New Zealand the culture around harsh physical punishment had already been changing before the debate and the law change. However it does appear that the debate and law change has had an effect on the culture of how these parents talk about smacking and who they would feel comfortable talking to about it or where they would feel comfortable using it.

New Zealand, unlike Sweden, does not have a large uptake of parenting programmes, where parents are able to get information and build a support network to help with their parenting. Perhaps New Zealand Government needs to focus more on providing support through programmes that will empower parents rather than passing legislation that will condemn them.

Sweden had a large education campaign after the law change to ensure that all parents were clear about what it meant and where they could get information on how to change their parenting. New Zealand did not have a large education campaign, which may explain why parents are still confused as to what the law actually means. Some parents talked about how there had been so much hype around the time of the debate and the law change and now they have not heard much information about what the law actually means or how it is working. They indicated there is a need to educate parents on the law's meaning and how to change their parenting appropriately. Amanda talked about possible ways to get the message across to parents by including brochures in new mother packs (information pamphlets from various organisations given to mothers by their doctor when they are pregnant), using a shock advertising campaign, having an interview on breakfast TV or an article in the *Women's Weekly*.

How parents seek advice and want support

It was clear from the present study that parents did seek out advice on how to parent their children. Most parents in this study talked about how relationships (sometimes formed through ante-natal classes) had helped them in their parenting. All of them talked about family and friends as good sources of advice, especially those who had experience of raising children and could speak from that experience. It seemed that they were more likely to go to people they knew for advice than to go to books, programmes or professionals. Being able to have informal conversations with people they knew enabled them to talk about what worked for them and to ask advice in a non-judgemental way.

Parents in this study seemed wary of professionals who gave advice that seemed one sided or condemning or they came across as being watchful and on the lookout for negative parenting, with the fear they would be dobbled in. For example, although some

talked about Plunket being helpful, others talked about the feeling that Plunket was watching and judging them. Amanda was disillusioned because the advice she was given from some agencies seemed to only support one way of doing things and there wasn't support when that didn't work.

As mentioned previously, researchers have noted that ongoing informal and incidental support from early childhood teachers was perceived to be more useful and respectful for parents than one-off parenting programmes or organised information-sharing (Duncan, et al., 2006), and early childhood teachers could be a key source of advice and support because of the already established relationship (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). Parents talked about how they had gone to their personal doctor or early childhood teachers. It may be that these were professionals who they had already developed a trusted relationship with and so they were more willing to accept advice on how to raise their children.

Some parents had gone to static information sources such as television programmes, SKIP brochures, the internet and books and magazines. Parents had talked about how television programmes such as *Supernanny* and *Nigel Latta's Politically Incorrect Parenting Show* had influenced or changed the way they parented. A few parents talked about how books had helped them with ideas about parenting.

How the debate and law affected relationships

Parents in the study were asked about how the debate and law change had affected their relationships with their spouse/partner who helps to raise their children. All of the parents talked about how they had similar views to those they shared parenting with and it had not had a detrimental effect; if anything it had brought it into conversation and they had become clearer about where they stood together on the issue. This may be an indication of how people choose a developmental niche, where

individuals seek contexts which match their own characteristics (Bowes & Hayes, 1999). Parents in the current study also talked about how they were able to negotiate with their children's grandparents so that their philosophy was respected.

Because the children in the study were all aged five and under, it was unlikely that they would know about the law. However, one parent talked about how her child came home from school and said something about how she wasn't allowed to smack him, and two other parents talked about the early childhood centre having a 'no hitting' philosophy, but not specifically teaching children their parents could not smack them. Future research may be able to investigate how children are reacting to the law, and in particular how schools and early childhood centres are negotiating the law and what they tell children about it.

It is interesting to note how other relationships were affected by the debate and law change. While some parents didn't notice any changes, a couple of parents saw their relationships heavily affected by the debate and law. One parent who was 'anti-smacking' felt isolated and kept quiet amongst her 'pro-smacking' friends because they saw her as a soft parent. This was similar to the Russell (1996) study where some parents had discussed their no-smacking philosophy with friends and encountered hostility. So it appears that because smacking is such a personal issue, it can affect the way friends interact. One parent in the current study talked about how it was almost seen as a political issue, but that amongst her friends they were mature enough to respect each other and allow for a difference of opinion. Another parent also talked about how she was able to provide support for her close friends who needed to confide about when they had smacked their children, and rather than feeling condemned, they just wanted to be heard.

