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Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

A Thesis

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Abstract

Fifteen women and five men participated in a study aimed at devising strategies to reduce the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. The potential problems with the use of physical punishment, the extent of its use in New Zealand, and the likelihood of intergenerational transmission are discussed to justify the aim of the study.

The participants were all parents who had been smacked themselves, but who had decided not to smack their own children. Their ages ranged from 28 to 57, and only three had less than some tertiary education. They were from various ethnic backgrounds; fourteen had an occupation other than parenting, and nine were single parents.

The participants had broken the intergenerational cycle of physical punishment: they had been smacked themselves but did not smack their own children. All participated in an individual, semi-structured interview, in which their childhood physical punishment, their decision not to smack, the maintenance of that decision, and their use of alternative disciplinary techniques were discussed. Four participated in a focus group, in which the strategies suggested in the interviews were discussed and refined to produce a final list of recommendations.

The parents made a conscious decision against smacking, which involved a particular experience that prompted them to consider their disciplinary practices. Negative views of smacking (ineffective, modelling violence, and potential to escalate) were also helpful in making the decision.

While maintaining their decision was usually easy, alternative techniques were sometimes hard to use, though effective in the long term. Some had to deal with the effects of deviating from a childrearing norm, particularly in regard to other family members. While many were satisfied that their own children were free from physical punishment, some had actively tried to convince other parents not to use it as well.

They recommended strategies aimed at achieving the goals of parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain, and increasing support for parents. They also suggested practical steps that individual parents who were interested in breaking the cycle of physical punishment could take.

The limitations and strengths of the study are discussed, as well as the implications for further research. The study demonstrates that parenting without physical punishment is effective, desirable, and achievable, even by parents who were smacked themselves. It presents a number of possible strategies and intermediate goals, for interventions at a national, community, or individual level, which aim to reduce the use of physical punishment.

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Introduction

Physical punishment of children or smacking, as it is generally known as in New Zealand (Coddington, 2006; Heather, 2006; MacDonald, 2003; Wichtel, 2005), is a common discipline technique. I have taken the position in this study that the use of physical punishment is problematic. In order to investigate how to break the cycle of physical punishment, three premises must be demonstrated. The first is that physical punishment is worth reducing. The second is that physical punishment is a sufficiently serious problem in New Zealand to warrant investigation into reducing its use, and the third is that the use of physical punishment is passed on from one generation to the next. As such, this chapter will look at the definitions of 'physical punishment' and 'smacking' to be used, problems associated with the use of physical punishment, the scope of the problem in New Zealand, the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment, possible strategies to reduce its use, and the specific aims of this study.

Definitions

In this study I have used the same definition for physical punishment that Straus (2005, p.4) uses for corporal punishment: "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behaviour." This is a rather general description since it does not specify where the force is applied, or what it is applied with.

I have taken the word ‘smacking’ to fall within the definition of physical punishment, but to be more specific. It is the term commonly used in New Zealand (Coddington, 2006; Heather, 2006; MacDonald, 2003; Wichtel, 2005) to describe physical punishment and defined by Millichamp, Martin, and Langley (2006, p.4), as being applied “with open hand on legs, hand or bottom”. Carswell (2001) also linked the term to the application of force with an open hand, and found that the majority of New Zealanders are not prepared to accept a level of force which results in a mark on the skin of a child. While the word ‘smacking’ could therefore be held to describe a lower level of violence than the term ‘physical punishment’, I have generally used them interchangeably in this study as smacking appears to constitute the acceptable level of physical punishment for most New Zealanders.

There is one exception, however; in the results section I have used the term ‘physical punishment’ to describe the experiences of the participants as children because some of them were physically punished at a level which would be considered more severe than smacking by most New Zealanders. In fact, there were participants who received injuries from their parents in the course of discipline, and while these cases would not fit the definition of physical punishment above, I was not willing to use the word ‘abuse’ if the participant did not describe their experiences in that way.

The effect of using these two terms interchangeably is the implication that there is no difference in the seriousness of a tap on the hand and a slap in the face. This was

deliberate. It is the position of this study that *any* use of physical force, resulting in pain, to correct behaviour is problematic. I will explain why in the following sections.

Problems Associated with the use of Physical Punishment

The following sections deal with the many possible problems associated with the use of physical punishment which have been identified by a number of different studies. Most of these studies were carried out in the United States; those conducted in other locations have been described as such. The risks involved with the use of physical punishment present good reasons to pursue a reduction in its use. Studies which have found that physical punishment is ineffective and related to other negative parenting factors are also described, and add to the argument for the reduction of its use.

Physical Punishment is a Risk Factor for Physical Child Abuse. The general cultural acceptance of violence in child rearing, or belief in its use by individual parents, has been identified by a number of authors as a factor contributing to physical child abuse (Garbarino, 1977; Gil, 1970; Graziano, 1994; Marion, 1982; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997; Straus & Yodanis, 2000; Whipple & Richey, 1997; Williams, 1983). The latest UNICEF (2003) report on Child Maltreatment Deaths in Rich Countries identifies measures against the use of physical punishment as the ground level on top of which a reduction in serious child abuse can be built. The report uses a metaphor of a

ladder, suggesting that the top rungs (severe physical child abuse and death) will be far harder to reach if the bottom rungs (physical punishment) are removed.

In 1967 and 1968, David Gil carried out his, now classic, study of 1380 cases of reported physical child abuse. It was the first which linked child abuse to physical punishment. Despite the regularity of 'unknown' checks on all of the survey items, he found that almost 63% of the incidents were in response to "real or perceived misconduct of the child" (Gil, 1970, p. 126). Whipple and Richey (1997) looked at the results of five American studies and concluded that while non-abusive parents physically punished their children an average of 2.5 times every 24 hours, abusive parents physically punished, on average, at least six times during the same period. In an Australian study, Oates, Davis, Ryan and Stewart (1979) studied hospital admitted children who had been abused or neglected. The abusive parents used physical punishment more frequently than the non-abusive parents; 54% of the abusive mothers in their study used physical punishment frequently, compared to 11% of the non-abusive comparison mothers.

In a study of 24 mothers, eight of whom were considered abusive, Lahey, Conger, Atkeson, and Treiber (1984) reported that 20% of the physical interactions of the abusive mothers with their children were negative, including hitting, pushing and grabbing. This was compared to two non-abusive control groups of mothers, one of which was matched to the abusive mothers in terms of poverty, and one group comprised of middle class mothers. The participants in both of the control groups physically interacted with their children in a negative way less than four percent of the time; five times less than the

abusive mothers. These results were found despite the fact that there were no statistically significant differences between the behaviour of the children in any of the groups.

Frude & Goss (1979, p.333) surveyed mothers of 18 month to four year old children and found that those who physically punished frequently were more likely to worry that they might lose control and hurt their child, and more likely to report an “incident in which they had really lost their temper and hit the child”. Graziano, Hamblen and Plante (1996, p.846) also found some indication of escalation among generally “mild hitters”. Of the 83% of parents who used physical punishment, 12% described the most severe occurrence as resulting in “considerable pain”. In a stressful situation, parents who believed in the use of physical punishment scored higher on child abuse potential (Crouch & Behl, 2001).

Physical punishment and physical child abuse have been considered to be at two ends of the same continuum (Graziano, 1994; Straus et al., 1980). Garbarino (1977, p. 725) wrote that “a cultural justification for the use of force against children” was a necessary condition for the occurrence of physical child abuse. He considered physical child abuse to be an increase in the level of socially sanctioned physical discipline, as initially small problems between the parent and child grew over time, and as the parents experienced situations of extreme stress and isolation from support systems. The process by which physical punishment has escalated into abuse has also been described by Marion (1982) as a logical consequence of the following factors: the immediate effectiveness in stopping

the behaviour, the poor long term effectiveness, and the further deviance (rather than compliance) caused by physical punishment.

Graziano (1994) described his own model of escalation from sub-abusive to abusive violence in childrearing as a process in which many socially acceptable uses of physical punishment have formed, for the parent, a base of acceptable physically punishing behaviour. This base was then drawn upon in situations of extreme stress and pressure, and tended to escalate under such conditions to the point of abuse. This abuse was then justified and continued by the parent because of its foundation in socially acceptable disciplinary practice.

From his classic study of 1380 cases of child abuse, Gil (1970) made a number of recommendations for the reduction of physical child abuse. His first was:

Since culturally determined permissive attitudes toward the use of physical force in child-rearing seem to constitute the common core of all physical abuse of children..., systematic educational efforts aimed at...developing clear-cut cultural prohibitions and legal sanctions against the use of physical force...are likely to produce over time the strongest possible reduction of the incidence and prevalence of the physical abuse of children. (Gil, 1970, p.141)

Physical Punishment Increases the Likelihood of Negative Behavioural, Psychological and Social Outcomes for Children and Adolescents. A number of negative outcomes for children and adolescents have been associated with the use of physical

punishment. In 1981 Ritchie and Ritchie suggested that physical punishment leads to anger and hostility in children, and an increase in aggression is widely regarded to be related to its use (Gershoff, 2002; Olweus, 1980; Steinmetz, 1979; Straus, 2005). Children whose parents reported that they would use physical punishment in particular situations were significantly more aggressive than the children whose parents did not (Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971), and the more children were physically punished, the more likely they were to seriously attack a sibling (Straus et al., 1980).

The link between physical punishment and aggression has been explained by the idea that physical punishment has been used as part of a generally negative approach to parenting, which also included the use of power assertive techniques (Olweus, 1980). Another explanation for the relation of physical punishment to an increase in aggression is that it taught children that using physical force to correct the behaviour of others is morally acceptable (Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell, & Babonis, 1994; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1997; Smith, 2004; Straus, 1994). As a power assertive method of discipline, Gershoff (2002) also found that physical punishment was related to reduced moral internalisation in children, that is, the extent to which their conscience was developed and they were able to understand the moral quality of actions and behave accordingly, even in the absence of their parents. In fact physical punishment has been linked to an increase in lying and secrecy behaviour, where children learnt how to behave well, but only did so when their parents were present (Gershoff, 2002; Smith, 2004; Straus, 2005).

The increase in the likelihood of delinquency found by Gershoff (2002) could be related to increased aggression. Physical punishment has also been linked to antisocial behaviour, regardless of the emotional warmth of the parents, the amount of cognitive stimulation provided, the amount of child misbehaviour, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and the gender of the child (Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997). Straus and Mouradian (1998) conducted a study to test whether the relationship between physical punishment and antisocial behaviour in children held only when the physical punishment was impulsive, or whether any physical punishment could be related to it. Their participants were 933 mothers of children between the ages of two and fourteen. The results indicated that physical punishment was linked to an increase in antisocial behaviour when it was carried out impulsively, but that there was still a significant effect from non-impulsive physical punishment. Not only was impulsive physical punishment related to increased antisocial behaviour, but roughly half of the mothers had used impulsive physical punishment at some time. The authors were also able to conclude that impulsive physical punishment was related to an increase in the impulsive behaviour of the children.

Eamon (2001) concluded that the more a child is physically punished, the more likely that child is to exhibit socio-emotional problems. This was measured by mothers reports of their child's externalising (such as disobedience and bullying) and internalising (such as withdrawing and anxiety) behaviour. Her explanation was that the relationship between physical punishment and the externalising behaviours was based on modelling, and that the internalising behaviours arose as a result of the children's internalisation of

their reactions to physical punishment. Engfer and Schneewind (1982) found a relationship between the use of harsh physical punishment and conduct disorder, which is similar in behavioural symptoms to Eamon's externalising behaviours. However, Engfer and Schneewind pointed out that the causal direction between physical punishment and conduct disorder was unclear.

The use of physical punishment has been related to a reduction in the quality of the parent child relationship (Gershoff, 2002). Indeed, some children have been found to take the use of physical punishment as a sign of caretaker rejection (Engfer & Schneewind, 1982; Rohner, Kean, & Cournoyer, 1991). Harsh parental punishment of children (measured by questionnaire items referring to yelling and types of physical punishment) was related to perceived rejection by their parents, which was measured by the questionnaire items: irritability and rejection, tolerance, emotional extortion, manipulation, and lack of predictability (Engfer & Schneewind, 1982). Further, in a study carried out in the West Indies, perceived rejection (measured using the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 1989)) was not moderated by the children's belief in the value of physical punishment as a disciplinary technique, where their belief in its value was assessed by interview questions about whether it was fair, deserved, and good (Rohner et al., 1991).

In a sample of 2000 ten to sixteen year olds, it was concluded that physical punishment "significantly contributes to both psychological distress and depression...independent of abuse" (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996, p. 163). The authors conceded that only very frequent

physical punishment contributed to serious depression, but their idea of very frequent was at least once a month. While the psychological distress component increased as the severity of the physical punishment increased, it was still statistically significant at low levels.

This study also provided evidence to negate the claim that physical punishment within the context of a highly supportive family environment is not harmful. In fact, the results demonstrated the opposite effect; those participants who had high parental support were more likely to experience general psychological distress (measured by scores on items about such as feeling sad, lonely, and wrong). The authors speculated that physical punishment by highly supportive parents could be more psychologically distressing to children and adolescents as they would be more likely to be surprised by it, feel that it is a result of their own personal failings, or feel more emotionally hurt because they are more attached to their parents.

Ronald Rohner has been involved in two studies of the relationship between physical punishment and psychological mal-adjustment of children, and the effect of the perception of rejection on this relationship (Rohner, Bourque, & Eldori, 1996; Rohner et al., 1991). In both studies physical punishment was related to psychological maladjustment, and this was mediated by the extent to which the children took the punishment as a sign of parental rejection. In one study (Rohner et al., 1991) the rejection perceived by the children increased as the frequency and severity of the physical punishment increased.

Physical Punishment Increases the Likelihood of Mental Health and Relationship Problems, and Criminal Behaviour for Adults. The effects of the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary technique do not end in childhood; the following studies link it to outcomes in later life. Reduced mental health in adulthood is often cited as a result of having been physically punished in childhood (Engfer & Schneewind, 1982; Gershoff, 2002; Rorty, Yager, & Rossotto, 1995; Straus, 2005; Straus & Yodanis, 1996; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). Physical punishment during adolescence has been related to high depression scores (Straus & Yodanis, 1996), suicidal ideation in adults (Straus, 2005), and Bulimia Nervosa in women (Rorty et al., 1995).

Physical punishment has also been linked to problems within one's close personal relationships in adulthood. One of these problems is an increased likelihood of being involved in marital conflict, particularly of a physical nature (Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Yodanis, 1996). Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980, p.109) wrote that "The more physical punishment one experienced as a child, the greater the rate of violence in marriages, fifteen or more years later". They also found that the participants who were physically punished during adolescence were more likely than those who were not to punish their children to an extent that they felt could cause serious injury. Straus and Yodanis (1996) studied a sample of adults who had been physically punished during adolescence. Not only was physical punishment (particularly by the mother) related to high marital conflict, but also to a greater likelihood to approve of one spouse slapping the other in the face, which was in turn related to actually having hit their partner within the last year.

The relation of physical punishment, particularly that carried out on adolescents, to violence toward one's partner is evident in the lives of adolescents, even before they are married. Simons, Lin and Gordon (1998) looked at the relationship of frequent physical punishment at grades seven through nine (ages 12 to 15) and dating violence at grades ten and twelve (ages 15 to 16, and 17 to 18) in young males. They were able to conclude that "frequent exposure to corporal punishment increased the risk of dating violence" (Simons et al., 1998, p. 467).

Straus (1994) suggests that the relationship between physical punishment and adult abuse of family members can be explained by his belief that physical punishment teaches the moral acceptability of using force to correct behaviour. As has been demonstrated in the previous section (see page 4), child abuse is usually in response to misbehaviour, and Straus extends that concept to the abuse of spouses and partners, who will invariably do something 'wrong' within the context of a family or personal relationship.

Physical punishment has been linked not only with being a perpetrator of violence, but also, being a victim of it. Fergusson and Lynskey (1997) carried out a New Zealand study of a birth cohort of 1265 people born in Christchurch. At age 18, the authors asked the participants to recall the extent of physical punishment they had experienced, and accordingly grouped them into four categories. Those in the 'regular' (32.1) and 'severe/harsh' (37.5) categories were roughly twice as likely as those in the 'none' (16.2) and 'seldom' (15.5) categories to have been a victim of assault.

The experience of receiving physical punishment has been associated with an increased likelihood of being involved in violent crime in adulthood (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997; Straus, 2005). In the New Zealand study described above, Fergusson and Lynskey (1997) also found that the participants who had experienced 'regular' physical punishment were roughly four times more likely (28.2) to have been involved in recurrent (at least three times) violent offending than those in the 'none' (7.2) or 'seldom' (7.7) physical punishment categories. Straus (2005) found that the more an adult was physically punished during adolescence, the more likely they were to assault a non-family member.

Summary. The use of physical punishment has been linked with the following outcomes for children and adolescents:

- Physical child abuse
- Increased aggression
- Serious attacks on siblings
- Decreased moral internalisation
- Increased lying and secrecy
- Delinquent and anti-social behaviour
- Impulsive behaviour
- Socio-emotional problems
- Conduct disorder
- A reduction in the quality of the parent-child relationship
- Perceived caretaker rejection

And for adults who were physically punished as children and adolescents:

- Depression
- Psychological distress
- Psychological maladjustment
- Reduced mental health
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Bulimia Nervosa
- General marital conflict
- Marital and dating violence
- Physical child abuse
- Being a victim of violence
- Being involved in violent crime, including assault

Limitations of Studies Linking Physical Punishment to Negative Outcomes. Every piece of research has limitations, and those mentioned above, which link physical punishment to a wide range of negative outcomes, are no exception. The first point to mention in this regard is that almost all of the studies were carried out in the United States, which must limit their applicability to New Zealand.

A serious problem with research into the possible effects of smacking is the lack of a control group of non-smacking parents, or non-smacked children. This is, for the most

part, due to the fact that such parents and children are rare. The studies mentioned above have dealt with this using two methods; the first is to look at the difference between low and high frequency groups in terms of smacking. For example, Eamon (2001) asked participants about the number of times they had used smacking within the last week and any participant who had not used it during that week was categorised as a non-smacker. Rohner et al. (1981) used a time frame of two weeks. The obvious problem with this approach is that participants categorised as non-smacking may well smack on occasion, or even frequently during the course of a usual week. Turner and Finkelhor (1996) overcame this particular problem by using a year as their referent period, with the drawback of the likely inaccuracy of recall over the period of a year as opposed to a week.

Another method used to overcome the lack of non-smacked participants is the grouping of participants according to when they were smacked. Straus (2005) discusses many different studies that he has been involved with in the past four decades, which have used a division of participants on whether or not they were physically punished during adolescence, since the numbers of participants who were never physically punished at all were too small for comparison. These studies have contributed to the findings mentioned above, that smacking is related to depression, suicidal ideation, violence against one's spouse, and adolescent stealing and assault. This has implications for the generalisability of these results, particularly to other age groups. It also allows room for an argument that smacking could be harmless at low frequencies or with young children. The following

two sections will cover why smacking is problematic even if this argument could be shown to be true.

In a 1998 study, Straus and Mouradian were able to find some participants who had never smacked the referent child. Of 933 participants, 189 fell into the 'never' category. The authors were looking at anti-social behaviour in children and found that those children who had never been smacked scored an average of 42 on the anti-social behaviour scale, compared to all other groups which fell between 50 and 58. This included those children who had been smacked at some point, but not within the last six months. This study implies that it is important to differentiate between children who have never been smacked, and who have not been smacked during a particular time period.

Another problem with some of the above studies is that they measured harsh parenting including physical punishment, not physical punishment itself. For example Eamon (2001) and Engfer and Schneewind (1982) measured harsh parenting or punishment using items that involved verbal as well as physical discipline. This point will be covered in more depth later in the section '*Physical Punishment is related to the use of other Negative Parenting Factors*', (page 19). While it does raise a question about the effects of smacking in itself, the fact that it is part of a system of harsh parenting does not absolve it as a practice; this point only widens the range of parenting practices that need to be considered for cessation efforts.

Straus (2005, p.194) talked about the classic methodological flaw in this area: cross sectional design. This has led to the “Chicken and Egg Problem”; does smacking result in negative behavioural outcomes, or does negative behaviour lead to more smacking by parents? Studies which have found a relationship between physical punishment and depression in young adolescents (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996), aggressive and anti-social behaviour in children (Engfer & Schneewind, 1981), and socio-emotional problems in children (Eamon, 2001) have suffered from this uncertainty. However, Straus (2005) also pointed out that this problem has been solved in recent times by studies such as Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims (1997), which used a longitudinal design to assess the effect of physical punishment on the anti-social behaviour of children at three different points in time. As discussed above (see page 8) smacking was found to be related to anti-social behaviour despite the authors controlling for an impressive number of other variables.

The representativeness of the participants is always important when considering the generalisability of the results. As has already been mentioned, most of the studies may not generalise well to the New Zealand context because they were not carried out in New Zealand. Further, some of the studies’ samples are not even representative of the populations they were drawn from. For example, all of the participants in Simons et al., (1998) were white and rural, which is as far as their results about the link between physical punishment and dating violence can be taken. Straus and Mouradian (1998) had 933 participants, all of whom were women. Therefore, their results can only be applied to physical punishment carried out by mothers.

In summary, care should be taken when applying the preceding potential effects to all children, adolescents, and adults, in all circumstances, and in all populations. The purpose of the sections which cover the possible negative effects of physical punishment was to demonstrate that there is a good case for aiming to reduce its use. Despite the limited generalisability of the studies described, I am satisfied that their cumulative weight is heavy enough to justify research into ways to reduce the use of smacking. Not only do the studies indicate numerous, serious, potential consequences of physical punishment, but, as will be covered in the following sections, these are not the only reasons to avoid its use.

Physical Punishment is Ineffective. The negative outcomes described in the preceding sections are only possibilities; they have not been proven absolutely conclusively (Straus, 2005), and as such, leave room for an argument that physical punishment might not result in negative consequences under particular conditions. However, it has been shown that physical punishment is no more effective than other disciplinary techniques (Day & Roberts, 1982; Straus, 1994), and, in fact, may not be effective at all (Holden, Miller, & Harris, 1999; Straus, 1996). It has even been suggested that physical punishment cannot be labelled a punishment technique because punishment, by definition, must result in a reduction of the punished behaviour (Carey, 1994).

Day and Roberts (1982, p.150) tested the effectiveness of physical punishment compared with a barrier, for the enforcement of time out. They found that while neither technique

worked any better than the other, the physical punishment technique was “repetitive”, not necessary, and “aversive...for child, mother and therapist alike”. Further, it has been found that children who are physically punished frequently were reported by their parents to misbehave significantly more often than children who have never been physically punished (Holden, Miller, & Harris, 1999).

In her meta-analysis, Gershoff (2002) was able to associate physical punishment with only one positive outcome: immediate compliance. However, she also found evidence that this was related to a decrease in moral internalisation, as measured by long term compliance, guilt about wrong actions, and reparations to affected others.

Physical Punishment is related to the use of other Negative Parenting Factors.

Straus (2005) suggested that the common attitude of social scientists is that physical punishment itself is the not the problem; that the studies which have found relationships between physical punishment and negative outcomes for children and adults have missed the real issue; “harsh or incompetent parenting” (p.xx). Socolar and Stein (1995) also questioned whether it was the physical punishment or the highly correlated negative approach to parenting that is responsible for the negative consequences mentioned above. Indeed, it has been concluded that the effect of physical punishment on “aggressiveness, delinquency, and psychological well-being” was no longer significant when the effect of parental involvement was taken into account (Simons, Johnson, & Conger, 1994, p.591). This paves the way for arguments that, in the context of a warm and supportive family

environment and accompanied by explanation, physical punishment is not problematic; Straus (2005) lists this as one of the myths that perpetuate its use. Turner and Finkelhor (1996) found just the opposite: that physical punishment had an even greater relationship to psychological distress when the participant had a highly supportive family environment.

There does seem to be a correlation between physical punishment and other negative parenting techniques (Socolar & Stein, 1995), such as yelling (Hemenway, Solnick, & Carter, 1994; Straus, 2005) and “verbal put-downs” (Murphy-Cowan & Stringer, 1999). However, Straus (2005) claims that the results of his numerous studies, which have found a relationship between physical punishment and a wide range of negative outcomes, are significant even when the effect of parenting variables is taken into account. Either way, the fact that there is such a correlation between physical punishment and other negative factors suggests that it is part of a negative approach. Surely it would be reasonable to aim to eliminate all parenting behaviour which contributes to a potentially harmful parenting system, whether there is a clear case that each individually directly contributes to negative outcomes or not. Simons et al. (1994, p.603) suggests that despite their findings that physical punishment had no effect on the outcomes they measured, it may “influence adolescent adjustment...indirectly through its coercive influence on the parent-child relationship”.

Scope of the Problem

This section will deal with the scope of the problem of smacking in New Zealand. It will illustrate that it is a serious problem, given the number of children who are smacked, the frequency at which they are smacked, and the severity of some of the physical punishment received. These points demonstrate that efforts to reduce the use of smacking in New Zealand are warranted, and that investigation into how to achieve this is necessary.

Attitudes to Smacking. The attitudes of New Zealanders to smacking seem to be very slowly turning away from the use of smacking as a disciplinary technique. Jane and James Ritchie (1981, p.31) asked parents whether they agreed with the statement that “in certain circumstances it is alright for a parent to smack a child”. A total of 96% of the fathers, and 89% of the mothers agreed with the statement. This means that only 7.5% of those who participated believed that it was never appropriate to smack a child. A similar question was asked of 1000 adults by Gabrielle Maxwell in 1995. Her results were that 87% “thought that there were circumstances when it was alright for a parent to smack a child” (Maxwell, 1995, p.299). This study demonstrated a slight reduction on the Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) study; 12% thought that it was never appropriate to smack.

A study carried out by Sue Carswell for the Ministry of Justice looked at the attitudes of 1000 adults. The purpose was to “inform ongoing policy work on section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961” (Carswell, 2001, p.1). Section 59 provides an exception to the crime of

assault, allowing that “every parent of a child (and every person in the place of a parent of a child) is justified in using force by way of correction towards the child, if the force is reasonable in the circumstances” (Carswell, 2001, p.1) (see page130). Since the study was aimed at finding out the attitudes of the participants to Section 59, that is, the legal allowance for smacking, the question asked was somewhat different. Carswell found that 80% agreed with the statement that “a person parenting a child should be allowed by law to smack the child with an open hand if they are naughty” (Carswell, 2001, p.1-2). There is another increase here, to 20% who disagreed with the statement. However, that is 20% who believed that parents should not legally be allowed to smack, not that parents should not smack. As such, it could be the case that 20% would be a conservative estimate of the people who believe that a parent should not smack because the 80% who agreed that parent should have the legal right could include a number who believe that parents should not smack, but also that the Government should not interfere with the way parents discipline their children. Notice, also, that this study defined smacking in the question as being carried out “with an open hand” (Carswell, 2001, p.1). Carswell (2001) also found that a smack which leaves no mark was the acceptable level of force for 75% of the participants, and possible evidence for a trend towards a reduction of support for smacking; the youngest age group (18 to 29) was most likely to consider it to be unacceptable.

Parents who Never Smack/ People who were Never Smacked. Based on the above attitudes to smacking it would be reasonable to assume that by far the majority of parents

do smack. In 1963 only two of the 151 mothers interviewed by Jane and James Ritchie (1979) had never smacked, that is 1.3%. In 1977 that figure had risen to 10% (Ritchie, 1979) and in the study completed by Maxwell in 1995, 30% had never smacked. In a study of 1265 18 year olds in 1997 (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1997), only 10.8% had not been smacked as children. However this study was based on the retrospective reports of 18 year olds, which means that the figure of 10.8% was probably about 10 years old in 1997. However, in 1998, in a study of mothers of four year old children (Whitfield, 1998) only 9% had never smacked. This could indicate that the 18 year olds in the previous study had forgotten the smacking they had probably received as very young children. In 2006 Millichamp, Martin, and Langley surveyed 962 26 year olds about the discipline they experienced in childhood and adolescence, and the severity of it. Their results were that 20% reported that they had never been smacked; again this data was based on retrospective reports and would have been at least ten years old. Also, there is reason to believe (Whitfield, 1998) that the participants might not have recalled smacking received in early childhood.

Severe Physical Punishment. The most alarming finding of the Millichamp et al. (2006) study was that only 29% (of the 80% who reported being smacked) said that smacking was as far as their physical punishment ever went. That means that 51% of the participants experienced physical punishment that went beyond smacking, where smacking was defined as being carried out “with open hand on legs, hand or bottom” (Millichamp et al., 2006, p.4). If this data is representative, then half of the children of

New Zealand were at some point (over the last two decades) being “hit with an object,...slapped on the face,...clipped around the ear,...(receiving) lasting bruises, or welts; (experiencing) beating up;...choking; sitting on; throwing on floor or against wall...(or) sexual violation.” (Millichamp, 2006, p.4). Gregory (2006) carried out a New Zealand study of 78 Waikato University students which involved information about their disciplinary histories. In the course of discipline, 53% had been hit with hairbrush, wooden spoon or paddle; 31% had been hit in the face or head; 20% had been hit with a belt, jandal, or jug cord; 15% had had something thrown at them; 14% had been punched or kicked; and 7% had been hit with a piece of wood, bat, or hockey stick. These two studies indicate that physical punishment in New Zealand does not consist of a light smack on the bottom all of the time; they support the research that concludes that smacking is a risk factor for physical child abuse (see page 4). Of course the most serious potential consequence of physical punishment is death, and New Zealand has a surprisingly high rate of death from maltreatment for children under age 15. For every 100 000 children in that age group, an average of 1.2 died from maltreatment each year during a five year period recorded in the 1990s (UNICEF, 2003). Of the 27 ‘rich nations’ listed, only two others had a higher rate.

Frequency of Smacking. The studies described by Ritchie (1979) and Whitfield (1998) present data on the frequency at which children were being smacked. I have graphed this below to show the change over 35 years in the frequency of smacking in New Zealand.

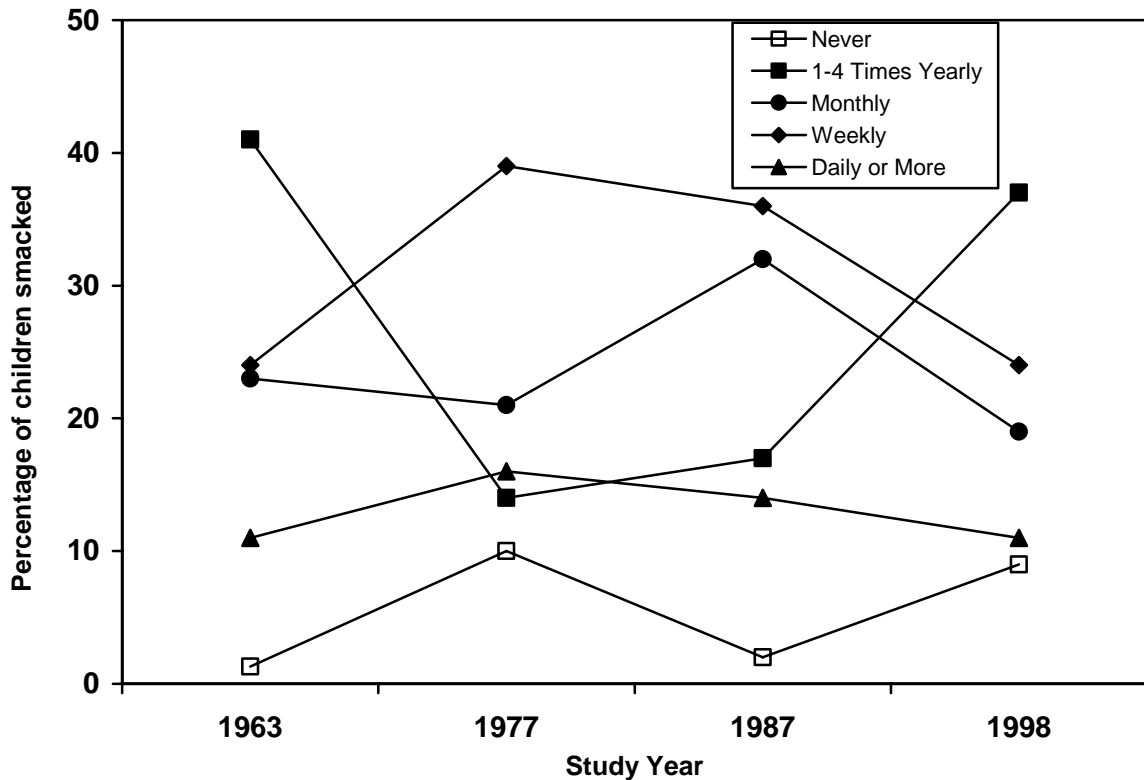


Figure 1. The change in the frequency of smacking of New Zealand children over 35 years.

Figure one demonstrates any serious change over the 35 years at only one of the frequencies: never. The percentage of children who were never smacked rose from 1963 to 1977, dropped back in the 1987 study, but rose again in the 1998 study to nine percent. The lines which represent all of the other frequencies of physical punishment fluctuate a lot but end up at a very similar rate in 1998, to what they were in 1963. Caution must be taken when considering the external validity of these studies; they were based on the reports of the parents of four year old children, and, as such, cannot be taken to represent the frequency of smacking experienced by other age groups. Also, there is the possibility of incorrect estimation of the frequencies in the parents' reports.

Summary. Smacking in New Zealand is a serious problem in its frequency and severity, and has been for some time. The most recent attitudinal study (Carswell, 2001) reported that 80% of adults agree that parents should be legally allowed to smack their children, and in 1998 (Whitfield, 1998) only 9% of parents had never smacked their four year old child. Not only are New Zealand children smacked frequently, but sometimes severely; the studies by Millichamp et al., (2006) and Gregory (2006) described examples of extreme physical discipline experienced by their participants as children (during the last two decades). Based on the collective research earlier in this chapter which demonstrates the wide range of possible negative outcomes of physical punishment, the fact that most New Zealand children continue to be smacked is cause for concern, and, for action.

Intergenerational Transmission

This section will look at studies which demonstrate that physical punishment is a child rearing technique which is passed on to successive generations within families, and which point out some of the conditions under which transmission is more or less likely to occur. The concept of intergenerational transmission is vital to the approach of reducing the use of smacking through change in individual families; it requires that once the cycle is broken, it stays broken. In other words, once a parent who was smacked decides not to smack, their children will be much less likely to smack their own children, and a cycle of non-smacking will begin to be passed on to successive generations.

Whitfield (1998) interviewed 100 Waikato (New Zealand) mothers, 65% of which told her that they had learned the concept of smacking from their own parents, and, in another Waikato study (Gregory, 2006), the participants reported that their favourable attitude to the use of physical punishment was due to their own experiences of it as children. These participants even said that if they had not been smacked by their own parents, they probably would have had a negative attitude towards its use. High levels of physical punishment experienced in childhood have been linked to the transmission of general family violence (Carroll, 1977), particularly when combined with low warmth ratings. Experience of particular types of punishment was related to approval of those types (Buntain-Ricklefs et al., 1994; Rodriguez & Sutherland, 1999). In another New Zealand study, Rodriguez and Sutherland questioned 99 parents about their disciplinary histories and current attitudes and practices. Their conclusion was that experiencing a particular discipline technique as a child was related to their perceptions of that technique (those experienced were considered less severe and more common), and that experience and perception of a technique were “the best predictors of parents’ disciplinary practices (Rodriguez & Sutherland, 1999, p.651).

The process through which the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment occurs has been shown to be modelling, rather than its impact on personality and parenting attitudes (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991). These authors suggest that harsh parenting (including physical punishment) directly “furnishes children with a script for the parent role that they enact with their own children” (p.169). Similarly, Muller, Hunter and Stollak (1995) found support for social learning theory to explain the

intergenerational transmission of physical punishment, using path analysis. Their model locates the transmission in the experience of physical punishment from the parents' own parents, and in their 'lifetime aggressive behaviour'. Their model is shown below in Figure 2.

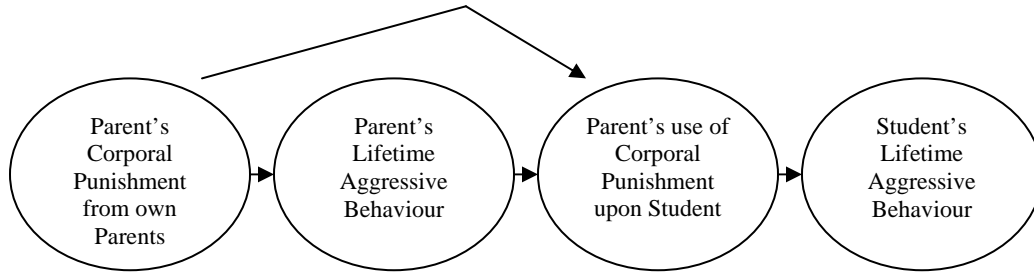


Figure 2. Muller, Hunter, and Stollak's (1995, p.1332) model of the intergenerational transmission of physical punishment.

Murphy-Cowan and Stringer (1999) divided their participants into groups based on their childhood experiences of low, medium, or high levels of smacking. They looked at the level of smacking by the current parents, compared to the level of smacking each received as a child and found that, for those parents who had been smacked at the low and medium levels, intergenerational transmission was supported. However, those current parents who had been smacked at the high level as children reported a lower level of use of smacking with their children, than that which they had experienced themselves, particularly with the middle class participants.

In a study by Hemenway, Solnick and Carter (1994) participants who had received frequent physical punishment (weekly plus) were more likely to physically punish their own children at a similar rate, except in the cases of those participants who felt that they

had been abused. These participants were able to “break out of the transgenerational cycle of punitive child rearing” (p.1011). These studies seem to suggest a conscious decision by people who were dissatisfied by their severe experiences of physical punishment in childhood to not continue the cycle. Indeed, in her study of parents who did not smack, Barbara Carson (1986) found that her participants had been exposed to high levels of violence in childhood, and some were abused. Those participants who had experienced harsh physical punishment or abuse were the most committed to not using smacking.

Once a person has broken the cycle of physical punishment by deciding not to smack their children, the break is relatively permanent, in that their own children are far less likely to use smacking themselves. Graziano and Namaste (1990, p.458) conducted a study in which 46 of the participants had not been physically punished as children. Of these participants only 28% agreed with the statement that “spanking is an effective procedure for discipline”, and 17% agreed with the statement that “children need to be spanked to teach discipline”. Whereas, for those participants who were physically punished, 72% agreed that spanking was effective, and 47% agreed that it was necessary. The authors found a significant difference on these questions between those who were smacked and those who were not. As far as attitudes determine action, this study indicates that most people who were not physically punished will not smack their own children. While the permanence of the break in the cycle implied by this study is not 100%, it is high enough for the cessation of the use of physical punishment in one generation to significantly reduce the likelihood of it being use in successive generations.

Strategies to Reduce the Use of Physical Punishment

A number of authors have suggested strategies which could be used to reduce the use of physical punishment, or described strategies which have already been used. These suggestions appear to fit into four general categories: parent education; use of systems already in place; the creation of new systems; and legal reform. This section will cover the strategies in each of these categories.

Parent Education. The greatest number of strategies seem to have been suggested within the category of parent education and while this probably is an important idea, the authors who suggest it do not necessarily include practical steps to get this education to parents. Nonetheless, the specific points that are considered important for parents to learn about in order to reduce the use of smacking are presented below. These include: education on alternative disciplinary techniques, child development, the fact that it is possible to raise children without smacking, the importance of conscious thought and planning about discipline, and the use of goal directed discipline.

Education on alternative disciplinary techniques is a popular suggestion (Ateah, 2003; Buntain-Ricklefs et al., 1994; Graziano et al., 1996; Kelder, McNamara, Carlson, & Lynn, 1991). In her study of Waikato mothers, Whitfield (1998) found that 36% of the mothers who used smacking felt it was ineffective but used it anyway, mostly because they did not know what else to use. Graziano, Hamblen and Plante (1996) found that 85%

of the parents in their study would prefer to use effective alternatives over smacking if these were available.

Education in child development has also been suggested (Ateah, 2003). It has been noted that parents often smack in response to perceived threats to their authority which are, in actuality, normal childhood processes of autonomy development (Graziano et al., 1996). The authors believe that parent education about child development could reduce a lot of smacking in response to this misunderstanding. In Sweden there has been an emphasis on education in child development which has helped parents to have realistic expectations about the behaviour of their children (Durrant & Olsen, 1997). Indeed, in a study which compared parents from Sweden and New Zealand on their knowledge of child development, the Swedish parents were significantly more informed (Wilkstedt, 2005). They were also found to have “more developmentally accurate expectations of children’s competencies” than the New Zealand participants (p.51).

Graziano, Hamblen and Plante (1996) found that, in their study, 17% of the participants did not use smacking at all. This is important for other parents to know; it is quite possible to raise children without smacking. They also talk about further investigation of the ambivalence about the use of smacking which was shown in their study. Their main point, however, was the importance of making a commitment to not using smacking. They suggest that parents should be encouraged to “make a definitive, conscious decision and commitment *not* to use corporal punishment, rather than simply enacting an overlearned norm without much thought” (Graziano et al., 1996, p. 848). Ateah and

Durrant (2005) also stress the importance of thought about discipline. They recommend that parents use goal-directed discipline, and believe this would result in reduced use of smacking as parents “weigh immediate compliance against longer term and child-centred outcomes” (p.180).