The challenge of parenting

One of the themes that came through the interviews in the current study is that parents commented a lot on how hard it is to parent, and the unrealistic expectations that seemed to be placed on them to be good parents. Parenting was talked about being exhausting, about how children can wear you down up to a point and then you lose it and get angry or furious at them. Parents also talked about how they felt almost validated when they heard other parents struggled as well and they were able to find support and encouragement from them. There seemed to be an appreciation for information and support that acknowledged that parenting was hard, and that there are times when they have bad days. As indicated previously, researchers have emphasised that parents need positive feedback and realistic expectations (Russell, 1996). In recent years, there is a growing literature base built on the concept of ‘good enough parenting.’ Hoghughi and Speight (1998) describe that the concept of ‘good enough parenting’ was first used in 1965 by psychiatrist Donald Winnicott, with the main tenant being a recognition that it “is unhelpful and unrealistic to demand perfection of parents, and to do so undermines the efforts of the vast majority of parents who are in all practical respects ‘good enough’ to meet their children’s needs” (M Hoghughi & Speight, 1998, p. 293).

Lack of community support

Another theme which emerged was how there seems to be a large gap in community support. This could be related to Xu et al (2000)’s model which talks about the need for cultural, social and human capital to guard against harsh parenting. Practical stressors can make it hard for parents to adopt positive parenting strategies and may cause more ‘emotive reactive’ physical punishment (Biglan, 1992; Giles-Sims, et

al., 1995). This was clearly evidenced with Carol, who talked about being a single mother with not much support, which meant that at times she resorted to yelling at or smacking her children.

Carol talked about how as a single parent she lacked a strong community base. She had no immediate family living close by and this lack of social support made parenting particularly challenging, and she envisaged that parents in all areas of society are lacking community support. Amanda, also a single mother, talked about how much she valued the friendships from her ante-natal group and wondered how mothers survived without a support base like this.

Parents also talked about how there is a gap in support for how to parent, that all parents actually need support, no matter what their demographics. There were suggestions about having practical advice available in more places such as in new parent packs, in *Women's Weekly* and on nappy packs, and also about having a parent line or a hub where parents can ring up for advice on where to go for information or support. It seems that parents need both relational support to help with their parenting and everyday sanity, but also information which is easy to obtain, practical and non-judgemental.

Feeling watched and judged

A final theme which emerged from the present study was that parents felt (in part because of the debate and law change) that they were constantly being watched and judged in the way they parented. They talked about how they are wary that friends or strangers or professionals may be able to 'dob' them in. One parent mentioned a Plunket visit where her child had a bruise from a fall, but it was still recorded by the Plunket nurse, which was their job, but also seemed to make her uncomfortable because she felt watched. Another parents also mentioned how she found a brochure in her child's

school bag about a parenting programme and her first reaction was that she had been targeted because she wasn't doing a good job.

Practical implications

The current study may have significance to policy and practice in how parents perceive and understand the law. In Sweden, a very clear message was sent through pamphlets, parenting programmes (which are attended by over 90% of all parents) and experts about the meaning of the new law (Durrant, 1996; Newell, 1989). As noted previously, this resulted in some parents becoming very permissive and steering away from using any punishment (Haeuser, 1988). Studies have shown that Swedish parents have since adjusted well, and now use verbal coercion and low use of authority, physical restraint and behaviour modification (Palmerus & Scarr, 1995) as well as mutual respect, comfort and empathy (Janson, 2007).

The current study has shown that New Zealand parents are uncertain about what the new law actually means. The main way parents heard about the law change was through mass media. The messages were perceived as being polarised and confusing, thus parents' perceptions of the debate and the law are confusing. This highlights the needs for a large public education campaign to educate the public as to what the new law actually means and what they can reasonably expect to happen to them as parents should they choose to smack their children.

Four of the parents in this study also spontaneously mentioned their uncertainty about what to do if they saw a stranger in public smacking their child. A social marketing campaign like the current "It's Not Ok" family violence campaign and the "Ease Up on the Drink" alcohol campaign could be used to educate the public in how to be a supportive bystander and what is an appropriate reaction when they see parents smacking their children in public.