Use of Systems Already in Place. A number of authors have suggested strategies which involve using systems and organisations which are already in place to approach the issue of reducing the use of smacking. Early childhood centres have been identified in New Zealand as organisations that parents already use for informal parenting advice and support, both from the staff and other parents (Duncan & Bowden, 2004). Durrant (2004) found that this was preferred over formal training. Duncan, Bowden and Smith (2005) mention that early childhood centre staff can act as mediators between families and other agencies which can provide services to parents.

Primary schools were identified by Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) as ideal locations to set up parent support centres, in much the same way as dental clinics used to be. They recommended “a parent support and education centre located in every primary school, staffed by an experienced and mature parent, trained in child development and the management of behaviour” (p.102). Such centres could provide free parenting advice and support to parents, which could obviously include information on the potential problems with the use of physical punishment, as well as alternatives and coping strategies.

Beth Wood (1999) stated that there is a lot that can be done by professionals to reduce the use of physical punishment. As part of her research, at least 80 questionnaires were hand delivered to people who work with children and families; she received 25 back from teachers, social workers, counsellors and agency managers. Most of those who responded felt that the issue of physical punishment was relevant to their work and that they should be doing something to help reduce its use. Of course those who would have responded negatively to this question probably did not return the questionnaire. There were a number of techniques mentioned: information on alternatives, through discussion or literature; referring parents to other agencies; modelling; staff training; political lobbying; and community discussion. These techniques could undoubtedly be applied by more professionals. They also mentioned ideas that they were not currently using, but would like to be. These included more parent and staff training, and the establishment of 'no hitting' zones within their organisations.

High school violence prevention programs (Straus, 1996), have been identified as systems which are already in place (in the United States) into which the anti-smacking message could be integrated. Straus (1996) suggests that it is remiss of such programs to ignore the most common form of violence that adolescents are likely to face: physical punishment. Graziano, Hamblen and Plante (1996) similarly suggest discussing the issue of smacking with those who may be on the receiving end. This is because they found that while the children in their study were generally unhappy with the use of smacking by their parents, they accepted it as a parental right. The authors suggest that the intergenerational transmission of smacking may be to do with the extent to which a child

“is co-opted by the experience, develops tolerance and support, that eventually may coalesce into the adult’s cognitive-emotional set of commitment to its use” (Graziano et al., 1996, p.847). Commitment to non-smacking was a major determinant of use of smacking in their study.

Child abuse programs, whether prevention or treatment based, have also been identified (Kelder et al., 1991). Rather than aiming to reduce smacking as an end in itself, these avenues could be pursued with the aim of being more effective at reducing physical child abuse by including the issue of physical punishment. Kelder, McNamara, Carlson and Lynn (1991) suggest that child abuse prevention program should focus on people who experienced ‘harsh’ parental discipline as they are more likely to approve of the use of physical punishment. For increased effectiveness, it has been recommended (Kelder et al., 1991) that professionals working to reduce child abuse within particular families should look not just at the abuse, but at the pattern of discipline (physical punishment) that may lead to it.

Creation of New Systems. Some authors have suggested the creation of prevention programs which are specifically aimed at reducing the use of smacking, or at least embed it within a more holistic, general parenting program.

Ateah (2003, p.99) looked at parents’ sources of information for their disciplinary practices and concluded that a small group format which allowed parents to “discuss

issues and compare experiences”, would be a good strategy. This idea is already being used in Sweden (Durrant, 2004) where parenting groups are provided for, and attended by, almost all parents. In these, parents are able to “hear each other’s experiences which helps them to learn the norms of development, hear other points of view, develop a problem solving approach, and actively generate solutions together”(Durrant, 2004, p.25).

Xu, Tung and Dunaway (2000) have created a model which shows a number of factors which may contribute to the use of physical punishment. These are cultural capital (such as religious attitudes and parent child-rearing values), human capital (such as income and education), social capital (such as help with babysitting), and other exogenous factors (such as number of children and age of parents). This model could be useful to decide which parents may be likely to use physical punishment, and for the development of prevention programs to figure out how to address the parenting needs of particular parents.

A few authors have detailed the characteristics of effective physical punishment prevention programs. They should focus on parental attitudes to smacking, rather than just providing alternative techniques (Ateah & Durrant, 2005), and teach parents effective strategies for dealing with anger (Ateah & Durrant, 2005; Graziano et al., 1996). Anger management techniques were considered particularly important as parents who use them effectively will also model them to their children (Muller et al, 1995).

Legal Reform. As early as 1978, Ritchie and Ritchie called for a deletion of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, which allows parents to use 'reasonable force' to physically punish their children (see page130). This was based on results of their studies of child rearing in New Zealand, and the frequent use of physical punishment that they found (Ritchie, 2006). In 1981 the Ritchies suggested a national policy against the use of physical punishment in New Zealand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). Sweden legally banned physical punishment of children by anyone in 1979 (Durrant & Olsen, 1997). This was situated within a system of numerous advertising strategies, and various parental supports and education. For example the law change was followed with a 16 page brochure which was sent out to all parents of young children, and a message on milk cartons was used to advertise the change for two months afterwards. In New Zealand we are a long way from a legal ban of physical punishment, the first step would have to be a repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act. The equivalent law in Sweden was removed from the penal code in 1957 (Durrant & Olsen, 1997). The repeal of Section 59 is also required by the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003), in order to meet our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by New Zealand (see page 130). Sweden has taken other legal steps which could also be applied in New Zealand; Swedish parents are entitled to a year shared parental leave, huge day care subsidies, and tax free child allowances. They are allowed 20 hours of time off work to attend parenting courses and attend Well Baby clinics and the provided parenting groups (Durrant & Olsen, 1997).

Summary. This section has presented some possible strategies to reduce the use of physical punishment. These points are very important to the aims of this study (see the following section), and as such, will be summarised below:

- Parent education in alternative disciplinary techniques
- Parent education in child development
- Parent education on the fact that some parents raise their children without ever using physical punishment
- Have parents make a conscious commitment not to use physical punishment
- Help parents to use goal-directed discipline
- More involvement of health, education, and child care professionals
- Integrate the non-smacking message into violence and abuse prevention programs
- The development of widespread parenting groups and centres
- The development of physical punishment prevention programs which focus on attitudes, alternatives, and anger management
- A legal ban on physical punishment starting with a repeal of Section 59
- Steps to make learning about and raising children economically easier

Aims of the Study

This chapter has looked at a variety of possible negative effects of physical punishment, the ineffectiveness of it as a disciplinary technique, and its relation to other negative parenting factors. These are all good reasons to aim to reduce its use. The chapter has also covered the scope of the problem in New Zealand, which stresses the need for

research and action. Since physical punishment is passed down through families and a break in the cycle is relatively permanent (as shown in the section on intergenerational transmission), a good place to start in the goal of the reduction of the use of physical punishment in New Zealand is to find out how individual parents can break the cycle in their families. That is, how can parents, who were smacked themselves, make and maintain a decision not to smack their children?

The people best qualified to answer this question are parents who have already done so; people who were smacked as children and who have made and maintained a decision not to smack their own children. Therefore the aims of this study are to find out the following information from these ‘cycle breaking experts’:

- Why did they make the decision not to smack their children?
- How have they maintained the decision not to smack their children?
- What would they recommend for helping or encouraging other parents to make and maintain a decision not to smack their children?

Method

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted because the processes involved in making and maintaining a decision not to smack are “complex, multi-person interactive behaviours”

(Nastasi & Schensul, 2005, p.179). They are also poorly covered in the literature. I decided to use techniques that would allow an in depth examination of a relatively small number of participants. This was in order to get detailed information on how they have made and maintained the decision not to smack. I also wanted to obtain well thought through, clearly specified, and practical recommendations on how to help or encourage other parents to do the same. The following sections describe the research methods; interviews and the focus group.

Stage One: Interviews. The first stage of the research involved individual, unstructured interviews with each participant. Interviews were used because of the lack of previous research on parents who have decided not to smack their children and “to identify areas for more detailed exploration” (Breakwell, 2000, p. 239). The major aims were to have the participants describe how they have made and maintained their decision not to smack, and to have them come up with ideas about how other people could be helped or encouraged to make and maintain a similar decision of their own. These ideas were then examined and refined.

Stage Two: Focus Group. As experts on the topic of making and maintaining a decision against the use of physical punishment, four participants were asked to consider and discuss the ideas as a group and then to define, modify, and specify them, based on their combined experience. The focus group was used to “get closer to participants’

understandings...and perceptions” (Millward, 2000, p.305) of the ideas suggested in the interviews. In fact, the term ‘focus group’ was applied in a very general way. According to the definitions of Krueger (1994), stage two of the research would more accurately be called a combination of a delphic process and a nominal group, since the participants were experts on the topic, and were asked to come to a consensus on the list of recommendations.

Participants

The participants were 20 parents who were smacked as children, but who had made the decision not to smack their own children. They were self selected, in that the terms smacking and physical punishment (which were used somewhat interchangeably) were not defined. Any potential participant who felt that they had been smacked or physically punished, and who had decided not to use this with their own children, according to their own definition, was invited to participate. The terms were not defined, in order to not exclude anyone who felt that the terms applied to their experience.

Demographic Information. Fifteen of the participants were female and five were male. Their ages ranged from 28 to 57 years. The participants identified themselves as New Zealand European/ Pakeha, both Maori and New Zealand European/ Pakeha, Maori, Scottish, or South African in ethnicity. Seven of the participants were affiliated with a religion, and those who were, identified a variety of religions, including several Christian

denominations, Hindu, and Buddhist. Nine of the participants were single parents at the time of the interview, and 11 were dual parents.

The participants had a wide range of occupations. All were parents and 14 also had jobs outside the home, four of which involved working with children. The highest level of education ranged from high school to postgraduate qualification or study. All participants had at least one child, and the number of children they had ranged from one to five. The various demographic details are shown below in Tables 1 to 10.

Table 1

Genders of Participants

Gender	Number of participants
Female	15
Male	5

Table 2

Ages of Participants

Age bracket	Number of participants
18 – 27	0
28 – 37	7
38 – 47	10
48 – 57	3

Table 3

Dual or Single Parent

Dual or single parent	Number of participants
Dual	11
Single	9

Table 4

Highest Level of Education of Participants

Highest level of education	Number of participants
High school	3
Tertiary	11
Postgraduate	6

Table 5

Occupations of Participants Other than Parent

Participant's pseudonym	Occupation
Nardia	Teacher aide/ student
Lisa	Administrator
Emily	Teacher
Mark	Learning developer
Greg	Cartographer/ student
Fred	Plant manager
Sarah	Quality facilitator

James	Road maintenance worker
Harriet	Clinical psychologist
Samantha	Probation officer
Sandy	Surveyor
Deidre	Supervisor at a child care centre
Astrid	Early childhood teacher
Laura	Student

Table 6

Ethnicity of Participants

Ethnicity	Number of participants
New Zealand European/ Pakeha	12
Maori	1
Maori and Pakeha	4
South African	2
Scottish	1

Table 7

Religion of Participants

Religion	Number of participants
None	13
Christian: very important	4
Christian: not very important	1

Buddhist: very important	1
Hindu: very important	1

Table 8

Number of Children of Participants

Number of children	Number of participants
1	6
2	7
3	3
4	3
5	1

Table 9

Ages of Children of Participants

Age of children	Number of participants
0 – 5	9
6 – 10	6
11 – 15	9
16 – 20	8
21 - 25	3

Table 10

Genders of Children of Participants

Gender of children	Number of participants
Female	12
Male	18

Demographic Information by Participant.

Mark

Mark was a learning developer, and a dual parent of five children, though not the biological father of all of them. He had three daughters, aged 18, 12, and 2 ½ months, and two sons aged 16 and 1. He fell into the 38-47 age group and had both Maori and Pakeha/New Zealand European ancestry. Mark's highest level of education was postgraduate and he had no religion.

Laura

Laura was a postgraduate student. She fell into the 38-47 age bracket and was New Zealand European in ethnicity. She was a dual parent at the time of the interview and had four children, three of whom were her biological children. These children were three sons, aged 16, 14, and 12, and a daughter, age 3. Laura said that she did not have a religion.

Nardia

Nardia was a teacher aide, and student at the time of the interview. She had some tertiary education. She was in the 37-48 age bracket. She identified her ethnicity as New Zealand European and her religion as Pentecostal, and quite important to her. Nardia had two daughters, aged 21 and 19, and a 17 year old son. She was a dual parent.

Rachel

Rachel gave home schooling as her occupation. She was in the age bracket 48-57, and was New Zealand European. Her highest level of education was at tertiary level. She had three adult children; one daughter aged 23, and two sons aged 19 and 21. She was a single parent and did not have a religion.

Sarah

Sarah was a quality facilitator by occupation. She fell into the 38-47 age bracket and her highest level of education was tertiary. She was a dual parent with a 13 year old son and an 11 year old daughter. She was New Zealand European and did not have a religion.

Harriet

Harriet was a clinical psychologist. She fell into the 38-47 age group and her highest educational level was postgraduate. Her ethnicity was New Zealand European. Harriet was a single parent and had a six year old son. She had no religion.

Emily

Emily was a teacher with a postgraduate qualification. She fell into the 38-47 age group and identified her ethnicity simply as a New Zealander. She did not wish to be called New Zealand European, though that would be technically correct. Emily was a single parent (in that she and her sons' father were no longer together) with two sons aged 12 and 8. She did not have a religion.

James

James was a road maintenance worker with four children. He was a single parent of three daughters, aged 19, 16, and 15, and a 13 year old son. His age was between 38 and 47, and his ethnicity was Maori. His highest level of education was 5th form (now called year 11) and he had no religion.

Francine

Francine was the mother of two sons aged eight and five. She fell into the 28-37 age bracket and like Emily, identified herself as a New Zealander, rather than as New Zealand European. She was a single parent whose highest level of education was school certificate. She did not have a religion.

Anna

Anna had three sons, aged 25, 18, and 17. She was South African, having moved to New Zealand. Her age was between 48 and 57, and her highest level of education was tertiary.

Anna was a dual parent, and said that while she was Anglican, her religion was not very important to her.

Gayle

Gayle was a natural therapist. She fell into the 28-37 age group and her highest education level was tertiary. She had Maori and New Zealand European ancestry. Gayle was a dual parent of a three and a half year old son and identified her religion as Hindu. She said that her religion was very important to her.

Astrid

Astrid was a teacher. She was between the ages of 28 and 37 and was New Zealand European in ethnicity. She was a single parent to her three year old daughter at the time of the interview as her current partner had not yet moved into her house. She had effectively been a single parent for all of her daughter's life as her ex-partner drove trucks so was usually absent. Her highest level of education was tertiary and she had no religion.

Cathy

Cathy was a single parent with an eight year old son. She stated that her occupation was home executive. She fell into the 38-47 age bracket and her highest educational level was tertiary. She had both Maori and Pakeha/New Zealand European ancestry and identified her religion as Ratana/Christian. She said that her religion was very important to her.

Fred

Fred was the father of two daughters and a plant manager. His daughters were 15 and 12 and he had postgraduate level education. His age was between 48 and 57, and he was South African in ethnicity, though he also called himself a New Zealander. Fred's religion was Presbyterian, which he said was very important to him. He was a dual parent.

Lisa

Lisa was an administrator with four children. She had three daughters aged 18, 6, and 3, and a 13 year old son. She fell into the 38-47 age bracket and had both Maori and Pakeha/New Zealand European ancestry. Lisa was a dual parent, her highest educational level was school certificate, and she had no religion.

Samantha

Samantha was a probation officer. She fell into the 28-37 age bracket and was New Zealand European in ethnicity. Her highest level of education was tertiary. She identified her religion as Buddhist and it was very important to her. She was a dual parent with her husband, though he was not the biological father of her five year old son.

Sandy

Sandy was a surveyor, who originally came from Scotland. He fell into the 38-47 age group and his highest level of education was tertiary. Sandy and his wife were dual

parents to their 18 year old son and fifteen year old daughter, though they were divorced. Sandy did not have a religion.

Bridget

Bridget was a teacher and the mother of two children; a three year old daughter and a two year old son. She fell into the 28-37 age bracket and her ethnicity was New Zealand European. Her highest level of education was tertiary. Bridget said that her religion was Christian, and that it was very important to her. She was a dual parent.

Greg

Greg was a cartographer and a student. He was a single parent with one 11 year old son. He fell into the 28-37 age group, and identified himself as a New Zealander, rather than New Zealand European. His highest level of education was postgraduate and he did not have a religion.

Deidre

Deidre was a supervisor at a childcare centre. She was between 28 and 37 years old and like some of the other participants, said that her ethnicity was New Zealander, rather than New Zealand European. Her highest educational level was tertiary. Deidre and her husband were dual parents to a daughter aged nine, and a son, aged five.

Interview and Focus Group Organisation. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Waikato, Psychology Department Research and Ethics Committee. All participants volunteered to be involved in the study after reading either a notice at one of many doctors' waiting rooms in Hamilton, or an article on the research in the Hamilton Press, a small, free, local Hamilton newspaper (see appendix).

Participants made initial contact by phone, through text messaging, or through email and were then sent a copy of the interview information sheet and consent form (either by post or email) (see appendix) in order to decide whether or not they would like to participate. They were contacted a few days after the information was sent and asked whether they would like to continue, and, if so, an interview time and location was arranged. Most of the interviews took place at either the University of Waikato, or the home of the participant. One interview was conducted at my home, and one at the participant's place of work.

Any participants who were first year psychology students at the University of Waikato were offered 1% course credit towards either of the two first year papers for participation in stage one, the interview, and a further 1% for participation in stage two, the focus group. Only one participant was a first year student and was able to claim the course credit.

The participants were given an information sheet about the focus group during the interview (see appendix). After completion of the interview stage of the research, the

participants were sent a letter or email asking them to suggest possible days of the week and times (morning or afternoon) which would suit them for the focus group if they wished to participate (see appendix). In this letter or email they were told that since there would only be one focus group, the day and time would be that which suited the greatest number of participants. Some of them replied to the email with their preferred day and time, and some were contacted by phone a few days after the letters and emails were sent.

The day and time (morning or afternoon) which was suggested by the most participants was selected for the focus group; this turned out to be a Sunday at 2pm which was preferred by eight participants. All participants who expressed interest in the focus group were contacted with the finalised date and time, and reassured that, if it was not one of their selections, this was due to numbers only and they were still welcome to attend if possible. Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they would attend the focus group and ten participants said that they would. On the day on the focus group two participants pulled out via email, and four more did not turn up to the meeting place at 2pm. I waited for them for 20 minutes then assumed they were not coming and started the focus group. While the four who did arrive were waiting they were offered tea, coffee or fruit juice.

Apparatus

Stage One: Interviews. Each potential participant who expressed interest in the study was sent a copy of the interview information sheet (see appendix D). This briefly covered the background of the study; the aim; what participation would involve; the right of withdrawal; confidentiality; the 1% course credit available to first year psychology students; their right to edit and approve the information they contributed; and a warning about the sensitive nature of the topic. The interview information sheet was the main source of information the participants used to decide whether they would like to participate in the interview stage of the research.

The interviews were recorded using an Iriver MP3 Player, Model number iFP-799. The demographic information was recorded by hand on the demographic question sheet and the interview questions were loosely asked from the interview question list during the interview. The questions were crossed off the list as they were answered to make sure that none were missed, but some were not applicable to particular participants.

Stage Two: Focus Group. Each participant was given a copy of the focus group information sheet at the conclusion of their interview. This sheet covered the aim of the focus group; details about what it would involve; confidentiality; the right of withdrawal; and the 1% course credit available to first year psychology students. The purpose of the

information sheet was to give potential focus group participants enough information to decide whether they would like to participate.

The ideas already suggested in the interviews were numbered and printed in their sub-categories, and a copy of these was given to each participant for their use during the focus group. The finalised ideas list was written on a white board during the focus group, then recorded using pen and paper afterwards.

Procedure

Stage One: Interviews. The interviews were conducted individually with each participant. The first step in each was the restatement of confidentiality. The participants were assured that their name and identifying details would not be included in the thesis, and supplied a pseudonym. The participant was then assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time, either during or after the interview. They were then asked to sign the consent forms, one of which was returned to them. The demographic details were filled in on the demographic question sheet.

Participants were then asked to look over the question list and cross out any question which they did not wish to be asked during the interview. They were also told that they could pass on any question, after it was asked. They were offered a copy of a summarised

and shortened version of the completed thesis and their postal address was recorded if they had not already supplied it.

The MP3 player was then set to record and the questions from the interview question sheet were loosely followed, both in wording and order. Participants were asked to clarify or elaborate on their responses when I felt it was necessary.

After the recording, participants were told that a summary of their interview would be sent to them, either by email or post. They were asked to read their interview summary and edit it if necessary. An information sheet on the focus group was handed out at this stage. Participants were asked whether they could be contacted about the possibility of them being involved in the focus group at a later date. The last task of the interview was to remind participants that they could contact me for more information about the research at any time, and to make sure that they had my contact details with which to do so.

Participants were contacted about any changes they would like to make to their interview summary a few days after it was sent, unless they had already responded by email. Three participants requested changes or additions to their interview summary and these were included exactly as they wanted them.

Stage Two: Focus Group. The focus group was held in a conference room at the University of Waikato. As many of the participants had children to look after they were

invited to bring them along if necessary, with something to keep them occupied during the focus group. Two of the participants brought their child with them.

At the beginning of the focus group participants were assured of confidentiality and asked to keep details about the other participants to themselves. Each participant was given a name tag with the pseudonym that they used for their interview in order for the discussion to run smoothly.

They were assured of the right of withdrawal but told that this was slightly different than in the interview in that, while they were free to leave at any time, the information gathered from the focus group was of a collaborative nature so their contribution would not be able to be separated out and excluded at a later date.

Because much of the content of the focus group involved discussion of ideas already suggested in the interviews, I told the participants that I was not going to reveal who had originally suggested each idea. This was in an effort to avoid any offence at criticisms of particular ideas, and to facilitate open discussion.

The goal was stated at the start so all the participants were clear about this. This was to come up with and discuss a list of recommendations for reducing the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. The areas discussed were their recommendations for helping or encouraging parents to make the decision not to smack (decision), and their recommendations for helping or encouraging parents to maintain a decision not to smack

(maintenance). Both of these areas were discussed at both the macro level (what could be done for communities) and the micro level (what could be done by individual parents). The focus group took approximately one hour to complete, which was the time it took to discuss all of the ideas in each area and at each level. It was not recorded because the final list of recommendations was finalised during the focus group, rather than afterwards.

The participants were provided with a document covering the ideas which had already been suggested in the interviews to assist them in their discussion (see appendix). It was supplemented with a number of ideas which the participants had not thought of during the interviews. It was divided into the two areas (decision and maintenance) and the two levels of each area (micro and macro). It also included facts relevant to some of the ideas, to give the participants information which could help them to assess and specify that idea. For example, for the idea 'addressing root causes such as stress through social welfare', the benefits available to parents in the 'Working for Families' scheme, which is already in place in New Zealand, were briefly covered.

Discussion of each area and level (for example: decision area, micro level) was started with the recommendations from the interview ideas document. I directed the participants to a particular idea on their interview ideas document and asked them for their thoughts on it. Each idea was considered by the group, with the goal of coming to a consensus about whether to include it, and then to clearly define it. After all of the interview ideas had been covered from an area and level, participants were asked to suggest any new

ideas, and these were similarly discussed and modified to the satisfaction of at least the majority of the group. The 30 successful items were added to the focus group list of ideas. This list was finalised before the completion of the focus group.

At the conclusion of the focus group participants were reminded again that they could contact me for more information about the research at any time, and it was pointed out that the contact details required for this were on the interview ideas document that they have been given at the start of the focus group.

Analysis

The analysis of the data from the study, overall, consisted of an inductive thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) describe thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”, and inductive thematic analysis as a process which involves finding the themes from the data itself, rather than attempting to put it into a frame which is set before the data collection.

Aronson (1994) identified a number of steps for conducting a thematic analysis. These were:

1. Collect data and transcribe or summarise
2. Identify themes and sub-themes
3. Get feedback from participants
4. Use the themes and the literature to build a valid argument

In this study, step one was achieved through the individual interviews with participants, some the data from which was categorised into ideas (themes) (step two). These ideas were then put back to some of the participants in the focus group (step three), and a more refined list of ideas was drawn from that. The final ideas were linked to the literature in the discussion section (step four). The following sections describe the process of analysis in greater detail.

Stage One: Interviews. The interviews were summarised from their recordings. The answer that the participant gave to each question was typed under the question in a summarised form, including any quotes that were particularly relevant or enlightening. Their completed interview summary was sent back to each participant, either by email or post, and they were contacted a few days later and asked whether they were happy with their interview summary, and, if not, what changes they would like to make. Some of the participants who were sent their interview summary as an email attachment replied without being called, others had to be called twice as they had not looked at their interview summary after the first few days. The changes and additions suggested by three of the participants were made exactly as they suggested. One participant wanted to change her pseudonym, and two others had additional information to add to the content of their interview summary.

The information from the approved interview summaries was used to create the overall interviews summary. For each question, the responses from all of the participants were

put into question categories. These categories were created by looking at a response and deciding on the main concept involved, then looking for more responses which might fit into the same category. The next response that did not fit that category was used to make a new category until all of the responses were accounted for. It was possible for a response to fit into multiple categories as many of the participants brought up more than one idea in answering any one question. The goal of this process was to find the most parsimonious categories without losing any of the concepts raised by the participants.

The result of this procedure was a table under each question with a list of the participants whose responses fell into each question category for the sections ‘History of Physical Punishment’, ‘Making the Decision not to Smack’, ‘Maintaining the Decision not to Smack’, and ‘Alternative Discipline Techniques’. Some questions had categories which required further division into macro and micro levels, and one question, ‘which alternative disciplinary techniques have you found effective?’, was obviously completely off target with the participants because rather than answering this question directly, most talked about the way in which they have implemented the techniques, and how it is the implementation rather than the technique itself which determines the effectiveness of it. From the tables of categories the number of participants who fell into each category was noted in the findings.

Since the pseudonyms of the participants were listed in the categories under each question it became clear that some questions seemed to be linked, in that the participants could be divided into the same groups in one category as in another category in a

different question. For example, every participant who cited pressure from others as making maintaining their decision not to smack difficult has had issues with their parents in regard to their decision. Such links between questions were noted in the findings section following the summary (and sometimes the table) of the categories for the respective questions.

The answers from the last question ‘Do you have anything else you’d like to add?’, were added directly to the overall interviews summary from each relevant interview summary. This was to ensure that their responses to this question were kept exactly as the participants wanted, since this was their opportunity to summarise, cover something I had missed, or make a point about what they felt was at the heart of the issue.

Stage Two: Focus Group. The data generated from the focus group was in the form of a list of ideas that the participants had specified and approved in terms of what they believed would help or encourage other parents to make and maintain a decision not to smack. The original list of ideas that had been created from the ideas suggested in the interviews was divided into the areas: making and maintaining the decision not to smack, at the two levels: macro (societal level) and micro (individual level). This was the format under which the ideas were discussed during the focus group and so was the format in which the focus group ideas were expressed before analysis.

It became clear during the assessment of the ideas that they had been devised to meet five goals which the participants believed would be important for reducing the use of smacking. These goals were parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, increasing support, and having specific recommendations for parents for making and maintaining the decision not to smack. The analysis of the focus group data involved taking each idea and categorising it according to the above goals. These goals are important in themselves in that any action which might help achieve them (even apart from those suggested in this study) would be worth implementing for the reduction of the use of smacking, according to the participants.

Findings

This chapter will describe the findings of the data from the interviews and the focus group. The interview findings were divided into the same sections as the interview questions. These were: history of physical punishment, making the decision not to smack, maintaining the decision not to smack, alternative disciplinary techniques, and what the participants would like to add. The recommendations made in the focus group are divided into the goals of: parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, support, and specific strategies for parents for making and maintaining the decision not to smack.

Stage One: Interviews

History of Physical Punishment. The participants were first asked to describe their own experiences of being smacked as a child. They were asked questions to determine the severity of the smacking they had received, as well as how they felt about it as it was considered that this could be related to their decision not to smack their own children (Hemenway, Solnick, & Carter, 1994; Murphy-Cowan & Stringer, 1999; Bower & Knutson, 1996; Rausch & Knutson, 1991). Although the participants were asked to describe their experience of smacking, some felt that they were physically punished in ways which could not be described as smacking. The term ‘physical punishment’ was used to describe their experiences in this section because it encompasses smacking as well as the other types of physical discipline experienced by the participants.

All of the participants were physically punished by their parents, and more than half by both parents. Six were physically punished by their mother only, and three by their father only. The frequency (shown in Table 11) of the physical punishment they received varied from approximately monthly, to more than daily. Sixteen participants were physically punished at least once a week.

Table 11

Frequency of Physical Punishment

Frequency	Number of Participants	Percentage
Approximately monthly	1	5
Approximately weekly	7	35
More than weekly	6	30
Approximately daily	2	10
More than daily	1	5
Not able to answer	3	15

While 14 of the participants' parents had physically punished them using their hand, only 8 had never been punished with an instrument. Some of the participants were hit with a belt or strap, and some with a wooden spoon or stick. Five were 'beaten up'; Nardia and Harriet were both punched with a fist, Cathy described having 'punch ups' with her mother, Deidre was once "picked up and thrown into a wall", and Anna's mother once hit her head against a concrete wall. A few of the participants were physically punished with more than one of the techniques listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Physical Punishment Technique

Instrument	Number of Participants	Percentage
Hand only	8	40
Belt/strap	5	25

Wooden spoon/stick	7	35
Beaten up	5	25

Half of the participants said they had been injured during the course of physical punishment. The most common injury type was bruises and welts but two reported broken or cracked bones, and two reported having hair pulled out. Eleven participants said that their parents were usually angry when they carried out the physical punishment. Six reported that their parents were sometimes calm and sometimes angry, and only three said that their parents were usually calm while physically disciplining them. Eleven participants said that their parents would yell as well as physically punish.

Positive reinforcement was generally not used by the parents of the participants of this study. Only four reported its use as a disciplinary technique when they were children.

The types of behaviour the participants recall being physically punished for were varied. The largest category was disobedience/defiance, which nine participants identified as a behaviour that they were physically punished for. The categories: ‘Not meeting behavioural standards’, and ‘Didn’t know what for’, were the second largest, with five participants each. The types of behaviour the participants were physically punished for are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Type of Behaviour Participants were Physically Punished For

Type of Behaviour	Number of Participants	Percentage
Disobedience/defiance	9	45
Not meeting behavioural standards	5	25
Did not know what for	5	25
Fighting with siblings	3	15
Just due to being the eldest	2	10
Disrespect	2	10
Stealing	2	10
Tantrums/Crying	2	10
Lying	1	5

The way the participants felt about their physical punishment at the time they received it is shown in Table 14. Two of the participants said that they accepted it: “I just accepted that as being part of my parents’ parenting” (Mark). The rest all remembered negative feelings towards their experiences. Sandy said “at one point I even hated them for it”. He remembers looking at his father and thinking “How could anyone like you? You’re so angry all the time”. Anna had a similar experience; “I hated my mother”. Deidre’s parents separated and her father was the one who physically punished her: “I remember absolutely hating going to Dad’s place”. Samantha never blamed herself; “I always knew it was her”, and Rachel said “I knew what they were doing to me was wrong”. Harriet

said that it was “horrendous...we were all very scared children”. Greg said that “certainly I felt very vulnerable afterwards and wouldn’t want to be around anybody”.

Table 14

How Participants felt about the Physical Punishment at the Time

How they felt	Words they Used	Number of Participants	Percentage
Angry	Hated it	11	55
	Hated the parent		
	Unfair		
	Wrong		
	Frustrated		
Upset	Not good	8	40
	Devastated		
	Confused		
	Scared		
	Alone		
	Sad		
Disempowered	Vulnerable	4	20
	Invaded		
	Insulted		
	Hurt		
	Frustrated		
Accepted it		2	10

When asked how they felt about their experiences of physical punishment at the time of the interview, eight of the participants were still not at peace about it. Harriet said that she was “still quite angry about it, really indignant”, and Cathy “still feel(s) that the repercussions of it...have shaped who I am today”. The rest could understand why it happened but still felt that it should not have been used. Samantha said “I can sort of see the bigger picture now...as an adult...I’m not really angry or bitter about it, just sad really”. Gayle said that “I don’t really expect that my parents should have known better...back in those days”.

Eleven of the participants felt that the physical punishment they received from their parents sometimes reached an extent at which they would label it abuse. Three more said that while they would not have considered it abuse in the context of the time, they might have at the time of the interview. Ninety percent of the participants who reported being injured during the course of physical punishment, and 88 percent of the participants who were still not at peace about their experiences of physical punishment, felt that they had been physically abused.

Ten participants felt that the physical punishment they received was effective. However, four of those felt that this was due to fear; the behaviour “only stopped because it (the physical punishment) made me angry and made me scared” (Gayle). Lisa described the effectiveness “in the sense that it was kind of like walking on glass”. Another four of the ten said that it was effective in changing their behaviour “at that time but not in the long term” (Samantha). Three said that it was ineffective as it built resentment and fear, and

three more stated that it was counterproductive as it increased lying and secrecy. Laura said that the physical punishment she received was effective “very temporarily, and I think more in terms of ‘Ok, I won’t do that in front of them again’”.

The general consensus, on whether the physical punishment they received was deserved, was that it was not. Greg’s response to this question was “I don’t think it’s ever deserved”, and Harriet’s was “absolutely not”. Only four participants felt that it might have been deserved sometimes. Eight agreed that they probably deserved some kind of punishment for their bad behaviour, but not physical punishment. Nardia said that her parents “just went overboard with their discipline”.

Most of the participants were not only physically punished; all but three reported receiving other types of discipline as well (whether positive or negative). The most common was withdrawal of privileges, which was used with six of the participants. Positive reinforcement and being sent to their room were both experienced by four participants for each, and grounding and humiliation by three. Other techniques mentioned were being fined pocket money, being sent to their room without food, receiving the ‘silent treatment’, and being made to feel guilty.

When asked why they thought they were smacked, as opposed to other techniques, the most common responses were that their parents had been smacked themselves as children, their parents “didn’t know any better” (Nardia), and that it was part of the general culture of parenting at the time; “the culturally appropriate medium” (Greg). Four

participants said that their parents could not cope and two said that it was part of their parents' general parenting style. Another two participants believed that their parents did not think about it, and Mark said that it was used as a last resort.

The ages up until which the participants were physically punished (shown in Table 15) were allocated into age groups of late childhood (8-10), early teens (11-14), and later teens (15-17). Most of the participants were physically punished during their adolescence. Three participants reported being physically punished until they left home and two until they were physically able to fight back.

Table 15

Oldest Ages at which Participants were Physically Punished

Age	Number of participants	Percentage
8 – 10	4	20
11 – 14	9	45
15 - 17	7	35

Only three of the participants felt that the physical punishment they received had no impact on their relationship with their parents. Eleven stated that it had an effect on their relationship when they were children, and continued to do so at the time of the interview. These effects included having no respect for them as parents or grandparents, still trying to please them and appear perfect, some residual fear, and having reduced, or even no contact with them. All eight participants who reported still not being at peace with their

experiences of physical punishment, as a child, felt that it had had a lasting effect on their relationship with their parents.

Four participants reported that the physical punishment they received was only part of the problem that they have with their parents. Two reported being angrier at their by-standing parent, who failed to stop it, than at the parent who actually physically punished them. Rachel, Gayle and Emily said that it had an effect on their relationship at the time because it resulted in fear and hate towards, and avoidance of, their parents. Gayle was scared of upsetting or making her parents angry, and was especially frightened of her father. Rachel said that “I was really scared of Mum” and that feeling had never really gone away completely. Another four stated that while it had an effect at the time, their relationship with their parents was not affected by it at the time of the interview. Greg said that, while it took many years, he was eventually able to rebuild a relationship with his father.

Making the Decision not to Smack. In this section of the interview, participants were asked about their decision not to smack their own children. These questions were aimed at finding out how and why they made the decision, what challenges they were presented with, and what they would suggest to encourage other parents to make the same decision.

There were three main reasons that the participants gave for making a decision not to smack their own children. These were: the memory of their own childhood experiences; their own research into child discipline, including talking about it, reading about it, and studying it; and that they did not believe in it as a technique: “I don’t believe it’s a valid way of changing behaviour at all” (Cathy). The reasons are listed in Table 16.

Table 16

Reasons for Deciding not to Smack Own Children

Reason	Number of participants	Percentage
Own childhood experiences	8	40
Did not believe in it as a technique	7	35
Talked and read about it, studied it	7	35
Did not want to model violence	4	20
Worried about escalation	4	20
Just seemed natural not to use it	3	15
Wanted kids to have what they did not have	2	15
Took a parenting course	1	5

Four participants were concerned about modelling violence:

“If you want your child to hit then you hit them, and that’s what you’re teaching them, and that’s all you’re teaching them” (Astrid)

“If you believe in modelling...showing that violence is a solution to something is wrong” (Mark)

Escalation of smacking was also a concern for four of the participants:

“I think that when you smack your kids it’s easy to go from smacking them when they’re doing something wrong...to...smacking them just because you’re angry with them...and I don’t trust myself that if I’m angry, that I’m just going to give them a smack...It’s really easy to go over the top so I think it’s better not to do it at all”. (Francine)

“I didn’t want to start something that I thought could get out of control” (Astrid)

Fred, Bridget and Samantha never really thought about using or not using smacking as a disciplinary technique. Bridget said that “on a practical level I don’t think I could bring myself to do it”. The rest of the participants deliberately and consciously made the decision not to smack their children. They made this decision at many different times and these are shown on Table 17. Lisa and Samantha decided on this when they were children and being physically punished by their own parents.

Table 17

When the Participants made the Decision not to Smack

When they made the decision	Number of participants	Percentage
Just before they had children	5	25
Long before they had children	4	20
After a specific event	4	20
When their child was a toddler	3	15
It was not a decision	2	10
When they were being physically punished	2	10

Four participants talked about a specific event which convinced them that they should stop using smacking. For Nardia, it was “when I saw my son thump another kid”. After watching the physical punishment of her son (by his father) escalate for some time, Anna went and stood between them during one incident and said “you’re going to hit me”. They discussed it afterwards and decided that it had to stop altogether. Deidre’s daughter was nine months old and would not stop crying when she picked her up and shook her. She realised she had to make a change. James made the decision not to smack when he took a parenting course while in prison.

When making the decision not to smack their children, six of the participants spoke about it only with their child’s (or children’s) other parent, and seven discussed it with no one at all. Only five participants spoke to someone else. These other people included peers, a counsellor, other people on a parenting course, and other family members. Gayle told her parents about her decision and they laughed at her.

There were factors that either made the decision easy or hard for the participants, though most found the decision very easy to make. The two most common things which made it easy were a consensus on the issue between them and their child’s (or children’s) other parent, and “remembering what it was like to be the recipient of a smack” (Sarah). Astrid also remembered “how I felt being smacked, and I didn’t want to do that to my children”. For Francine, it was the memory of the “severity of the hits” she received that made it easy to make the decision not to smack.

Nardia, Sarah and Sandy started off by smacking their children, on occasion, and the reaction they got was a factor in their decision not to smack. Sarah found it ineffective and Nardia felt that it was negatively affecting her son’s behaviour. Sandy remembers seeing “total bewilderment” on his son’s face after smacking him and thinking “this isn’t right”. Emily’s and Samantha’s decisions were made easier by their strong feelings on the issue. Samantha said “I just sort of had it in my heart that...it wasn’t right”. Other factors which made the decision easy are listed in Table 18.

Table 18

Factors which made it Easy for Participants to Decide not to Smack

Factor	Number of participants	Percentage
Memory of being physically punished	6	30
Parental consensus	5	25
Their child’s response to being smacked	3	15
Knowledge of alternative disciplinary techniques	3	15
Concern about escalation of smacking	2	10
Their own strong feelings on the issue	2	10
The support of peers	2	10
The effects of being smacked on them	1	5

Only seven of the participants were able to identify any factors which made the decision not to smack difficult to make; the rest said that it was an easy decision. Cathy, Rachel,

James and Gayle noted the disagreement of family members. The childrearing culture in New Zealand, the lack of information on alternative discipline techniques, and the lack of support for young mothers were each identified by one participant as a factor which made their decision difficult.

Most of the participants did not speak to any professionals about their decision not to smack. The three who did received a mixed response. James was on a parenting course in prison when he decided not to smack. The coordinators of the course stressed talking to his children and looking at things from their perspective; non-smacking was a big part of the course. Nardia spoke to her counsellor on the subject and they discussed the pros and cons of deciding not to smack. Deidre used Plunketline a lot with her children. They suggested a lot of good disciplinary strategies that she was able to use other than smacking; she was also told that the way to deal with a biting toddler was to bite back, which she did.

Since all of the participants were smacked themselves, their parents had obviously endorsed smacking. Nine of the participants had issues with them as grandparents in relation to their decision not to smack. Five participants had problems with their in-laws or other family members. At the time of the interview, five of the participants' parents continued to insist that the children should be smacked, and, as a consequence, James and Nardia did not allow their parents to look after their children. Another five participants had made it clear that their children were not to be smacked and, at the time of the interview, had a situation in which their parents knew that they were not allowed to do it.

For some, this clarification followed an incident in which their children were smacked. Harriet's son came back from his grandmother's once and told her that he had been smacked; Harriet told her that "I don't hit my child, so you don't hit my child either". For two participants the issue had not come up because they had little or no contact with their parents.