The current study also found that some parents are wary of professional advice, or are unaware of where they can go to ask for non-judgemental parenting help. This highlights the need for parenting programmes to provide non-judgemental advice and support that will enable parents to begin to change their parenting to more positive techniques. A social marketing campaign could be used to raise awareness that parenting is hard, and may attempt to alleviate some of the stigma currently attached to seeking parental advice. The campaign could be a means to normalise seeking help, as well as informing parents about possible sources of advice and support.

How can parents be supported?

It seems like parents need more support in their parenting, but they don't want the support to be judgemental and condemning. One of the parents talked about how there didn't seem to be a space for parents to ask for help if they were currently smacking their children and wanted to change, because there only seemed to be judgement that they were doing the wrong thing. Parents talked about needing support and not judgement.

The law was one avenue for sending a message that abuse and harsh physical punishment is not acceptable, but there also needs to be further action to empower parents to become better parents. Has the debate and law made smacking such a polarised and emotive topic that parents feel they are not able to actively seek advice if they did want to change? Have parents become afraid of talking and are closing up and moving 'underground' and becoming more isolated and insecure?

This study seems to have raised the issue of how parents can be provided with support that they both need and want. Parenting programmes in New Zealand have typically been targeted for parents who are seen as 'at risk' for poor parenting, and thus there has become a stigma attached to attending parenting programmes (Families

Commission, 2005a). There is a growing investment into home visitation programmes targeted at families with severe stress and difficulties to encourage positive outcomes for the children and families, with programmes such as Parents as First Teachers, and the Family Start programme (Fergusson, Grant, Horwood, & Ridder, 2006). The challenge is to make attending parenting programmes more normalised (perhaps how ante-natal classes are seen), so that more parents can find the information and support they need in a non-judgemental and supportive way. Research by the Families Commission identified a tension between the need to ensure appropriate targeting, while minimising stigmatisation, as all key government-funded programmes have clearly defined criteria for their target population to ensure the programmes reach their target groups (Families Commission, 2005a).

There is growing support in New Zealand for more of a focus around universal programmes rather than focusing on ‘at-risk’ families. McCreanor, Watson and Denny (2006) challenge the existing ‘at-risk’ framework which categorises recipients of services by stigma-related variables like criminal history, drug use, poor educational status, lower socio-economic status and ethnic classifications. They argue for a paradigm shift to remove the stigma associated with targeting at-risk programmes, which often impedes programme success, and moving toward universal service provision like that of Sweden. The shift needs to come through aligning existing policy models, in two main areas, to acknowledge that in fact all parents require education and support, and that the expense of programmes does not justify the status quo (McCreanor, et al., 2006).

The Families Commission emphasise that greater engagement in parent education programmes may result from a culture where it is normal to seek help with parenting, as engaging parents is complex and requires families to be attracted to the programme, make a commitment and be motivated to change their attitudes and

behaviours (Families Commission, 2005a). The Families Commission supports research which emphasises that universal services normalise access to support, and that policy makers need to realise that it is not unusual for parents to need support from time to time (Families Commission, 2005a). Universal services also provide a better service for vulnerable families who seem to drop out of programmes where they move and services are not available in the new area, and provide a basis for identifying ‘at-risk’ families (Families Commission, 2005a). One of the five main themes emerging from the Agenda for Children consultation raised the issue of providing more support and education for parents that should be compulsory and/or free (Families Commission, 2005a).

Another Families Commission study noted concerns amongst parents about the perceived pressure to be a successful parent on your own and the ensuing reluctance and embarrassment to admit they are having difficulties and need to seek support (Families Commission, 2005b). An ease of support seems to be offered for young children, through places like Plunket, but little support when children grew older, and support that is available is not well known (Families Commission, 2005b). Parents also showed criticism of the government as treating families badly, having poor social policies and being overly politically correct. Unfavourable comparisons were made with other countries like Australia, Germany and Scandinavia, where it was perceived there was greater support for families (Families Commission, 2005b).

Other research by the Families Commission (2006) showed the importance families placed on the relational support of family, friends, communities and community groups to overcome challenges in family life. There was a desire for more support to community groups offering parenting services and advice. Gilligan (2006) reinforces this finding by emphasising the importance of help coming from people, rather than services, that professional help for parents shouldn’t be about doing things

for and *to* people, but about empowering them in their own capacity as parents and strengthening their existing social systems.