Eight of the participants did not have any problems with their parents in regard to their decision not to smack their children. Six said that their parents were "completely different" (Lisa) with their grandchildren than they were with them. Fred recalled a bizarre incident with his mother in which she expressed shock at his joking suggestion to "give... (the girls) a hiding and send them off to bed". It was as if she did not remember what had happened to Fred when he was a child.

Most of the participants did not identify with any religion, and most of those who did said that their religion had not had any impact on their decision not to smack their children. Five participants gave their religion as a Christian denomination, and all but one of these said that it was important to them. Despite this, they all said that their religion had not had an impact on their decision not to smack. Cathy mentioned that it had not been part of her decision because "some parts of Christianity affirm smacking", but no one else who identified with any of the Christian denominations related their decision in any way to their religion.

Two women said that their religion did have some impact on their decision. Gayle identified herself as Hindu and said that this had an impact, not so much on her decision,

but on her personality and beliefs which were part of her decision. She said that she believed in non-violence and finding the peaceful solution to problems. She said she tried not to hurt anyone, and felt that this helped her maintain her decision. Samantha said that she was Buddhist, and that her religion has impacted on her decision in that it involved compassion, tolerance, getting on with others and using words rather than violence to deal with conflict.

Participants were asked if there was anything that would have made making the decision easier that was not available to them when they made it. Seven said that there was not anything they could think of because it was an easy decision to make. Five participants suggested more easily accessible information on alternatives and on the benefits of non-smacking. Samantha and Anna said that studies or statistics on the success of raising children without using smacking would have been helpful to them, and Sandy mentioned that he would have liked to have had his decision affirmed by health authorities.

The concept of non-smacking being more accepted and publicly discussed was also suggested by some of the participants. The general culture of childrearing in New Zealand was mentioned by Emily as something which made the decision not to smack and a change in this culture, involving perhaps a media campaign and certainly more discussion of the issue, was suggested as something that might have helped. Lisa said that “really people don’t talk about physically...reprimanding children”. Of course, since the interviews were conducted, there has been a lot of media coverage of the issue of smacking, as it relates to the proposed repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act (see page

130). Emily and Gayle said that an atmosphere of acceptance of their decision would have helped, and while Rachel said that it was a relatively easy decision to make, she felt she had been “pushing against the stream” with her childrearing choices. One participant suggested a support group for young mothers, and, another, exposure to good models.

Participants were asked to make recommendations to help or encourage other parents to make the decision not to smack. Their answers were divided into two levels: micro level: what parents could do themselves; and macro level: what could be done on a societal level to encourage parents to make the decision. These recommendations are presented in Tables 19 and 20.

Table 19

Recommendations to Help or Encourage other Parents to make the Decision not to Smack: Micro Level

Recommendations	Number of participants	Percentage
Talk to people who do not, or were not smacked	5	25
Learning about the possible effects of smacking	3	15
Taking a parenting course	2	10
Watching parenting television shows	2	10

Table 20

Recommendations to Help or Encourage other Parents to make the Decision not to Smack: Macro Level

Recommendations	Number of participants	Percentage
Inform that alternatives require persistence	5	25
Parenting discussed in ante-natal classes	3	15
Parenting taught in schools	3	15
Info. pack for all new parents, on 1-5 year olds	2	10
More political involvement	2	10
Campaign: smacking and discipline are different	2	10
Suggest that parents think about their childhoods	2	10
Plunket nurses could discuss discipline in homes	2	10
Sessions about discipline at childcare centres	1	5
Address the causes of smacking such as stress	1	5

Maintaining the Decision not to Smack. The following section deals with the participants' responses to questions about how they have maintained their decision not to smack. After the decision has been made, the actual daily task of raising children without smacking must involve the use of other techniques and restraint from using smacking in particularly difficult or stressful situations. Approaching discipline in a way which excludes the methods used by one's parents is unusual. Most people who were smacked unthinkingly use smacking (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger &, Wu, 1991) in the same ways

that their parents did (Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell, & Babonis, 1994; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Rodriguez & Sutherland, 1999). This section looks at how the participants have undertaken the task of not using a parenting technique that was modelled to them by their parents.

Most of the participants found maintaining their decision not to smack easy most of the time. Seven said that it was difficult on occasion, and two said it was difficult. Harriet said that the difficulty for her was that she had inherited her parents' quick temper. Bridget, Anna and Deidre said that, while it was easy not to smack, it was hard to find alternatives which worked with particular children, or in particular circumstances. For example, Bridget found that her two year old son required a punishment which was very close in time to the unwanted behaviour, and appropriate to his reasoning ability. A punishment which fitted these criteria was hard to find. Deidre had trouble applying her usual technique of putting distance between her and her children during car rides. Rachel mentioned that maintaining her decision not to smack became easier with time, both as her children grew up, and as she learnt effective alternative disciplinary techniques.

The most common factor cited by participants as making maintaining their decision not to smack easy was the good behaviour of their children as a result of their use of techniques other than smacking. Negative opinions or memories that they had about smacking were also helpful in maintaining their decision. These included its ineffectiveness, their experiences of being a recipient and of using it, their fear of escalation, and a general strong belief against it: "I just don't think that adults should hit

children” (Bridget). The factors that made it easy to maintain the decision not to smack are detailed in Table 21.

Table 21

Factors which Made Maintaining the Participants’ Decision not to Smack Easy

Factor	Number of Participants	Percentage
Children’s good behaviour	9	45
Strong belief against smacking	6	30
Knowing smacking is ineffective	4	20
Support (of partner or Plunket)	4	20
Knowing the effects of smacking	3	15
How the participant felt after smacking	3	15
Does not occur to them to smack	3	15
Fear of escalation	2	10
Memories of being smacked	2	10
Relationship with children	2	10

When asked about the factors that made maintaining their decision not to smack difficult, eight of the participants were quick to point out that there were none; they said that maintaining their decision not to smack had been easy. Five mentioned being tired, stressed or angry, which, as Mark pointed out, is more to do with the participant themselves than with their children. Five participants did mention a factor relating to their

children's behaviour as making it difficult not to smack, either when they were being particularly difficult, or when the usual techniques were not working, or both.

Four of the participants talked about being very irritable and having a quick temper that they felt was a legacy of their own upbringing: "They (her parents) modelled to me beautifully lack of patience and extreme irritability" (Harriet). Samantha had taken an anger management course to help her deal with the fact that she became very angry so quickly. Five participants also noted that they had felt under pressure from others to smack, which had made maintaining their decision more difficult. All of these five participants also mentioned that they have had issues with their parents or other family members in regard to their decision not to smack, and some even specifically mentioned their relatives as the source of the pressure from others to smack. Three participants cited lack of support as a factor which had made maintaining their decision difficult.

Thirteen of the participants have had to deal with situations in which other people have suggested that they smack. As mentioned above, many of these other people were family members. Seven participants have had to confront their relatives about the issue, in many cases to make it clear that they were not allowed to smack the participant's children. Emily effectively threatened her ex-husband with court action after a second incident in which his girlfriend smacked one of her sons. They have said things like: "In my home, and in my family that's just not something that we do" (Cathy); "That's fine, but not for my son" (Harriet); and "You discipline your children the way you want to; I'll discipline mine" (James). Anna recalled an incident in which her mother hit her son, and regrets not

saying anything. She was still very fearful of her mother at that time and believed she would react differently if it happened again.

While seven of the participants had been happy to state that their children were not to be smacked and leave it at that, four had tried to convince other people not to smack their own children. Sarah had discussed it with her husband with reference to their baby (which she was pregnant with at the time of the interview) as this was her first child with him. He agreed to try it her way and not use smacking. Deidre worked at a childcare centre and has ended up in discussions with parents who use smacking. She has said “That’s your decision, but have you thought about this...?” Lisa had a discussion with a friend, who she knew used smacking, about what Lisa has used instead; she did not think it made much difference.

Francine did not necessarily set out to change her friends’ minds. She just answered their question about why she did not smack: “I usually say to them that I don’t smack my kids because I can’t say that I could stop”. A couple of her friends have actually stopped using smacking as a result.

Samantha has often tried to convince people not to smack their children. She has asked them why they think its ok to smack and has told them why she thinks it is not. For example, the fact that no one is allowed to hit anyone else except their children, that parents are supposed to raise their children to be healthy, functioning adults, that they have no right to hit their kids, and that “to hit him (her son) I’m teaching him to hit...I’m

not teaching him to reason, to think about it, to look at alternatives”. The usual response she has received is the classic ‘I was hit and I’m ok’. Her reply has been that she was hit and she was not ok.

Participants were asked who supported them when their child or children were being particularly difficult. Seven participants mentioned only their partner, who for many was often not available. Four single parent participants said themselves. So a total of 11 participants did not go outside of their immediate family for support in their childrearing. Three participants said that they received support from their friends, and one participant each mentioned their child’s school, Plunketline, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, parents and parents in law, other parents at their children’s playgroup, and the children themselves.

Maintaining their decision not to smack was described as being easy by eight of the participants, who said that there was nothing that would have made it easier which has not been available to them. Four participants suggested easier access to information about the problems with smacking, and the benefits, as well as specific details about alternative disciplinary techniques. Francine mentioned that parents should not have to look for this information; it should be given to them. The factors that would have been helpful to participants in maintaining their decision not to smack, but which have not been available to them, are listed in Table 22.

Table 22

Factors that would have been Helpful in Maintaining the Decision not to Smack

Factor	Number of participants	Percentage
Nothing, maintaining the decision is easy	8	40
Easy access to info. on smacking and alternatives	4	20
A cultural shift in regard to smacking	2	10
Learning to control own temper	2	10
Parenting class available for working parents	1	5
Having like-minded people to discuss it with	1	5
Information from health authorities	1	5
Having a partner	1	5

The participants were asked to make recommendations for helping or encouraging other parents to maintain the decision not to smack, once they have made it. This is important because nearly half of the participants had had some difficulty, at some time, in maintaining their decision not to smack; more than half had had to deal with pressure from others to smack and more than half do not have any support in their child rearing outside of their immediate family. Their responses can be divided into two categories: micro level, which are recommendations for individual parents; and macro level, which are recommendations for strategies to be implemented at the societal level. These recommendations are presented in Tables 23 and 24.

Table 23

Recommendations for Maintaining the Decision not to Smack: Micro Level

Recommendations	Number of participant	Percentage
Learn about alternatives and child development	6	30
Have support	6	30
Be persistent, especially during transition from smacking	4	20
Remember why you decided not to smack	4	20
Remove yourself from the situation	4	20
Consider the effects of smacking and non-smacking	3	15
Try out techniques with different children and situations	2	10
Consider your own and your children's temperaments	2	10
Consider what you want to achieve before reacting	2	10

Table 24

Recommendations for Maintaining the Decision not to Smack: Macro Level

Recommendations	Number of participants	Percentage
Info. given to all parents so they do not have to find it	2	10

Plunket Nurses to give information in homes	1	5
Counselling for pregnant couples or singles	1	5
A speaker or course at playgroups or kindergartens	1	5
Improve the response of Plunketline	1	5
Address root causes through social welfare	1	5
Parenting taught at high schools	1	5
All parenting courses should have summary documents for parents to look at after the course	1	5

Alternative Disciplinary Techniques. Anyone who decides not to smack their children must find other disciplinary techniques to use, which can be difficult, particularly if they were smacked as children and if smacking was the only technique used. Finding alternatives will be an important part of whether a parent is able to maintain a decision not to smack. This section will cover the acquisition and use of alternative disciplinary techniques by the participants.

Since the participants did not learn many disciplinary techniques other than smacking from their parents, they had to find them from other sources. The most common sources were books and talking to other people, see Table 25.

Table 25

Sources of Information on Alternative Disciplinary Techniques

Source	Number of participants	Percentage
Books	11	55
Talking to others	7	35
Tertiary Study (teaching/psychology)	5	25
Trial and Error	4	20
Parenting courses	3	15
Television	3	15
Magazines	3	15
Plunket	1	5
La Leche League	1	5
Discussion with child	1	5
Looking after other children	1	5
What worked with the participant as a child	1	5

Seven of the participants talked to other people about alternative disciplinary strategies. Mark discussed it with his brother and sister in law who became parents before he did, and who both had jobs relating to children. They emphasised positive role modelling. Gayle discussed it with the other parents at her son's kindergarten. Fred's wife was not smacked as a child and Sandy's wife had done a lot of reading. Fred also discussed techniques with the psychologist who assessed his daughter for giftedness. Greg spoke to

his son's maternal grandmother who had been involved with HAIPP (Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project) and Women's Refuge.

Laura and Harriet had both studied psychology and learned techniques from this study. Deidre and Astrid learnt about alternative techniques from their education in early childhood teaching, and Bridget had learned basic principles such as consistency, predictability, and following through in her time as a primary school teacher.

The participants have used a variety of techniques which have all been effective, at least some of the time. Although only nine reported using positive reinforcement; there is the possibility that more used it since the question was asked in terms of alternatives to smacking, which is a punisher. Most have used time out and withdrawal of privileges. The techniques used by the participants are shown in Table 26.

Table 26

Number of Participants who had used each Alternative Disciplinary Technique

Technique	Number of participants	Percentage
Time-out	14	60
Withdrawal of privileges	14	60
Positive reinforcement	9	45
Discussion and contextualisation	6	30
Distraction	4	20
Ignoring unwanted behaviour	3	15

Naughty/quiet spot	3	15
Suggesting or modelling desired behaviour	3	15
Removing the child from the situation	3	15
Anticipating problems	3	15
Growling	3	15
Logical consequences	2	10
Giving the child to the count of...(a number)	2	10
Grounding	2	10
Having the child write lines or essays	2	10
The stand and think technique	1	5
Giving the child a choice	1	5

When asked which techniques have been effective, most of the participants talked about how the technique was applied. Nine participants said that the effectiveness of any technique will depend on the age of the child and the particular situation. While five mentioned that alternative techniques can be hard to find or use, two others stressed that non-violent techniques work better in the long term. Sandy, Samantha, Emily and Anna all mentioned that being consistent with disciplinary techniques was important. Sandy said that even if you are tired you still have to make a point of being consistent. Bridget was consistent in disciplinary techniques across her children. She used the same techniques with her two year old son as she did with her three year old daughter so that she could see that “justice is being done”.

Emily and Samantha stressed the importance of following through, that is, if you say you are going to do something, you should do it. Having a range of techniques was discussed by Deidre and Gayle: “if one doesn’t work then move onto the next one” (Gayle). Samantha and Laura mentioned choosing your battles. Laura made a big deal out of every little thing with her sons but found with her daughter that if she let some of the little things slide she achieved more harmony and better results with the points she did raise. Samantha discussed this in terms of being flexible about things that do not really matter.

Sarah was always careful to explain why a punishment was being used and to specify exactly what it would entail, including how long it would last. James liked to use the withdrawal of the privilege of television as an opportunity to have quality time with his children. Gayle said that the techniques she used worked in the long term but could sometimes be hard. They have required patience and perseverance. Sandy felt that even though a technique did not always change the behaviour, it got the point across and made his children think about it. He stressed the learning involved. Mark had some trouble when his daughter was 13 and 14, and figured out that her parents did not have all the power, after all. Time-out stopped working and in the end they had to make some compromises with her. For example, she was allowed to see a particular problematic person, but only if the person came to their house.

Greg has had to be realistic in his expectations of his son and has reminded himself that he was not the only eleven year old who does not clean up after himself, for example. Fred said that the techniques he has used are “as effective as they need to be...we’re not

talking problem children”. He found that children go through phases and most bad behaviour just dies out as they mature. Francine said that she had had to modify her techniques as her children had grown older and figured things out. Her older son realised that if he was put into time out in a room, she could not just leave him there if he wrecked the room. So she moved time out to a naughty chair which was in sight and then instructed her younger son that his brother was to be ignored while he was sitting there.

The points raised about the effectiveness of alternative techniques are summarised below:

- Alternative techniques can be hard to use
- Alternative techniques are less work in the long term
- The effectiveness depends on the child, their age, and the situation
- Following through is important for a technique to be effective
- Applying a technique consistently is important for effectiveness
- Have a range of techniques to use when you find that one is not working
- Choose your battles
- Explain why and be specific about punishments
- Use withdrawal of privileges as an opportunity for quality time
- Persevere with alternative techniques and be patient
- Alternative techniques get the point across to children; they involve learning
- Sometimes you have to compromise
- Have realistic expectations of children
- Most bad behaviours die out with maturity
- Sometimes you have to modify a technique

Since the participants mostly stressed the application of a technique, rather than the technique itself, as being relevant to its effectiveness, only four could give a technique which they have found unequivocally ineffective. Bridget, Nardia and Samantha said that yelling is not effective. Samantha found that raising her voice with her son just scared him. She also cautioned against “making the penalty too harsh”. James has learnt that punishments which cannot be policed do not work. For example, telling his kids that they cannot use the phone has not worked when he is not there, and telling them they cannot see certain people has not worked because he was not able to enforce it while they were at school. Anna said that withdrawing television from her children did not work because they just went and read a book. An effective withdrawal of privilege has to be something that they actually care about losing.

What the Participants would like to add. The last question in every interview was whether the participant had anything else they would like to add. Seven did, and their comments are presented below:

Sandy was glad he made the decision not to smack. He felt that it has made a big difference to his relationship with his children. It has also helped him to understand the smacking he experienced in childhood and forgive his parents for it.

Anna has worked on a trial and error basis with her parenting and felt that she has been researching the behaviour of her children (particularly her youngest at the time of the interview) every day. She was very pleased with the results.

Harriet is concerned that even though she does not smack, she has still yelled at her son on occasion: “Is my yelling just as bad?” She was very pleased that the concept of smacking was so foreign to her son.

Gayle felt that “in the end I think not smacking is a decision made because you respect your child...as a human being, and I think that’s a really important thing for people to think about when they decide whether they should smack or not”. She said that you would not smack another adult, so why smack your helpless child who depends on you for their happiness?

Mark said: “I definitely believe (non-smacking) was the way to go”. However, he also felt that people have the right to smack their kids within reason, and thought that this opinion was based on the way that he was smacked as a child.

James encouraged all parents to take a parenting course and to “take a step back and have a look at what you’re doing to your children”. Their lives reflect on you.

Lisa wanted to stress that you should not blame your adult behaviour as a parent on your childhood, no matter how bad it was. People who have had really hard childhoods should

get help to work through their own issues and make the choice to not continue the cycle of physical punishment with their own children.

Stage Two: Focus Group

In the focus group four participants assessed and refined the ideas suggested in the interviews, and came up with a list of ideas which, if implemented, they felt could help to reduce the use of smacking in New Zealand. The ideas I presented to them were initially grouped into making and maintaining the decision, and into macro and micro levels of these. However, their final list of recommendations involved some overlap between the categories so I decided to divide the ideas into the more practical five goal directed categories of: parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, support, and specific recommendations for parents for making and maintaining the decision not to smack. These categories are recommendations in themselves, in that reducing the use of physical punishment will require their achievement, however this is done.

The participants wanted to be clear that they understood that the non-smacking message would not reach all parents through the implementation of these ideas. However, they still felt that they were worth doing because even a small decrease in the percentage of parents who smack could make a big difference to the lives of many children.

Parent Education. The participants felt that education for parenting in New Zealand was generally lacking. They suggested the following be implemented to address this problem.

- Parenting should be taught at high school, and classes should be compulsory for all students. The participants felt that discussing the realities of parenting would actually be a disincentive, rather than an endorsement of having children, for the reassurance of those students' parents who would undoubtedly be concerned about teenage pregnancies. The classes should involve discipline and include some basic human behaviour change training that they can apply to other areas of their life as well as parenting. It should include parenting, specifically, not just early childhood teaching.
- Ante-natal classes should start earlier in the pregnancy so more time could be spent on parenting at the beginning, with the focus shifting to the birth towards the end.
- An information pack should be given to all parents who have a baby, covering everything you need to know for 0 – 2 year olds. It should be written by people with plenty of experience and should include good practical strategies as well as contact numbers for various organisations that can help. The information should be balanced, so that parents can make up their own minds about what they want to do. For example, there should be information on bottle feeding even though breastfeeding is recommended. Further information packs could be sent out to parents when their child reaches each developmental stage, until they start school.

- Parents should get paid parental leave to attend parenting courses during the day, before and after the birth of their first child, in particular, and, later on, during their first few years as parents.
- Parenting courses should involve a lot of solid, practical information and strategies; child discipline; child development; ways to deal with the frustrations of parenting; and some basic information on human behaviour and behaviour change.
- Childcare centres should run information evenings for parents, and there should be at least one on child discipline (per specific time period).
- Pamphlets or posters should be strategically placed in locations where people spend time waiting for long periods, such as doctors' waiting rooms.