There is agreement of a need for widespread culturally sensitive efforts to teach parents positive parent management strategies and not merely exhorting them to stop smacking (Hassall, 2007; Schluter, et al., 2007). Some researchers argue that parenting programmes should not merely focus on the solutions to particular problems, but on their underlying belief systems about children (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1980). If New Zealand is serious about helping parents to change, we need to be serious about providing appropriate programmes and supports to enable parents to become better parents.

Another implication from this study is that parents have gone to early childhood teachers and their personal doctors for advice on how to parent their children. As mentioned previously, researchers have noted that ongoing informal and incidental support from early childhood teachers was perceived to be more useful and respectful for parents than one-off parenting programmes or organised information-sharing (Duncan, et al., 2006), and early childhood teachers could be a key source of advice and support because of the already established relationship (Lawrence & Smith, 2009). There may be a need for early childhood teachers and doctors to receive training to equip them with appropriate resources to support parents with their parenting queries, as it appears parents are willing to ask them for advice.

Study Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of this study was using qualitative interviews because it enabled participants to share in depth their perceptions of the debate and the law change. Previous research had not allowed for such an in-depth exploration of the effects of the law on parents. Using a qualitative descriptive framework allows their

words to be used and gave them a voice, with little interpretation, enabling the topic to be explored.

Due to the nature of the study (being part of a Master's thesis) with limited resources and a limited time frame, the sample chosen was small. It was also a convenience sample, being taken from an early childhood centre where parents of young children could be easily found, and from the researcher's city. The sample is not representative, and only represents a very small sample of parents' perceptions in New Zealand. The sample consisted of parents aged between 35 and 45 who were New Zealand European and indicated they had no religious affiliation. While the study does not claim to represent all parents' perceptions, it is an indication of how the public debate and the law is affecting this small group of parents. The data did not reach saturation, with each new participant added, there was new information added.

The first early childhood centre we approached indicated that their children of a variety of ethnicities enrolled in their centre. It was hoped that approaching this centre would provide a demographically diverse sample. However, as noted previously, only New Zealand European parents chose to participate in the study. This may be for a number of reasons. Firstly, to be eligible to participate in the study parents needed to be confident to be interviewed in English. If they were from a different culture and English was not their first language this may have dissuaded them from participating, or they may have felt overly watched coming from a marginalised group.

Recruiting participants was a challenge. Originally six participants were aimed for, with the hope that the sample might be extended to 12. But, for whatever reason, only five participants volunteered for the study, even after using a snowball technique with the first three participants and approaching another early childhood centre. This may have been because the nature of the research is controversial and personal (the study had highlighted that parents feel they are being watched and judged). Uncertainty

about how parents would be treated if they ‘disclosed’ they were smacking their children may have prevented them from participating.

Recommendations for future research

Future research should aim to expand on the present study by aiming for a more diverse sample. The present sample only represented a very small sample of parents aged between 35 and 45, with no religious affiliation and only New Zealand European ethnicity. Research has clearly shown that the age of the parent, their religion and their ethnicity affect the way they parent, and it may also affect the way they reacted to the public debate and the law. Therefore future research should aim to find a more demographically diverse sample to investigate how age, culture and religion affect parents’ perceptions of the debate and the law change. The sample also only included one father, and this is an area that can be explored further. This study was limited to interviewing parents individually, but future research may consider interviewing parents as couples, and even including extended family, or community focus groups in the interviews to gauge their combined perceptions.

Conclusion

This aim of this research was to investigate parents’ perceptions of whether and how the ‘anti-smacking’ public debate and law change affected their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. Overall, the five participants found the debate strong, polarised, emotional and confusing. Their understanding of the debate and the law seemed to reflect more on their personal stance towards physical punishment. The law did not change their attitude towards and use of physical punishment, although the debate and the law did change the way they talked about smacking and where they would be comfortable using it. Parents were unsure about

what they would do if they saw a stranger in public smacking their own child, and they had not heard a lot about how the law was actually working, apart from a few cases that the media had highlighted. Parents had reflected on their own upbringing, though not necessarily replicating it. They seemed to rely mainly on friends and relatives to get advice on their parenting, and did not often seek professional advice.

The public debate and the ‘Anti-smacking’ law had made some differences in parents’ attitudes and practices in disciplining their children. Although this study highlighted some of the impacts, there is also a need for more research to investigate why some changes have occurred and others haven’t. There is a need for more research to focus on a wider demographic of parents, particularly on how religion and culture may be affecting their response to the debate and law change. As a result of this study it is recommended the need for a large education campaign to educate parents on what the new law actually means. There is also a need for more advice and support to be made available for parents in a normative, supportive and non-judgemental way to enable parents to adopt more positive parenting techniques.

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**Crimes (Substituted Section 59)
Amendment Act 2007**

Public Act 2007 No 18
Date of assent 21 May 2007

The Parliament of New Zealand enacts as follows:

1 Title

This Act is the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007.

2 Commencement

This Act comes into force one month after the date on which it receives the Royal assent.

3 Principal Act amended

This Act amends the Crimes Act 1961.

4 Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to amend the principal Act to make better provision for children to live in a safe and secure environment free from violence by abolishing the use of parental force for the purpose of correction.

5 New section 59 substituted

Section 59 is repealed and the following section substituted:

“59 Parental control

“(1) Every parent of a child and every person in the place of a parent of the child is justified in using force if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances and is for the purpose of—

“(a) preventing or minimising harm to the child or another person; or

“(b) preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in conduct that amounts to a criminal offence; or

“(c) preventing the child from engaging or continuing to engage in offensive or disruptive behaviour; or

“(d) performing the normal daily tasks that are incidental to good care and parenting.

“(2) Nothing in subsection (1) or in any rule of common law justifies the use of force for the purpose of correction.

“(3) Subsection (2) prevails over subsection (1).

“(4) To avoid doubt, it is affirmed that the Police have the discretion not to prosecute complaints against a parent of a child or person in the place of a parent of a child in relation

to an offence involving the use of force against a child, where the offence is considered to be so inconsequential that there is no public interest in proceeding with a prosecution.”

6 Amendments to Education Act 1989

- (1) This section amends the Education Act 1989.
- (2) Section 139A(1) and (2) of the Education Act 1989 are amended by omitting “, unless that person is a guardian of the student or child”.

7 Chief executive to monitor effects of this Act

- (1) The chief executive must, in accordance with this section, monitor, and advise the Minister on, the effects of this Act, including the extent to which this Act is achieving its purpose as set out in section 4 of this Act, and of any additional impacts.
- (2) As soon as practicable after the expiry of the period of 2 years after the date of the commencement of this Act, the chief executive must—
 - (a) review the available data and any trends indicated by that data about the matters referred to in subsection (1);
 - and
 - (b) report the chief executive’s findings to the Minister.
- (3) As soon as practicable after receiving the report under subsection (2), the Minister must present a copy of that report to the House of Representatives.
- (4) In this section, chief executive and Minister have the same meanings as in section 2(1) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

Legislative history

9 June 2005 Introduction (Bill 2711)

27 July 2005 First reading and referral to Justice and Electoral Committee

20 November 2006 Reported from Justice and Electoral Committee (Bill 2712)

21 February 2007 Second reading

14, 28 March, 2 May 2007 Committee of the whole House (Bill 2713)

16 May 2007 Third reading

Appendix B: Grid-Group Theory

The following is a more in-depth description of the Grid-Group Theory, which comes from sociology and anthropology (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005a, 2005b), and builds on the idea of how cultural and parental belief systems impact on parenting style. Two social dimensions are conceptualised: grid (a need for and legitimacy of an external prescription to control behaviour); and group (the desirability of affiliation to others). This conceptualisation created four grid-group categories on which to classify cultures: individualistic, egalitarian, hierarchical and fatalistic.

Figure 4 shows how parenting styles and grid-group styles concur.