Raising Awareness. The participants thought that there were some deeply held beliefs and misconceptions about smacking and that parents needed to be made aware of these. An example is the idea that discipline and smacking are the same thing, so if you do not smack your children, they will be uncontrollable and will 'run riot'. This idea is encapsulated in the phrase 'spare the rod, spoil the child', which the participants felt was commonly referred to. To address the misconceptions and beliefs, the participants recommended the following awareness raising strategies:

- Health, education and childcare professionals need to take a more active role in the reduction of the use of smacking. Staff should be educated about the issue and

trained in how to deal with it. Organisations should have clear policies on smacking, and on encouraging parents not to use it. They should establish 'no-hitting zones' in their buildings and discuss the issue with parents, distribute information, and refer parents to parenting courses.

- 'No-hitting zones' should be created everywhere – like no smoking areas. This would send the message that using smacking is not a good idea.
- A series of television advertisements should be run with two purposes: to encourage parents to think about the discipline they received as children and remember how they felt about it, and to let parents know that most child abuse occurs within the context of discipline. The participants had two suggestions:
 1. An advertisement from the child's point of view about smacking, which directly asks parents to think about their own disciplinary histories.
 2. A shock advertisement showing a child who has clearly been physically abused (with bruises etc) which states something like 'This Began with Smacking'.
- Section 59 of the crimes act should be deleted. The participants did not think that many parents would stop smacking because of this but they thought that it was important to send the message to parents that smacking is not a good idea. They also thought that this move may have an impact on parents who use severe physical punishment; they might think twice about hitting their children as hard or with objects.

Reducing Strain on Parents. The participants believed that factors which put pressure and stress on parents contribute to their use of smacking. Therefore strategies should be put into place to reduce the strain on parents, in regards to time and money. While there are undoubtedly many strategies that could be used to achieve this, the following were those that the participants thought might be particularly helpful. Some are based on systems that are in place in Sweden.

- More parents should be eligible for the benefits available under the ‘Working for Families’ scheme.
- Parents should get more, and shared, parental leave.
- Parents should be entitled to reduce their workloads (and proportionately their pay) by a particular percentage until their children are a particular age.
- There should be free, or at least subsidized, healthcare for children provided at school locations.
- There should be more free day care or home based care available.

Support. Since the participants were all smacked as children, many felt that they were not able to approach their own parents or their parents in law for support in their decision not to smack. For some, their decision not to smack or their experiences of being smacked as a child, has caused a strained relationship with their parents, which has resulted in them not receiving support in their general parenting from their parents. It would be reasonable to assume that this would also be the case for many other parents if they decided not to smack, as the vast majority of people in New Zealand have been

smacked at some stage. In fact, when asked about the support they had in childrearing, 11 participants said either that their partner or spouse is their only support or that (since they are a single parent) no one supports them. Clearly support for parents, and for a decision not to smack in particular, is lacking. To remedy this situation the participants made the following recommendations:

- Widespread parenting groups should be set up for support and education. These should be co-ordinated by a trained professional but be more like meetings with a specific discussion topic than formal lectures. The co-ordinator should announce the topic for discussion and the parents should run with it themselves, asking questions of each other and sharing their own experiences and solutions to problems. Group members should share their contact details and develop support networks which could be accessed outside the scheduled sessions.
- There should be parenting centres at primary schools run by experienced parents with appropriate training who can give information and support, or direct parents to agencies who can help. Parents could turn up any time to talk about parenting free of charge.
- All parenting courses should have course content summary documents for parents to refer to when they feel like they might smack, or when they are running out of ideas.

Specific Strategies for Parents: Making the Decision not to Smack

- Talk to parents who do not smack for advice and strategies, and for validation for your decision not to smack.
- Talk to adults who were not smacked, just to get examples of people who turned out all right having been brought up without smacking.
- Take a parenting course.
- Watching parenting television shows can be helpful but do not take the advice too seriously; they are made for ratings, not for parents.

Specific Strategies for Parents: Maintaining the Decision not to Smack

- Learn about the alternatives to smacking.
- Learn about child development so you have realistic expectations and are prepared for what might be coming.
- Think about your temperament and your child's temperament and come up with a disciplinary plan for each child.
- Try out alternative disciplinary techniques to see which work for different children and different situations.
- Be persistent, especially during a transition from smacking to alternatives; it will probably not work straight away.
- Be consistent; make sure both parents are using the same techniques and are doing so in a way that is predictable for your child/ren.

- When you are in a situation in which you feel like smacking:
 1. Remove yourself from the situation.
 2. Think about what you want to achieve before reacting.
 3. Think about why you decided not to smack.
 4. Think about the effects of smacking and non-smacking.
 5. Get support.

The above recommendations were based on the suggestions made by participants and on supplementary research done to make sure that the focus group participants had a wide range of ideas to assess. I do not consider the recommendations to be sufficient for the reduction of the use of smacking in New Zealand; they are just a start. Probably more important in achieving a reduction of the use of smacking would be the goals under which the specific recommendations have been divided. These goals are parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, support, and specific recommendations for individual parents. Any action which might achieve these goals may be helpful in reducing the use of physical punishment.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to find out from parents, who had already done so, how to break the intergenerational cycle of physical punishment. This information was gathered by asking non-smacking parents about their experiences of physical punishment as

children, and about the process of making and maintaining a decision not to smack their own children. They were also asked to make recommendations about ways in which the use of physical punishment in New Zealand could be reduced. This section will look at the findings of the study as they relate to the literature, and to the goal of reducing the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. The limitations, strengths, and implications of the study will also be discussed.

Making the Decision not to Smack

How and why some parents make the decision not to smack is very relevant to the goal of reducing the use of smacking as that is the process through which more parents will have to go in order for this goal to be achieved. This section will look at this process, at some of the factors which could prompt it to begin, and at the reasons parents have given for not smacking their children.

History of Physical Punishment. All of the participants were physically punished as children, and, for many, it was sometimes very severe. Half of the participants were injured during the course of discipline and twelve were physically punished with an object. For most of the participants it was frequent; sixteen were physically punished at least once a week, and eleven labelled it abuse at the time of the interview. Eighteen of the twenty participants remembered it as a set of very negative experiences in their

childhoods; they recalled feeling angry, upset, and disempowered. Eight were still not at peace with their experiences of physical punishment at the time of the interview.

The nine participants who linked their experiences of physical punishment, as children, with their decision not to smack were those who experienced the most severe physical punishment as children (based on the characteristics of their physical punishment above). For example, Francine, Rachel, Cathy, Samantha, and Harriet were all physically punished at least weekly; they were all injured during the course of discipline; and all labelled their experiences abuse.

The tendency for people who were severely physically punished to use a lower level of physical discipline with their children is not unique to this study. It was also reported by Murphy-Cowan and Stringer (1999) who found support for the intergenerational transmission of specific levels of physical punishment, except for middle class parents who had received severe physical punishment. These parents smacked their own children at a lower level than they had been smacked; however, they had not necessarily made a decision not to use smacking at all, which was the case in this study.

Davis (1999, p.505) reported that some of the participants in his study had stopped using physical punishment because they had been “hit too hard, too often, too angrily, or in the wrong way” as children. Carson (1986) studied parents who did not smack and also found relatively high levels of violence and abuse in their childhoods. Some of her participants recalled their physical punishment as children as negative experiences which

they did not want to inflict on their own children, and 5 of 17 participants had been abused. Those five were some of the most committed in her study to not smack their children.

Severe physical punishment or abuse appears to be common in the histories of those people who decide not to smack. In their New Zealand study, Paers and Capaldi (2001) found that parents who were abused as children were significantly more likely to abuse their own children, which raises the question: what is it about these particular people that lead them to stop the cycle of violence, as opposed to those who continue it?

The answer could be that parents who were severely physically punished as children, but who decide not to smack their own children, have spent time thinking about their disciplinary history and have come to the conclusion that it was abnormally or inappropriately harsh. Hemenway, Solnick, and Carter (1994) looked at the intergenerational cycle of punitive parenting, which was measured by frequent physical and verbal discipline. While a number of their participants who were spanked and yelled at daily did not feel that they had been abused, the ones who did label their experiences as abuse were less likely to continue the cycle.

Giving one's childhood physical punishment a label of abuse implies that a person has given conscious thought to their disciplinary experiences and concluded that they were potentially or actually damaging. Perhaps it is the thought process that is important to highlight in explaining the greater likelihood of people who label themselves abused in

breaking the cycle of physical punishment. Graziano, Hamblen, and Plante (1996) suggested “having potential parents make a definitive, conscious decision and commitment *not* to use corporal punishment, rather than simply enacting an overlearned norm without much thought” (p.848). The pamphlet ‘Manaakihia te Paharakeke: Nurturing the Family’, (Child Youth and Family, 2002) suggests that parents think about and assess their disciplinary history in order to continue the good practices and exclude the bad. In the present study, 85% (seventeen out of twenty) made a conscious decision not to smack. In fact, when asked to make suggestions about how to help other parents to decide not to smack their children, two participants recommended that parents be encouraged to think about their own disciplinary history.

Another interesting characteristic of the physical punishment received by the participants is that, for 80%, it continued into their adolescence. Millichamp, Martin, and Langley (2006) found that 47% of the participants in their New Zealand study were physically punished during adolescence, which is clearly many less. The fact that most of the participants in the present study were physically punished during adolescence may have contributed to their decision not to smack their own children. This could have been because of their increased ability to think about the physical punishment compared to their ability when they were children, and the relative abnormality of such treatment for adolescents, compared to children. It might even have been the case that, being closer to having their own children, they were more likely to think about what they would do as parents, in situations in which they themselves were being physically punished.

Among the parents who had decided not to smack, a relatively high number had experienced severe physical punishment or abuse, and had been physically punished during adolescence. Their decision may be due to their thought about their experiences, and their conclusion that they were inappropriate and not good techniques to use with their own children. While not all of the participants in this study received severe treatment, 90% (eighteen out of twenty) recalled their negative feelings about being smacked as children, and, for 85%, not smacking was a conscious decision. The process of reflection about what it was like to be smacked as a child could be a good starting point for strategies which aim to prevent the use of smacking with individual parents.

The Decision Process. As mentioned above, most (85%) of the participants in the present study had made a conscious decision not to smack their children. For each of these seventeen participants there seemed to be an instigating factor (or factors) which prompted them to think about the type of discipline they wanted to use with their children. For example, two participants directly stated that they decided not to smack while they were still being smacked themselves. The other participants who said that they had decided not to smack long before they had children all mentioned the influence of their experience of being smacked on their decision; in most cases it was the first thing they mentioned when asked why they made the decision.

For some participants it was a pregnancy which caused them to think about it, or when their first child was a toddler and started to be capable of undesirable behaviour. Four

participants spoke of a specific event which was a turning point in their discipline practices: a parenting course in prison, an incident in which a participant's son hit another child, and two cases in which the participants' discipline of their children escalated towards abuse. Some of the participants in Carson's (1986) study also decided against the use of smacking after an incident in which they used it with their children, and either decided that it was ineffective, or felt guilty about using it.

In his U.S. study, Davis (1999) looked at a group of 22 mothers who initially used physical punishment, but who had stopped, or were trying to stop, at the time they were interviewed. He divided the reasons the participants gave for their physical punishment cessation into five contexts, almost all of which involved an event which instigated change in the meaning of smacking. For example, some recalled a reaction by their child to being smacked; some were told that they had to stop using physical punishment in order to be foster parents; some changed their opinions of smacking as a result of study in the area (in parent education courses, books, or discussion with others); and some decided to stop at the request of their spouse.

Based on the results of the present study, making the decision not to smack one's children seems to require (in most cases) an event or factor which causes the parent to think about the way they want to discipline their children. This makes sense considering that using smacking is normal practice in New Zealand (Fergusson & Lynskey, Millichamp, et al., 2006; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, 1997; Whitfield, 1998), and that the participants of this study were all physically punished as children. As was shown in the previous section, this

factor could be the memory of one's own experience with physical punishment, but it could also be a number of other things. While four of the participants had taken parenting courses, it was very positive to note that for one participant (James), the parenting course he took while in prison was the main reason that he decided not to smack. This suggests that it is possible to present the anti-smacking message in a way that is general enough to apply to a group, but personal enough to have actually changed the disciplinary practices of this individual.

Why They did not Smack. There were three reasons given by the participants to explain why they decided not to smack, apart from the factors which prompted them to think about the discipline they wanted to use with their children. These reasons were more theoretical and related to their opinions about the value of smacking as a disciplinary technique. Seven participants felt that smacking was ineffective and unnecessary; four believed that by smacking they would model violence to their children; and four were concerned about their smacking escalating and so decided not to use it at all.

These points were very similar to some of the reasons given for not smacking in other studies of parents who have decided not to smack. Some of the parents interviewed by Carson (1986) felt that smacking constituted violence and that they did not want to teach their children to use violence to resolve problems. Her participants also said that they believed that smacking was ineffective. Five of the non-smacking participants in a New

Zealand study (Russell, 1996) said that alternatives to smacking were more effective, which implies that they believed that smacking was a relatively ineffective technique. Two also thought that it was unnecessary in that it was not required for their children. Three of Russell's (1986) participants said that they could not trust themselves when angry. I have summarised similar responses in the present study as a concern about escalation. Francine made this point best:

“I think that when you smack your kids it's easy to go from smacking them when they're doing something wrong...to...smacking them just because you're angry with them...and I don't trust myself that if I'm angry, that I'm just going to give them a smack”. “It's really easy to...go over the top so I think it's better not to do it at all”.

Three studies have been carried out in New Zealand and America, each ten years apart; Carson in 1986, Russell in 1996, and this study in 2006. The fact that the parents involved had some very similar opinions of smacking as a disciplinary technique adds weight to the assertion that smacking is ineffective and unnecessary, that it models violence, and that its use can lead to escalation.

These points have also been made by other researchers, though presented in a different way. Holden, Miller, and Harris (1999) and Straus (1996) suggested that smacking was ineffective, and Graziano, Hamblen, and Plante (1996) talked about the fact that, in their study, 17% of the participants did not use smacking, which proved that it is possible to raise children without smacking; that is, it is unnecessary.

The idea that the use of smacking models violence as a solution to problems has been suggested by Buntain-Ricklefs et al., (1994); Ritchie & Ritchie (1981, 1997); Smith (2004); and Straus (1994). It has also been implied by studies which have found a relationship between smacking and increased violence and aggression in children (Eron et al., 1971; Gershoff, 2002; Olweus, 1980; Steinmetz, 1979; Straus, 2005; Straus et al., 1980).

The combination of the opinions of the participants in studies of parents who have decided not to use smacking, and the suggestions of the researchers who have studied the relationship between smacking and increased violence and aggression, make these three points convincing. However, in relation to the aims of this study (finding ways to reduce the use of physical punishment) it is more important that these concerns (ineffectiveness, modelling, and escalation) have been held by parents who have decided not to use smacking, and have helped them in making this decision. As such, these three points should be included in interventions which involve parental education and aim to reduce the use of physical punishment. It has been suggested that physical punishment prevention programs address parents' attitudes to smacking (Ateah & Durrant, 2005); perhaps these three opinions about the value of smacking as a disciplinary technique would be a good place to start.

Maintaining the Decision not to Smack

This section will cover how parents who were smacked themselves as children have maintained a decision not to smack. The findings of the study indicate that there are three main points to discuss in this regard: the way that parents have refrained from using smacking even though they sometimes felt they might; the childrearing techniques they do use, and how they use them; and the way in which they have dealt with their deviation from the childrearing norm that is smacking.

Refraining from Smacking. The parents in this study were unique in that they deliberately did not use the disciplinary technique which, for most of them, was the one most often used by their parents. Without consciously thinking about it, most people who were smacked will go on to smack their own children, and often in the same way that they were smacked (Buntain-Ricklefs et al., 1994; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Rodriguez & Sutherland, 1999; Simons et al., 1991). This section will describe how non-smacking parents counter this trend.

Half of the participants responded with an unqualified 'easy' when asked whether it has been easy or difficult for them to maintain their decision not to smack. Seven said that while it had been easy most of the time, it had been difficult on occasion, and Rachel (who had adult children) said that it had become easier with time. Only Harriet and Fred had found maintaining their decision not to smack difficult. These two were physically punished to an extent they would label abuse, and were still upset about the fact that they

were disciplined so severely. Harriet felt that her disciplinary history affected her temper: “They (her parents) modelled to me beautifully lack of patience and extreme irritability”. She gave this as the factor which made it difficult to avoid smacking, but was still able to resist its use. For parents who were smacked to a lesser degree, then, it appears that in terms of the goal of reducing the use of physical punishment, making the decision could be the most important part, as, once made, maintaining it may be easy.

Considering their disciplinary histories, it is somewhat surprising that the participants have found it generally easy to maintain their decision not to smack. The most often cited factor which has made it easy, in this study and Russell’s (1996), was the good behaviour of the participants’ children. Russell (1996) labelled this category ‘child characteristics’. Carson (1986, p.124) wrote that “non-spanking parents claim that one reason they do not spank is because their children are well-behaved”. She presented this factor in two different ways; the first of which was as an excuse that her participants used to explain their deviant child-rearing behaviour (not using physical punishment). However, it also appeared to be a real phenomenon; the children seemed to be very high academic achievers, and many of the participants reported comments by other people including complete strangers, on the good behaviour of their children. In the present study, Gayle also reported regularly receiving comments from strangers about her son’s good behaviour. While it could be suggested that the non-smacking parents in the above studies (Carson, 1986; Russell, 1996) did not smack because of the good behaviour of their children (rather than the behaviour following the non-smacking), in the present

study this can easily be demonstrated to be false due to the fact that Gayle (for example) decided not to smack before her son was born.

The good behaviour of the participants' children is not surprising in view of the possible negative behavioural reactions to smacking (Eamon, 2001; Engfer & Schneewind, 1982; Eron et al., 1971; Gershoff, 2002; Olweus, 1980; Smith, 2004; Steinmetz, 1979; Straus, 2005; Straus et al., 1997; Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Mouradian, 1998) which may not be present in children who are not smacked. Further, by excluding the use of an ineffective technique (Gershoff, 2002; Holden et al., 1999; Straus, 1996), non-smacking parents may use more effective alternatives (see the next section on alternative techniques). Straus (2005) found that children who were not smacked were generally better behaved than those who were because their consciences were better developed. This is assumedly because the discipline they receive involves conscience development, as opposed to smacking, which does not (Gershoff, 2002).

Other factors which were reported by the participants as contributing to the ease at which they were able to maintain their decision not to smack were related to their opinions about the value of smacking as a disciplinary technique, and their memories of receiving physical punishment. These were some of the same factors, as in the previous section, which helped them to make the decision. Thus, a strategy for maintaining the decision not to smack appears to be remembering why it was made to begin with. This idea was directly supported by four of the participants in this study who recommended that parents think about why they decided not to use smacking, as a strategy to maintain the decision.

Another factor mentioned was support, both in their decision not to smack, and in the job of childrearing. Support was also mentioned by four of the nine non-smacking parents in Russell's (1996) study.

While maintaining the decision not to smack seems usually to be an easy task, this study indicates that there will be parents who sometimes find it hard and some who will find it very difficult. Therefore, it is important to look at the factors which may make it difficult, and the ways in which these factors can be overcome. Five of the participants mentioned that it was difficult to maintain their decision when their children were being particularly difficult, or when the usual alternative techniques were not working, or both. This will be covered in the next section on using alternative techniques.

Another five talked about personal factors; being tired, stressed, or angry. A strategy suggested by the participants to deal with these emotions, without smacking, is parental time out; that is, putting the child somewhere safe and leaving the room, or the house, or locking oneself in a room away from the children to calm down. There is a pamphlet called 'Tips on Stress' in the SKIP (Strategies with kids, Information for Parents) booklet (Family & Community Services, 2004) which recommends that stressed parents "Go outside, open a window and, if you can, get into another space" (p.4). One of the participants in Russell's (1996) study also reported going outside by herself, walking around and breathing deeply before going back inside. Removing oneself from the situation was recommended for the maintenance of a decision not to smack by four of the participants in this study.

In summary, once a decision has been made not to smack one's children, it seems that maintaining that decision is usually easy. This is, for the most part, because children are generally better behaved when disciplined with techniques which engender conscience development, as opposed to smacking which does not, and which can lead to other negative behavioural outcomes. Further, parents who were smacked but who do not smack their own children have, in most cases, made a conscious decision to that extent (see previous section on making the decision). The reasons for that initial decision will also be helpful in maintaining it, as will support in their decision and in childrearing generally. However, there will be occasions in which it is particularly difficult to refrain from smacking, and a good course of action at such times is parental time out.

Using Alternative Techniques. The participants in this study used a number of different techniques as alternatives to smacking. Since smacking was the main technique used by the parents of some of the participants, active pursuit of alternative techniques was required. For most, it was not just a matter of excluding smacking from their disciplinary repertoire, but replacing it. This section will look at how parents can acquire new disciplinary techniques, the types of techniques they might use, and the points they made on how they should be applied.

Only one participant (Anna) mentioned that she was able to take a technique which worked with her as an adolescent; 95% did not mention taking any of the techniques that their parents used with them and applying them to their own children. Eleven of the

participants listed reading books as part of their learning about alternative techniques (the most common category); this could be related to the third most common category; tertiary education. This may be a point which demonstrates a limitation to the representativeness of this sample; since the participants were disproportionately educated (17 of 20 had done some tertiary study) the results of the study, and particularly the sources from which they learned alternative techniques, may not be representative of the general New Zealand population.

However, there were many sources of alternative techniques given which would appear to be equally available to people of different educations and socio-economic statuses, including television (especially parenting programs such as ‘Supernanny’), magazines, and talking to other people (which was the second most common category) (see Table 24). Deidre had utilised the Plunket hotline on many occasions when she was having trouble with her children’s behaviour and while she had extreme difficulty getting through, once she was able to talk to someone she found it very helpful. Astrid had been involved with the La Leche League, an organisation which was primarily interested in breastfeeding, but which was also helpful in supplying her with alternative disciplinary techniques.

Considering that, at the time they were looking for alternative techniques, these participants were ready and willing to break the cycle of physical punishment, it is disappointing that only three mentioned parenting courses as a source through which they acquired alternative techniques. Four participants said that they had used ‘trial and error’.

There obviously needs to be more emphasis on formal parenting education if even those who may be most willing to learn are not accessing what is available. Harriet said that she would have liked to have taken a parenting course but as a clinical psychologist and single parent, felt that the hours she worked did not allow her the time.

In terms of the actual disciplinary practices used, the participants in this study used many of the same techniques as in other New Zealand studies. Explaining, discussing and reasoning were the most used techniques in Russell (1996) and Maxwell (1995), and in the American study by Carson (1986). In the present study six participants (30%) used discussion and contextualisation as a discipline technique with their children. Time out and withdrawal of privileges were also popular strategies in the three studies above, as well as in this study, in which they were the most commonly mentioned. Maxwell (1995) used the category 'sent to room' which could be the same as time out; 34% of the women and 37% of the men in her study reported using that technique. The participants in this study also used some variations of time out, such as a naughty spot; removing the child from the situation; and the stand and think technique, which is designed, not as a punishment, but to encourage calming down and thinking about it.

Positive disciplinary practices were not mentioned by Maxwell's (1995) participants because the question asked about responses to misbehaviour. However, Russell's (1996) participants did use them (she labelled the category 'giving praise and acknowledgement'). In the present study positive reinforcement was mentioned, but the number who reported using it (nine) is probably a minimal estimate since the participants

were asked about alternatives to smacking, which is a negative technique. The SKIP (Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents) pamphlet: 'Managing behaviour for under fives' (Family and Community Services, 2004) suggests positive reinforcement in terms of making more positive than negative comments to children and praising good behaviour. All of these techniques could well be used by people who refuse to give up smacking as a last resort.

While the participants in this study employed a wide range of disciplinary techniques, they almost all agreed that it is the way that you use a technique which determines its effectiveness. This point was further strengthened by the fact that the application of a technique was not mentioned during the interview; the participants raised the matter of their own accord. The comments that the participants made about the effectiveness of alternative techniques will be presented below.

When asked what she would recommend for helping other parents to make a decision not to smack, Bridget said that she would probably not make such a recommendation. While she could not bring herself to smack her children, she said that using alternative techniques can be a lot of work, and parents should understand that before making the decision. Her children were two and three years old at the time of the interview. The good news for Bridget and other parents of young children is that, while the other participants agreed that alternative techniques can be hard to use, they also stated that the techniques promote learning in children (they get the point across) and require less work in the long term. This is consistent with the literature covered in the previous section '*Refraining*

from Smacking' (see page 113), as well as the evidence in this study that suggests that children who are not smacked are generally very well behaved. It makes sense that fewer punishments are required when children are behaving well.

The participants also listed some points relevant to the way in which any discipline technique is carried out, which will determine its effectiveness. These are: consistency in application for individual children, and across children (being fair in discipline); following through with punishments; explaining what the child did wrong and why they are going to receive a punishment; and being very specific about what the punishment will entail, for example the specific time period during which they will not be allowed to use the computer. The participants also had a number of other recommendations such as having a range of techniques to use, being willing to compromise, having realistic expectations, choosing your battles, and taking each individual child's characteristics into consideration. The value of these points, in terms of the aims of this study, is that they were helpful to the participants in using disciplinary techniques other than smacking; this means that they were also helpful in the task of maintaining their decision. Parent education programs which aim to encourage parents not to use physical punishment, or teach them how to use alternative techniques, will need to include these points.

To summarise this section, the participants were mostly unable to take alternative techniques from their parents and so had to learn about them from different sources. For many, these sources were related to their tertiary study, which demonstrates the fact that the participants were disproportionately educated. However, a number of sources listed

would be available to anyone so it is probably the number of parents who learned about alternative techniques from each of the sources, rather than the sources, themselves, that may not generalise well to other New Zealanders. Only three listed parenting courses as a source and four said that they used trial and error. This indicates either a lack of parenting education programs or a problem with access, since these participants went through a process during which they needed, and were very willing, to learn about alternative techniques. The participants did learn a number of alternative techniques to use, which based on the behaviour of their children, seem to be successful. Not only did they learn techniques, but also the way to use the techniques so that they were effective. This knowledge has been very helpful to the participants in maintaining their decision not to smack and should be made available to other parents who are trying to maintain such a decision.

Deviation from the Childrearing Norm. Like the participants in this study, Carson (1986) studied parents who did not smack their children. She found a rather contradictory situation in which her participants claimed to be unaware that they were deviating from the norm by not smacking their children, and then told her how they dealt with people who suggested that they should smack (primarily parents and in-laws). For example, many would say that their children did not need smacking, based on their behaviour, rather than admit that they did not believe in smacking as a disciplinary technique. They even suggested that they might smack if a situation which warranted it arose, but still did not use physical punishment, despite describing incidents in which their children did

misbehave. Carson (1986) stated that since people who believe in smacking cannot argue with the 'good behaviour' reason, and because their children were generally very well behaved, the parents in her study did not challenge the legitimate status of smacking.

Twenty years later, and in New Zealand, some of the participants in this study appeared to have made deliberate attempts to challenge the legitimacy of physical punishment as a child rearing technique. Many had had to deal with people who suggested that they smack, and, like Carson's (1986) participants, these people were often family members. It is not surprising that some of the parents of the participants in this study had disputed the participants' stance on smacking, as all of the participants were smacked as children, and thus at least one of their parents had used physical punishment. In fact, it is the deviation from their parents' methods which makes the data from these participants important in efforts to reduce the use of physical punishment in New Zealand since the majority of people will have to go through such a process for a reduction to occur.

The participants were asked whether they have had any issues with their parents in relation to their decision not to smack, and nine had. Three of the participants continued to disagree with their parents on the issue at the time of their interview, and another two did not allow their parents to look after their children for that reason. When asked what makes it difficult to maintain their decision not to smack, five of the participants cited pressure from others to use physical punishment, and all of these participants had had issues with their family in relation to their decision. Similarly, in the New Zealand study by Russell (1996), pressure to smack from their parents was listed as a factor which made

it difficult for some of the participants to avoid using smacking. Eight of the participants in her study had been told by family members that they should smack. In a study he conducted with 1002 mothers, Straus (2000) found that 53% had had smacking recommended to them by a relative or friend in the six months before the study.

Seven of the participants had had to confront relatives about the issue, sometimes because they insisted on smacking the participants' children while they were in their care. They had to be quite assertive about it, using statements like "I don't hit my child, so you don't hit my child either" (Harriet). Emily effectively threatened her ex-husband with court action after his new girlfriend hit one of Emily's sons a second time. On the other hand, six of the participants had had no trouble with their parents and other family members with regard to their decision; their parents knew and accepted the non-smacking situation, and adhered to it.

While family members had been the most vocal in their disapproval of the anti-smacking stance of the participants, some felt that they had been "pushing against the stream" (Rachel) more generally. Only five participants spoke to anyone outside of their immediate family when deciding not to smack their children, and two of those were Greg and Mark, who felt that non-smacking was acceptable within their peer group. Rachel and Emily talked about a cultural shift with regard to smacking as something which would have made maintaining their decision not to smack easier. It is obvious that the more mainstream non-smacking becomes, the easier it will be for more parents to exclude it from their disciplinary repertoire.

Considering that smacking is common practice in New Zealand (see page 21), it was surprising to find that some participants did not feel that they were deviant in their decision at all. Gayle found that other parents at her son's kindergarten were also against the use of smacking, and Mark and Greg both felt that, within their peer group, non-smacking was the culturally acceptable course to take. These two men both had postgraduate university education, so one might assume that their peer group would include similarly educated people. Indeed, Greg talked about being exposed to relatively educated people who "had informed themselves about options and alternatives" to smacking. He stressed the need for parenting education when asked about strategies to reduce the use of physical punishment.

The possibility of a higher degree of acceptance for non-smacking among more educated people is not a comment on intelligence or social class, but a demonstration of the information on child rearing that is available at higher educational levels in New Zealand, and absent at lower levels. This is similar to the findings of Eamon's (2001, p.797) American study, in which she concluded that "more educated mothers were less likely to use physical punishment...suggesting that knowledge of alternative child disciplinary practices influences mothers' use of physical punishment". Indeed, all of the participants in the current study who cited studying the topic, talking about it, and reading about it, as reasons for their decision, had at least some tertiary education, and two of them had trained as teachers. As Greg pointed out, this information needs to be provided at earlier levels of education such as secondary school. Based on the experiences of Greg, Gayle and Mark, information about child rearing can contribute to a cultural climate, within

social groups, that rejects the use of physical punishment. As such, dissemination of child rearing information appears to be important.

Unlike Carson's (1986) participants, some of the parents in this study had made others aware that they did not smack, and provided them with the reasons for their position. In fact, four had actively tried to convince others not to smack. For Sarah this was necessary as the other person was her husband, and the father of the child she was pregnant with, but Deidre, Lisa, and Samantha had no reason to do so other than their own convictions. While it was not intentional, Francine actually convinced two of her friends to stop using smacking by providing them with her own reason not to smack: "I don't smack my kids because I can't say that I could stop".

It is encouraging to discover that there are parents in New Zealand who have deliberately tried to convince other parents to make the decision not to smack their children. Perhaps this difference, as compared to Carson's (1986) study, is an indication of a move towards greater acceptance of not using smacking as a child rearing technique in New Zealand. The participants in this study were all very willing to talk about their experiences with making a decision against the use of smacking, which was shown very clearly by the fact that within three days of the advertisement running in the 'Hamilton Press', 24 parents had expressed interest in participating in the study. It is possible that New Zealand may be nearing a point at which the cultural climate of parenting is such that measures toward reducing the use of smacking could be well received and effective. This point is further evidenced by the current private members bill before the New Zealand Parliament, which

aims to repeal Section 59 (see page 130), and which the media has called the ‘anti-smacking bill’ (Heather, 2006).

In summary, there are ways in which parents who do not wish to smack their children can excuse their deviance in society without challenging physical punishment as a child rearing norm. Some of the parents in this study chose not to hide their attitude to smacking, but to advertise it to others, sometimes actively trying to convince other parents to avoid its use. Many of the participants had felt under pressure to smack, particularly from family members, and some had to be very assertive to ensure that their children were not physically punished. There is also some evidence of informal peer groups in New Zealand in which smacking one’s children is considered inappropriate, and education in child rearing may be important to facilitate this.

Participants’ Recommendations

The most important results of this study are the recommendations (see page 96) made by the participants in the focus group, based on their assessment of those suggested during the interviews. This section will cover the relationship between what they suggested and the recommendations made by the items of literature that go as far as to propose strategies to reduce the use of physical punishment. The recommendations made by the participants fall into five categories as mentioned in previous sections. These are: parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, support, and specific recommendations for parents for making and maintaining the decision not to smack.

Parent Education. Parent education is probably the most commonly recommended strategy in the literature (Ateah, 2003; Buntain-Ricklefs et al., 1994; Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2006; Graziano et al., 1996; Kelder, McNamara, Carlson, & Lynn, 1991). Specifically, parent education may involve information about effective disciplinary alternatives (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2006; Graziano et al., 1996), child development (Ateah, 2003; Graziano et al., 1996), and the use of goal-directed discipline (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Similarly, the participants in this study suggested that parenting education should include information on child discipline (including discipline techniques) and on child development. The participants also mentioned ‘ways to deal with the frustrations of parenting’ and ‘basic human behaviour and behaviour change’, as concepts to include in parent education with the aim of reducing the use of physical punishment.

The participants also gave a number of practical strategies to get more parents involved in parent education, such as: parenting being taught in high schools, ante-natal classes, and childcare centres; the dissemination of education packs, posters and pamphlets; and paid leave to attend parenting classes. In fact, strategies to help more parents receive parenting education were the main focus of the participants’ recommendations in that section. This seems to indicate that they were of the opinion that while quality parenting education may well be available, the issue is getting more parents involved. This point is emphasised by the fact that some of the participants had attended parenting programs and found them helpful, while others expressed a desire to attend such courses, but also frustration at the difficulties of doing so. For example, Harriet was a single mother with a

full time job who felt that she was not able to make use of services such as parenting groups.

Raising Awareness. The focus group participants agreed upon four strategies to raise awareness about the issue of smacking. The first was a greater emphasis on the issue by child care, health, and education professionals as suggested by Duncan and Bowden (2004), Kelder et al. (1991), Straus (1996), and Wood (1999). This was a strategy which I added to the list of those suggested by the participants (see Appendix J) during the interview, but the focus group participants confirmed that they believed it would be helpful in reducing the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. Some examples they agreed upon (originally from Wood, 1999) were training for staff, clear policies on the issue, and the implementation of ‘no-hitting zones’.

Another awareness raising strategy agreed upon by the focus group participants was the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act which allows parents to use force for the purposes of child discipline. This step has been suggested by Ritchie and Ritchie as early as 1979 (Ritchie, 2006). The participants had mixed views on this in the interviews. Some said that they did not think it should be repealed, and Cathy (for example) thought that the legal reform should go even further and that smacking should be made illegal. In the focus group the participants were asked to consider the repeal of Section 59 in terms of the aim of the study, to reduce the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. After some discussion they agreed that it should be included in the list of strategies, not

because it would necessarily stop parents from smacking, but because it would send a clear message to parents that smacking is not a good idea, and not endorsed by the Government. This is why it is included in the goal section: Raising Awareness. At the completion of the present study, the Justice and Electoral Select Committee had released their recommendation for the form of the private members bill on Section 59. They suggested that Section 59 be modified so that force cannot be used for the purposes of correction, but may still be used for safety and control of children.

In 1993, New Zealand ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and submitted its report to the committee in 1995. In 1997, the committee expressed “its concern at the authorisation provided by section 59 of the Crimes Act to use physical force against children as punishment within the family” (Ritchie, 2006, p.10). The Global Report: Ending Legalised Violence against Children (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2006) recommends that the applicable steps be taken in law to make physical punishment illegal. In New Zealand such a process would begin with the repeal of Section 59. The report calls for awareness raising steps in terms of what any new law dictates, and about positive, non-violent childrearing.

Reducing Strain on Parents. The focus group participants agreed upon a number of strategies which were designed to reduce the strain on parents, which they obviously felt was a factor which helped to determine whether or not parents might use physical punishment. Fred felt that he was under far less strain, financially and socially, than his

parents, and cited that as a reason that they had used physical punishment compared to Fred himself who had not. This idea supports the suggestion by Graziano and Namaste (1986) that some parents smack without much thought; logically, people who are under pressure and unable to cope might be more likely to react without taking the extra time and effort to consider their actions within the context of any goals for their children's behaviour that they may or may not have thought about previously. Carson's (1986) participants also felt that smacking was something that parents used when they were "frustrated and out of control" (p.109).

Supporting the idea that parental use of physical punishment may be contributed to by various life pressures is the study by Xu, Tung and Dunaway (2000). Their list of factors that might influence a parent to use (or not use) smacking included items such as 'Family Income', 'Employment Status', and whether the parents received help with babysitting or housework. These were similar to some of the recommendations made by the participants such as subsidised health care and day care, more parental leave, and the 'Working for Families' scheme being available to more parents. That study (and this one) takes some of the environmental or situational factors into consideration when looking at why parents use physical punishment. It is important to bear in mind that alternative disciplinary strategies initially take time, effort, and commitment (see page 88) which may well exclude some parents from using them without first addressing other factors.

Support. Support was an interesting concept in the study because most of the participants felt that they received support in their decision not to smack only from their partner (if they had one), but many suggested that more support would be helpful to them, or to other parents in making and maintaining the decision not to smack. Conversely, with very little support, most of the participants were (for the most part) easily able to maintain their decision not to smack. This is an indication of the commitment of the participants to avoid using smacking, and of the success of alternative techniques in terms of the behaviour of their children. Nonetheless, support for the decision not to smack and for parenting in New Zealand, generally, was considered an important goal by the focus group participants, based on the recommendations they made.

The participants agreed that small, widespread parenting groups should be set up; parenting centres should be located in schools; and parenting courses should have summary documents for parents to refer to later. The first two strategies are similar to those suggested by Durrant and Olsen (1997) and Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) (respectively) because the ideas originally came from those sources and were added to the list of interview suggestions to be assessed and refined in the focus group. The focus group participants discussed them and decided to include them in the final list of recommendations. Ateah (2003, p.99) also considered that a small group format in which parents were able to “discuss issues and compare experiences” would be a good support strategy. The review documents for parenting courses was suggested by James, who would sometimes look at the written commitment he had made to himself, to stick to his new parenting style which excluded smacking. The parenting course he attended did have

summary documents and he felt that if they did not already, all other parenting courses should also supply parents with summary documents which they could refer to at a later date.

Specific Strategies for Parents. This section contains the recommendations which were the most practical. They apply to individual parents who are interested in making and maintaining a decision not to smack their children. There was very little literature which included specific strategies for parents who would like to make and maintain a decision not to smack. The sources which did include such information are presented at the end of this section.

Making the Decision not to Smack

- Talk to parents who do not smack for advice and strategies, and for validation for your decision not to smack.
- Talk to adults who were not smacked, just to get examples of people who turned out all right having been brought up without smacking.
- Take a parenting course.
- Watching parenting television shows can be helpful but do not take the advice too seriously; they are made for ratings, not for parents.

Maintaining the Decision not to Smack

- Learn about the alternatives to smacking.

- Learn about child development so you have realistic expectations and are prepared for what might be coming.
- Think about your temperament and your child's temperament and come up with a disciplinary plan for each child.
- Use trial and error of alternative disciplinary techniques for different children and different situations.
- Be persistent, especially during a transition from smacking to alternatives; it will probably not work straight away.
- Be consistent; make sure both parents are using the same techniques and are doing so in a way that is predictable for your child/ren.
- When you are in a situation in which you feel like smacking:
 1. Remove yourself from the situation.
 2. Think about what you want to achieve before reacting.
 3. Think about why you decided not to smack.
 4. Think about the effects of smacking and non-smacking.
 5. Get support.

Pritchard (2006, p.47) made the following suggestions for parents who want to discontinue the practice of smacking:

- Tell your children.
- Let everyone in the family know and seek their support.
- Be clear about the rules that are most important to you and stick with these. It's OK to let some of the small things go.

- Realise that you can adapt the way you help a child to behave well to suit his or her age and personality.
- Find a way of calming down or go somewhere safe in the house when you're stressed.

These suggestions are similar to some of the recommendations of the present study, for example, being consistent, learning about child development, and removing oneself from the situation. The recommendation on considering temperament is supported by the SKIP booklet pamphlet: 'Temperament' (Ministry of social development, 2004). Like the participants in the present study, the 'Temperament' pamphlet suggests that parents try different techniques for different children, and that they plan each child's discipline based on temperament.

Further sources of information for parents who are interested in parenting without smacking:

Children are Unbeatable: 7 Very Good Reasons not to Hit Children

Booklet online at:

http://www.unicef.org.nz/advocacy/publications/Unbeatable_Booklet.pdf .

SKIP - Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents

Available locally from:

The Nest

Corner of Ohaupo Road and Kahikatea Drive, Hamilton

Or from: <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/info-for-families/skip/>

Limitations of the Study

A discussion of the limitations of the study must begin with my limitations as a researcher. I was in a particularly naïve position in relation to this topic when I began because, not only did I not have any children, but I was not smacked during my childhood. As has been indicated by the literature (see page 26), as a person who was not smacked during childhood, it was likely that I would not see any value in physical punishment as a disciplinary technique, and this was, indeed, the case. I had also completed multiple university papers in which the issue of physical punishment was presented as a serious social problem. This bias played a major role in determining how I approached the study, and even my choice of topic. It was also something that I had to consciously remind myself to consider when talking to the participants, particularly since many of them had used smacking at some point. I also had to be aware that I did not have an understanding of the strain that parenting can entail, or of the temptation to smack which some of the participants described as being a product of their own disciplinary histories. Further, I had almost no experience in planning and conducting interviews or focus groups with participants.