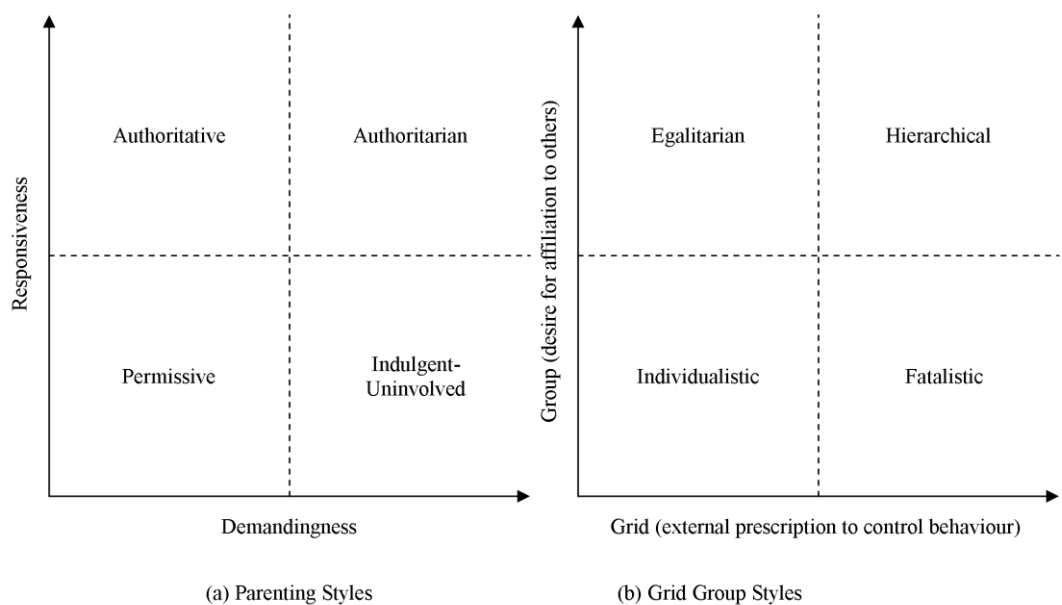


Figure 4: Parenting Styles and Grid-Group Styles

The **individualistic** stance assumes people are self-interested and all have equal competencies like rationality. Individualistic parents are permissive, and see people as masters of their own fates, with a focus on actions and accomplishments rather than

discussion and feeling, and thus discipline is more pragmatic, using reward and punishment as needed. In response to a law change, these parents are expected to be more open-minded about the research which condemns smacking, but be unlikely to support the law because of the constraint on personal freedom.

The **egalitarian** stance assumes people are broadly equal and don't have natural flows destructive of social harmony. They prefer small groups to organise themselves using consensus on collective decisions through discussion. They are authoritative parents, who see little reason to dissuade a child from developing their own ways of behaving, perceiving and evaluating. The quality of their relationship is important with lengthy non-threatening discussions of an ideal, leading to a common understanding and self-direction. Egalitarian parents would be most likely to support the law change and change their parenting strategies.

Thirdly, the **hierarchical** stance sees humans as inherently unequal: society is organised vertically with the more able at the top and appropriate institutions used to teach the correct way of living. As authoritarian parents, they see expertise as a faith in a correct way of living and see their role as teaching children this correct way, with a focus on punishment to achieve this (and minimal positive reinforcement). In regards to a law change, these parents would be most prone to accept the authority of the new law, but may also think government has fallen into the hands of cultural adversaries. So they would not comply with the new rules in their own homes and would perceive it as misguided and socially destructive legislation and may engage in public civil disobedience.

The final category is **fatalism**, where people recognise a need for social constraint, but wouldn't feel part of a social collective and so avoid interaction beyond the family. As indulgent-uninvolved parents, there is a dilemma between stern and one-right-way discipline and a belief this advice may be apt to flaw, thus discipline is

inconsistent drifting between permissive and authoritarian. Physical punishment is used impulsively, and they are more inclined to be abusive. It is suggested that merely changing the law or providing more funds for parents may not have much effect on parents' behaviour because of this, as the fatalistic mindset is not prone to look to laws or outside advice to guide their behaviour (Giles-Sims & Lockhart, 2005b).

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Rapport question

How do you see your role as a parent?

Now I am going to ask you questions about the ‘anti-smacking’ law.

I will ask questions about before the public debate, during the public debate and after the law change. The public debate started in June 2005, and the law was passed in June 2007. For this study, when I ask about discipline I mean ‘the guidance of children’s moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children to take responsibility for themselves when they are older’ (A. Smith, et al., 2004, p. 10). Discipline can be positive (like praise for good behaviour) or negative (like punishment for doing something wrong) (A. Smith, et al., 2005). When we talk about physical punishment I mean ‘the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling the child’s behaviour’ (Straus & Donnelly, 2005, p. 3). *[Print outs of these definitions can be given to parents if requested]*

So thinking about before the public debate...

1. What disciplinary techniques did you use with your child(ren) before the public debate? *[A list of some common disciplinary strategies will be available to help participants orientate to this question in needed]*
If they didn’t have children back then... ask what techniques they thought about using.. or just skip to next question.

a. Prompts:

- i. What did you think were the most effective techniques? Why?

2. How would you describe your approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment before the public debate (ca 2005)?
3. Who or what do you think shaped or influenced your attitudes toward discipline and physical punishment back then?
 - a. Prompts:
 - i. The way you were brought up
 - ii. Cultural/religious beliefs
 - iii. Partner/family/friends
 - iv. Plunket nurse/early childhood teachers/parenting programmes

During the debate

4. What do you remember about the debate that preceded the law change?
 - a. Prompts: How did you hear about it?
5. Can you describe for me what the new law says about the use of physical punishment?
6. What do you think about this new law?
 - a. Prompts: Should governments get involved in how parents discipline their children?

Since the debate and law change

7. What disciplinary techniques do you use with your children now?
 - a. What do you think are the most effective techniques? Why?
8. How would you describe your approach or attitude towards discipline and physical punishment now?
9. Do you think your approach or attitudes have changed since 2005?
 - a. If 'yes', can you describe what has changed?
 - i. What has brought about this change?
 - ii. What was it about this?

- iii. Was there anything else?
- b. Prompts:
 - i. The debate and/or law change.
 - ii. Child characteristics (different child).
 - iii. Influence of spouse, friends, family, etc.
 - iv. A defining experience of discipline.
 - v. Books, magazines, parenting programmes.

Relationships

- 10. Is there anyone else who helps you to raise your child(ren) (e.g. spouse)?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. How have they responded to the public debate and law change?
 - ii. How has this affected your relationship and your parenting?
- 11. Do your children know about the law change?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. How have they responded?
 - ii. How has this affected your relationships?
- 12. Can you explain if the law has affected any other relationships
 - a. Prompt: extended family, friends, work-mates

Parenting Advice

- 13. Have you ever sought advice on how to raise and discipline your child(ren)?
 - a. If yes:
 - i. What prompted you to seek that advice?
 - ii. Where did you go to find that advice?
 - iii. Why did you go there?
 - iv. What did you think about the advice and what did you do with it?
 - v. Where else did you go to find advice?

- b. Have you sought advice on other occasions?’
- c. Where would you *prefer* to get that sort of advice?

14. Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

Appendix D: Recruitment E-mail

Subject: Invitation to participate in a research project about the Anti-Smacking Bill

To: *All parents at the early childhood centre*

CC: Sharon Page

Dear Parent,

Sharon Page is currently studying toward a Master of Arts in Children and Public Policy at AUT under the supervision of Dr Kirsten Hanna and Professor Jane Koziol-McLain.

Sharon is looking for parents who would be interested in being a part of her study on whether and how the 'anti-smacking' debate and law change might be affecting parents. She will be conducting single interviews with parents.

All parents at our centre are invited to participate in this study.

How do you agree to participate in this research?

Please read the attached Parent Information Sheet and Consent Form for more details about the study.

If you would like to know more about the study and how to be involved, please contact Sharon directly (before 8th March) through email: [researcher's email]

Kind Regards
Centre Manager

Appendix E: Ethics Approval



MEMORANDUM

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Kirsten Hanna
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC
Date: 7 April 2011
Subject: Ethics Application Number 10/299 Parents' perceptions of the s59 Crimes Act debate and law change (the "Anti-Smacking Bill").

Dear Kirsten

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 13 December 2010 and that on 16 February 2011, I approved your ethics application with minor amendments allowing additional recruitment methods and locations.. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 9 May 2011.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 16 February 2014.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 16 February 2014;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 16 February 2014 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at ethics@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

22 February 2011

Project Title:

Parents' perceptions of the s59 Crimes Act debate and law change (the "Anti-Smacking Bill")

An Invitation

My name is Sharon Page and I am currently studying toward my Master of Arts in Children and Public Policy under the supervision of Dr Kirsten Hanna and Professor Jane Koziol-McLain.

On 9 June 2005, a Bill came before parliament to repeal section 59 of the Crimes Act, the section of the Act which allowed a defence in law if reasonable force was used to correct children's behaviour. There was a lot of public debate about this, and on 16 May 2007 the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Bill, which is commonly referred to as the "Anti-smacking" Bill was passed.

Although I am not a parent, I am interested in whether and how the 'anti-smacking' debate and law change might be affecting parents.

I would like you to be a part of my research. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time if you choose to before the completion of the data collection (31 March) without any adverse consequences of any kind.