Other limitations of the study were inherent in its design. An individual interview with a participant is a time consuming task, so I decided to involve only 20 participants. Obviously, such a small number of participants will reduce the generalisability of the results to other people. Again, due to time constraints, I decided to hold only one focus group, at the time suited to the greatest number of interested participants. While there

were originally eight participants who agreed to attend, only four actually came on the day so the focus group included only those four participants.

There was also the potential problem of adult recall of childhood events. The participants were asked to recount their disciplinary histories, and, for some, this was challenging. The question about the frequency of the physical punishment they received was usually difficult for the participants to remember and most said that they estimated this. While not surprising, there is a possibility that some of the participants over or underestimated the frequency. Further, there is a good chance that the frequency did not remain stable over the periods of the participants' childhoods, as children present different behaviour and behavioural challenges at different ages.

Recall was also a problem with the answers to the questions about the types of alternative disciplinary strategies the participants used with their own children. Most participants described current, recent, or salient disciplinary strategies; the parents with older children did not generally describe techniques that might be used with younger children, and which they may well have used with their children, such as distraction. In this regard it was good that there were a range of ages represented in the children of the participants.

A further possible limitation resulted from the way in which participants were screened for eligibility. In the advertisement I asked for parents who were smacked as children. I deliberately did not define 'smacking' because I was concerned about numbers. As it turned out, there more than enough potential participants willing to be involved, but the fact that the term 'smacking' had not been defined meant that the participants had had a

range of physical punishment in their disciplinary histories. Some of the participants were physically punished to an extent that I, and they themselves, would consider physical abuse, whereas Mark (for example) was smacked very rarely and only as a last resort.

While I was very careful in the literature section to differentiate between those studies which measured the effects of physical abuse, and those which measured the effects of 'normal' or socially acceptable smacking, I was not able to make such a distinction with the participants in this study. It is important, then, to remember that actual physical abuse was a prompting factor for some of the participants in this study to decide not to use smacking at all. This factor is obviously (and thankfully) not available to all parents who might consider a decision not to smack. The fact that it was common to some of the participants helped me to identify the presence of a motivating factor, which was important to the decision making process of most of the participants, whether it was abuse or something else.

Strengths of the Study

Some of the strengths of the study are in the varied nature of the participants. For example, one quarter of the participants were male; nine were single parents at the time of the interview; their ages ranged from 28 to 57; their children's ages ranged from 0 to 25 years old; they had a wide range of occupations; and they located themselves within five different ethnic groups. Although there were not enough participants to draw any

broad generalisations, the variance in the characteristics of the participants should have reduced possible bias towards a particular 'type' of parent.

The strongest point of this study is that parents who have already broken the cycle of physical punishment were directly asked what they would recommend to help or encourage other parents to make and maintain a decision not to smack their children. As people who have experienced the complex process of breaking this cycle, the participants were experts on how it can be done and were able to make recommendations based on their entire experience. This would obviously be much more comprehensive than the second hand recommendations that I could make as a researcher, having questioned them about their experiences.

Further, since each participant could not be expected to have thoroughly considered each recommendation they made, or to have thought about every possible strategy, the focus group was also a strength of the study. This gave some of the participants the opportunity to further think about, and discuss, their own recommendations and those made by other participants. They were able to come to a consensus about the value of the suggested strategies, and to define them more specifically. The focus group provided triangulation of the final list of recommendations; they were approved by different participants using two different methods.

Looking at the final list of strategies, it became clear that the focus group participants were actually attempting to achieve certain goals which they obviously felt were

necessary to reduce the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. This meant that not only were the participants able to define the specific strategies that they thought would be useful, but also that those strategies could be located within a set of goals (parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, and support) which could be used to assess other strategies that the participants may not have considered. Since the practical feasibility of the strategies was not a factor in the focus group, it is also possible that they may need further modification in order to be applied. The set of goals would be very helpful in this regard because any modifications could be conducted with the goals in mind.

Another strength was the practical nature of the results. I felt that New Zealand was nearing a time in our social development where steps towards a reduction of the use of physical punishment might begin to be made at a national and government level. The private member's bill on the repeal of Section 59 (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child Discipline) (see page 130) (Coddington, 2006) is an indication of this. There are also organisations working within New Zealand with the aim of reducing the use of smacking, and the New Zealand Government has funded initiatives such as the SKIP (Strategies with Kids: Information for Parents) booklet which includes information encouraging parents not to use smacking. Some of the results of this study could be used as part of an intervention which aimed to help or encourage parents to make and maintain a decision not to smack their children. In fact, the recommendations from the section: *Specific Strategies for Parents* (see page 102) could be directly used by parents who intend to make and maintain such a decision.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of the present study suggest numerous topics for further research. Since it was a small qualitative study, research which involved greater numbers of participants, or which tested some of the findings quantitatively, would be useful in determining the generalisability of the findings.

The present study was conducted in New Zealand and the findings would not readily apply to other countries. They are likely to have different: laws which apply to physical punishment; levels of physical punishment use in the population; reasons behind the use of physical punishment; parenting support systems and organisations; family structures; roles for children within the family; parenting education; and rules for the use of physical punishment within schools and other institutions. Further research is therefore required to discover the extent to which the information presented in this study might apply to other countries. Due to the above (and other) variations between New Zealand and other countries, I would suggest that totally new research be carried out in other countries interested in finding ways to reduce the use of physical punishment. It is clear that asking parents who have already broken the cycle of physical punishment is a good idea; the present study has shown that such research is an effective way to produce possible strategies.

The goals which the focus group participants felt were important to reduce the use of physical punishment in New Zealand indicate the need for further research. These were: parent education, raising awareness, reducing strain on parents, and support. Research is

needed to confirm these goals as necessary to the aim of reducing the use of physical punishment in New Zealand, and into other strategies through which the goals could be achieved.

Many of the recommendations of the study could be applied in interventions aimed at reducing the use of physical punishment in New Zealand. Anyone interested in using the recommendations in this way would need to carry out research into the practical feasibility of their application, any necessary modifications, and their effectiveness upon implementation.

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Appendix A

Newspaper Article Seeking Participants

Article in the Hamilton Press
Wednesday, April 5th, 2006
Page 11

Non-Smack Parents Sought

Gina Sturkenboom, a Masters student at Waikato University majoring in psychology, is seeking interviews with parents who were smacked as children but who have decided not to smack their own kids, for her thesis on: "Breaking the inter-generational cycle of physical punishment". "Seeing as how the vast majority of the psychological literature agrees that physical punishment (or smacking) is a risk factor for physical abuse; increases the risk of the development of psychological and behavioural problems (in children and adults); and is not an effective teaching tool, I decided to stop trying to prove these things and move on to looking at how the use of physical punishment can be reduced", Gina said. "To do this I want to interview parents who were smacked as children but who have decided not to smack their own kids. This is because most parents in New Zealand were smacked, and will smack their kids. If I can find out how and why the target parents have made and maintained the decision not to smack, I will have useful information for anyone planning an intervention to help or encourage other parents to make that decision." Gina needs 10-20 parents (of children of any age), who were smacked as children, and are willing to be interviewed regarding their own disciplinary history and the way they discipline their kids. Participants should contact Gina Sturkenboom, gas4@waikato.ac.nz, ph 843-2622, or 021-050-7533.

Appendix B
University Advertisement for Participants

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Gina Sturkenboom

Research Participants Needed

Most parents who were physically punished (or smacked) as children will go on to smack their own children. Some however, break this cycle by deciding not to use physical punishment. My aim in this study is to find out how the cycle of physical punishment is broken by such people, and how the decision not to smack can be maintained.

I need 10 to 20 parents who were smacked as children but who have decided not to smack their own children (of whatever age), to participate in this study. If this applies to you, and you are interested in participating, please contact me on:

07 8432622

021 0507533

gas4@waikato.ac.nz

Participation will involve an interview and a focus group. First year psychology students will receive 1% course credit per hour towards their PSYC102 or PSYC103 papers (one to two hours total).

Primary Supervisor:

Professor Jane Ritchie

Extension: 8402

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Gina Sturkenboom, Masters Student at the University of Waikato

Research Participants Needed

Most parents who were physically punished (or smacked) as children will go on to smack their own children. Some however, break this cycle by deciding not to use physical punishment. My aim in this study is to find out how the cycle of physical punishment is broken by such people, and how the decision not to smack can be maintained.

I need 10 to 20 parents who were smacked as children but who have decided not to smack their own children (of whatever age), to participate in this study. If this applies to you, and you might be interested in participating, please contact me for more information on:

07 8432622

021 0507533

gas4@waikato.ac.nz

Gina Sturkenboom.

Appendix D
Interview Information Sheet

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Interview Information Sheet

Hi. My name is Gina Sturkenboom. I am a student at the University of Waikato and this study will be my Masters Thesis. Physical punishment or smacking of children is a common practice in New Zealand that has recently had a lot of media attention. Most psychological studies of the practice have concluded that smacking is not effective and may be harmful to children. There is also evidence that a person who was smacked as a child will most likely smack their own children as parents. Some parents (like you) have broken this cycle by deciding not to smack their children. In this study I aim to find out how this cycle can be broken, and how the decision not to smack can be maintained. This information will be very useful to anyone who wants to help or encourage other parents to break the cycle.

Participation in this study will involve an interview with me which will be tape recorded. If you decide to participate you will be able to view the questions before the interview and exclude any you don't want to answer. You will also have final say on your interview summary before it is included in the study. You will have complete confidentiality and be referred to by a pseudonym in my thesis, and your children referred to as the son/daughter of your pseudonym (or have their own pseudonym). No one else will see any information which will link you personally to the study and your interview summary and tape recorded interview will either be destroyed or returned to you at the end of the study, whichever you prefer. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, no questions asked. First year students will still receive their 1% course credit if they withdraw. I will send you a short summary of my thesis at the end of the study if you wish.

Please bear in mind that this study will be dealing with what may be sensitive issues regarding your own childhood, and the way you discipline your own children. However you will have the option to pass on any question which you don't want to answer.

Thank you for considering taking part in this study,
Gina Sturkenboom.

Appendix E
Consent Form
University of Waikato
Psychology Department
Consent Form

PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Name of Researcher: Gina Sturkenboom

Name of Supervisors: Professor Jane Ritchie and Darrin Hodgetts

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 838 4466 ext. 8401, e-mail r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

University of Waikato
Psychology Department
Consent Form

RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Name of Researcher: Gina Sturkenboom

Name of Supervisors: Professor Jane Ritchie and Darrin Hodgetts

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Robert Isler, phone: 838 4466 ext. 8401, e-mail r.isler@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Interview Questions List

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Demographics

1. Gender
2. Age bracket: 18 – 27, 28 – 37, 38 – 47, 48 – 57, 58 – 67, 68 – 77
3. Highest level of education
4. Occupation
5. Ethnicity
6. Religion: What is it? How important is it to you?
7. Number/ Age/ Gender of children

Interview Questions

1. What was your experience of being smacked as a child?
2. Who smacked you?
3. How often were you smacked?
4. How were you smacked (or physically punished)?
5. Were you ever injured as a result of smacking (or physical punishment)?
6. Did your parents smack while angry or calm?
7. Did your parents yell as well as smacking?
8. Did your parents use positive reinforcement like praising good behaviour and rewards?
9. What types of behaviour were you smacked for?
10. How did you feel about it at the time?
11. How do you feel about it now?
12. Were you ever smacked (physically punished) so hard you would label it abuse?
13. Did you find it effective?
14. Did you think it was deserved?
15. What other types of disciplinary techniques were used with you?
16. Why do you think you were smacked as opposed to other techniques?
17. Up until what age were you smacked?
18. Do you think being smacked had an effect on your relationship with your parents?

19. What made you decide not to smack your children? (may be multiple factors)
20. When did you make this decision?
21. Was it a deliberate and conscious decision?
22. Who did you talk to about your decision? (Russell & Wood)
23. Who/what made the decision easy?
24. Who/what made the decision difficult?
25. Did you speak to any professionals on the subject? What did they say?
26. Have you had any issues with your own parents as grandparents to your children,

- in regard to your decision not to smack?
27. Has your religion had any impact on your decision not to smack?
 28. What would have made the decision easier that wasn't available to you?
 29. What would you recommend for helping/encouraging other parents to make the decision not to smack?

 30. Have you found it easy or difficult to maintain your decision not to smack?
 31. Who/what makes it easy to maintain your decision?
 32. Who/what makes it difficult to maintain your decision?
 33. Have you had to deal with people who suggest you smack? How have you handled such situations?
 34. Who supports you when your child/ren is/are being particularly difficult?
 35. What would make maintaining your decision easier that hasn't been available to you?
 36. What would you recommend for helping/encouraging parents to maintain the decision not to smack?

 37. How/where did you find/learn alternative disciplinary techniques?
 38. Which alternative disciplinary techniques have you used?
 39. Which alternative disciplinary techniques have you found effective?
 40. Which alternative disciplinary techniques have you found not effective?

 41. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix G
Focus Group Information Sheet

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Focus Group Information Sheet

Thank you for taking part in the interview for this study. As you know the aim of this research is to find out how to encourage or help parents who were smacked to decide not to smack their own children. The interview which you have already completed was the first step in finding out this information and the focus group will be stage two of the study. It will involve a group discussion between some of the people who were interviewed to come up with strategies which could be used to help or encourage other parents to decide not to smack their children.

Again your confidentiality is important. Your name will not be mentioned in the summary of the focus group and no details which could identify you will be included. The focus group will involve other people so all participants will be asked to keep the identities of the other members to themselves. You will not be required to reveal your real name to the other participants. Due to the nature of the focus group question it should not be necessary to share any personal experiences (as was required for the interview). The summary of the results of focus group will be discussed and agreed upon before the end of the focus group.

The focus group will take up to 1 hour and first year students will receive another 1% course credit for participation. You may withdraw from the focus group at any time, no questions asked. First year students will still receive their 1% course credit if they withdraw.

Thank you for considering taking part in stage two of this study,
Gina Sturkenboom

Appendix H

Focus Group Time Probe Email

Hi everyone, Gina Sturkenboom here again.

I've finished the interview part of my thesis and now want to move on to the focus group. I want to have as many people as I can participate in the focus group, but since I'm planning on holding only one at this stage, the time which is chosen will not suit everyone. With this in mind I've decided to send out letters and emails to get an idea of what time of the week, and what time of day people would be available. Please bear in mind that the focus group will have to take place at the University so those of you who have kids to look after would have to be able to organise someone to look after them, or you could bring them, with something to keep them occupied. The time the focus group will take will depend on how much everyone has to say but I would be surprised if it took more than an hour.

Please think about which of these options would work for you, the more the better.

Monday - Morning
Monday - Afternoon
Tuesday - Morning
Tuesday - Afternoon
Wednesday - Morning
Wednesday - Afternoon
Thursday - Morning
Thursday - Afternoon
Friday - Morning
Friday - Afternoon
Saturday - Morning
Saturday - Afternoon
Sunday - Morning
Sunday - Afternoon

You could either email me back, or I'll give you a call in a few days time about your choice/s. When I have the day and time that would suit most people I will contact you back. Please don't be offended if none of the days and times you selected is the one chosen, it will just be the most common choice.

I know this might be a big hassle for many of you, so please don't feel like you have to participate just because you said you might earlier. I really appreciate the contribution that all of you have made to the study so far, I've got some really interesting information from the interviews which I plan to build on in the focus group. I know I already gave you all a copy of the focus group information sheet, but here it is again (attached) for anyone who lost it.

Thanks,
Gina Sturkenboom.

Appendix I

Focus Group Time Probe Letter

Hi everyone, Gina Sturkenboom here again.

I've finished the interview part of my thesis and now want to move on to the focus group. I want to have as many people as I can participate in the focus group, but since I'm planning on holding only one at this stage, the time which is chosen will not suit everyone. With this in mind I've decided to send out letters and emails to get an idea of what time of the week, and what time of day people would be available. Please bear in mind that the focus group will have to take place at the University so those of you who have kids to look after would have to be able to organise someone to look after them, or you could bring them, with something to keep them occupied. The time the focus group will take will depend on how much everyone has to say but I would be surprised if it took more than an hour.

Please think about which of these options would work for you, the more the better.

Monday - Morning
Monday - Afternoon
Tuesday - Morning
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Wednesday - Morning
Wednesday - Afternoon
Thursday - Morning
Thursday - Afternoon
Friday - Morning
Friday - Afternoon
Saturday - Morning
Saturday - Afternoon
Sunday - Morning
Sunday - Afternoon

I'll give you a call in a few days time about your choice/s.

When I have the day and time that would suit most people I will contact you back. Please don't be offended if none of the days and times you selected is the one chosen, it will just be the most common choice.

I know this might be a big hassle for many of you, so please don't feel like you have to participate just because you said you might earlier. I really appreciate the contribution that all of you have made to the study so far, I've got some really interesting information from the interviews which I plan to build on in the focus group. I know I already gave you all a copy of the focus group information sheet, but here it is again for anyone who lost it.

Thanks,
Gina Sturkenboom.

Appendix J
Focus Group Initial Ideas Document

Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Physical Punishment

Focus Group

Area: Making the Decision

Level: Micro

1. Talk to parents who don't smack
2. Talk to adults who weren't smacked as kids
3. Learn about the effects of smacking
4. Take a parenting course
5. Watch parenting shows

Area: Making the Decision Not to Smack

Level: Macro

6. Parenting discussed in ante-natal classes
7. Inform that alternatives require persistence
8. Plunket Nurses (or others?) could go into homes and discuss discipline
9. Something that gets parents to think about their own childhoods, aiming to change attitudes toward smacking (people who were severely physically punished, but who don't label it abuse are less likely to decide not to use smacking)
10. Parenting taught in schools
11. Campaign on the difference between smacking and discipline
12. Information pack given to all new parents covering 1-5 year olds
13. Childcare centres run sessions on discipline
14. More political involvement (e.g. paid parental leave to attend parenting courses?)
(e.g. deletion of Section 59 of the crimes act?)

15. Address the root causes of smacking such as stress
16. More involvement by professionals (teachers/ counsellors/ social workers/ doctors/ nurses), including discussion, distribution of pamphlets etc, referring parents to parenting courses, establishing clear policies on smacking, staff training on how to encourage people not to smack
17. Prevention education aimed at people who were smacked as children, in particular
18. Birth certificates could have a warning that using smacking is potentially harmful to children (or other documents?)
19. Non-smacking posters and pamphlets in maternity wards and doctors offices

Area: Maintaining the Decision Not to Smack

Level: Micro

20. Know about alternatives and child development
21. Think about effects of smacking and non-smacking
22. Have support
23. Remove yourself from the situation
24. Be persistent (especially during transition from smacking to non-smacking)
25. Remember why you decided not to smack
26. Trial and error of alternatives for different kids and different situations
27. Think about what you want to achieve before reacting
28. Think about your temperament, and your kids' temperament when disciplining

Area: Maintaining the Decision not to Smack

Level: Macro

29. Information given to all parents who have a baby so they don't have to find it
30. Parenting taught at High School
31. Counselling for pregnant couples

32. A speaker or course at playgroups and kindergartens
33. All parenting courses should have review documents
34. Address root causes through social welfare
35. Plunket nurses to give information in homes
36. Parenting centres at schools, like the old dental clinics, run by a few experienced parents with appropriate training, and free for all parents.
37. Widespread parenting groups which everyone parent is encouraged to attend
38. Anger management courses, related particularly to dealing with children and the particular frustrations they can entail
39. Something that encourages parent to think about the long term goals of discipline when their child is misbehaving

Section 59 of the Crimes Act

“Every parent of a child or...every person in the place of the parent of a child is justified in using force by correction towards the child, if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances”

- The repeal would mean that children would have the same rights as adults and that physically punishing them would technically be assault.
- The law would be applied in the same way that it is for adults, that is, minor incidents (including most physical punishment) would be ignored by police.
- The repeal would demonstrate that the Government holds a negative stance on smacking.
- The repeal would mean that people in court on charges of child abuse would not be able to use it as a defence.
- **The question is: do you think the repeal of Section 59 would encourage parents to make the decision not to smack, if they were made aware of it?**

Possibilities for Addressing Root Causes through Social Welfare

Sweden has taken the following steps (among others) to reduce the stress of being a parent, with the aim of increasing the welfare of children.

- 12 months shared parental leave, paid at 75%

- Parents entitled to reduce their workload by 25% until their youngest child is 7
- Large subsidies for day care (up to 89%)
- A tax free child allowance for each child under 16
- Free health care for children in schools
- 50 days paid pregnancy leave

New Zealand already has the 'Working for Families' scheme which includes an accommodation supplement, day care and out of school care subsidies, family support, an in-work payment, a family tax credit, and a parental tax credit.