This study is not an evaluation of your parenting skills; it is about your perceptions of the law change and whether and how you think it is affecting your parenting.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore parents' perceptions of the effect of the 'anti-smacking' debate and law change on their attitudes toward and practices in disciplining their children. The end result will be a thesis which will complete my master's degree. Some of the information may also be written up for publication in an academic journal or to present at a relevant conference.

For the purposes of this research, "discipline" is taken to mean "the guidance of children's moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children to take responsibility for themselves when they are older" (Smith, Gollop, Taylor, & Marshall, 2005) and can be positive (e.g. praise for good behaviour) or negative (e.g. punishment for doing something wrong). "Physical punishment" is taken to mean "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling the child's behaviour" (Straus & Donnelly, 2005).

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You have been chosen to take part in this research because we have selected the early child care centre where your child attends as a place where parents of children can easily be found. We are seeking parents to participate in this research who were living in New Zealand over the period of the public debate and law change (June 2005 to June 2007), who were aware of the public debate surrounding the 'anti-smacking' Bill, and would be comfortable being interviewed in English. I will only be able to interview a limited number of parents due to time constraints.

What will happen in this research?

I will be asking a number of parents to take part in interviews. The interviews will be recorded onto audio tape, which will be kept confidential. Only I will have access to the tape and I will transcribe the conversation so we can analyse the results. Your name will not be linked to the information. Indeed, your name and the name of anyone else mentioned in the interviews will be removed from the written transcript. All the interviews will be conducted on site at AUT, at a convenient time that suits you.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Some of the questions we ask are about personal circumstances and relationships you have with your children and others. You may feel uncomfortable answering some of these questions. It may remind you of negative experiences or bring up some negative emotions.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Your participation in this study is *completely voluntary*. If you feel uncomfortable about any of the questions, you can choose to skip that particular question/s or choose to pull out of the study altogether (up to the completion of the data collection phase) without any adverse consequences of any kind. Choosing not to participate will not affect your relationship to the early child care centre. If the study affects you in a negative way, and you would like to talk to someone about this, we can facilitate your access to counselling or help you find someone else to listen to you and help you. You will be most welcome to bring a support person(s) with you to the interview.

What are the benefits?

This study will help me to understand more about the effects of the 'anti-smacking' law and how it is affecting parents. It will help government and other professionals to understand more about how the law is affecting parents. The final report will be available for you to learn what others have said and how I think this information can be useful. It may also be helpful for you to reflect on how your parenting has been affected by this Bill.

How will my privacy be protected?

As the research will involve face to face interviews, you will not be anonymous, but I will keep your identity and the identity of any other person mentioned in the interview strictly confidential. Similarly, my supervisors will not know your identity. None of the information I get from the study will be linked to your name: you will be assigned an ID number and pseudonym, and the code that connects the ID number to your name will be stored securely in a different location to that in which the data is stored. If we use any of your words or comments in the final report, they will not be attributed to you. The staff of the Early Childhood Centre and the other parents will not know the identity of yourself or any other parents involved in this study.

If anything arises during the interview that suggests you or your children are not safe, we will take the appropriate measures to contact someone to keep you/them safe. We will talk to you about this before we do this.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

It will not cost you any money to participate in this research, but it will take up some of your time. The interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please let me know within two weeks (i.e. by 8 March) if you would like to take part in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you need any more information to help you consider being a part of the study you are most welcome to contact me.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to be a part of this study, you will need to complete the consent form attached and then contact me to arrange an interview time (see below for contact details).

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will be given the opportunity to review, comment on and alter the interview transcript before the data is analysed. You may indicate on the consent form if you would like a summary of the study and what I found out. This would likely be sent to you some time in June.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Kirsten Hanna, kirsten.hanna@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 8308.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*Researcher Contact Details:*

Sharon Page

Phone:

Email:

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Kirsten Hanna, Institute of Public Policy, Private Bag 92004, Auckland 1142,
kirsten.hanna@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 8308.

AUTECH approval details

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 February 2011.

AUTECH Reference number 10/299

Appendix G. Consent Form

Participant Consent Form



Project title: ***Parents' perceptions of the s59 Crimes Act debate and law change (the "Anti-Smacking Bill")***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Kirsten Hanna***

Researcher: ***Sharon Page***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22 February 2011.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the findings (please tick one):

Yes ☐

No ☐

Participant's Signature: _____ Date : _____

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Contact Details: _____

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 February 2011.
AUTEC Reference number 10/299.*