

**DISCIPLINE, POWER AND GUIDANCE: THE PARENTAL  
CESSATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

by

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

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**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

August 1997

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0-612-24185-8

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## Abstract

This study reports a qualitative investigation into 12 mothers and a single father who had decided, as a result of dissatisfaction, to cease using corporal punishment. Parents were from a range of cultural, religious and educational backgrounds. Their children's ages ranged from preschoolers to thirteen years. Two parents discussed children who are now adult. Parents' use of corporal punishment ranged from 'mild' spanking to spanking causing bruising and/or with implements. Parents were interviewed concerning their use of corporal punishment; the resources and processes used to develop alternatives; the effects of cessation on themselves, their children and the parent-child relationship.

In Chapter One I outline the legal background for corporal punishment of children and the nature of the associated risk factors. Chapter Two consists of a review of the literature concerning corporal punishment with respect to the effects on children and parents, parenting programs and connections between corporal punishment and physical child abuse. In Chapter Three I discuss methodology. I consider my interview protocol, issues of consistency and applicability, and the coding process which used the computer program HYPERRESEARCH. Chapter Four contains the results. Parents' use of corporal punishment was associated with parental distress and guilt, risk of harming child and aggression by the child. Parents expended considerable time and energy on both learning new strategies and carrying them out. After cessation parents reported increased sense of parenting competency and self regard, and reduction in negative affect. Children were more content and cooperative. This resulted in a more pleasurable and stronger parent-child bond. In Chapter Five these findings are related to other research. A theory of cessation of corporal punishment is proposed.

**Key Words: Corporal punishment, Parental Processes, Psychological Distress,  
Parent-Child Relations.**

## **Dedication**

For the children,  
that they may increasingly grow respected and loved,  
without burdens from the past, for their parent's,  
for Sheila and for Jacob.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*I would like to thank the participants who expressed commitment to this research and who relayed their experiences with their children. I would also like to thank Dr Michael Manley-Casimir and Dr Lucy LeMare for their feedback and insistent criticism of this research. Thankyou to Sheila Daykin Lindfield for her patient advice and encouragement. Thanks also to the following people, Corinne Robertshaw, of the Committee to Repeal Section 43, to Peter Newell and Miranda Horobin of EPOCH WORLDWIDE, and Dr Marie Hay, Child Development Centre, Prince George, Canada, for their encouragement and their work on behalf of children, and to Dr Penelope Leach for her time and thought. Thanks to Dr Murray Straus for permission to adapt his process model of corporal punishment for Figure 1. Lastly to Dr Michael Manley-Casimir and Dr Lucy LeMare and Sheila Daykin Lindfield for their work proofing the manuscript.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

Corporal punishment of children by their parents is a deeply entrenched practice passed on from generation to generation. The public attention to child abuse within the last twenty years has apparently had little impact on the numbers of parents using corporal punishment, although anecdotal accounts suggest that the overall intensity of punishment may be less than it was ten years ago (Straus, 1994). Durrant (1993a), in an area survey of Torontonians, found that over 75% of respondents supported the use of corporal punishment of children. A majority of respondents felt ambivalent about its use, believed that parental guilt was a possible outcome and were unaware of a connection with physical child abuse.

Twenty years ago corporal punishment of children was an almost invisible issue. Since then however, the pace of research on this topic has increased substantially. The main impetus for much of this research is the increasing understanding of both the prevalence and harmful nature of the practice. In an extensive literature review Burns (1993) found no evidence of beneficial effects of corporal punishment on children. On the contrary she found evidence linking corporal punishment with harm to children's self esteem, physical child abuse (Kadushin & Martin, 1981) and violence both within and outside the family (Straus, 1991).

Straus (1991) used data from the National Family Violence Survey and the Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS). Straus found that corporal punishment tended to "Increase the probability of deviance, including delinquency in adolescence and violent crime both inside and outside the family as an adult" (p.133). Crimes inside the family included: spouse assault (most seriously wife assault), and physical child abuse. Crimes outside the family included adult assault. Both juvenile assault and theft rate correlated with the frequency of corporal punishment experienced as a child.

In support of Straus (1991), Newson and Newson (1989) in the U.K. used extensive longitudinal data to investigate a connection between corporal punishment and delinquency. (This study is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Two). These investigators found that setting aside the effects of class, sex and family size, there was a significant association between the frequency and intensity of corporal punishment and the delinquency of the child. When Newson and Newson looked at which children developed a criminal record before the age of 19, they found that the factors most predictive of developing a criminal record were being smacked or beaten at least once a week at age 11 and having a mother with a strong commitment to formal corporal punishment at that age. Having an involved but non-punishing father stood out as protecting the child from developing a criminal record. Although the direction of causality is unclear, Newson and Newson concluded that mothers using frequent spanking and beating did not prevent delinquency in children.

The effects of corporal punishment may be intrapersonal as well as interpersonal. Straus and Kantor (1994) using adult recall in a subset of 6,002 individuals included in the National Family Violence Survey, found that adult depression and suicidal ideation for both men and women increased markedly with increasing frequency of corporal punishment experienced as an adolescent. Straus and Kantor also found a positive correlation between increasing frequency of binge or high daily drinking and increased frequency of corporal punishment experienced as a male adolescent. The authors do not suggest that corporal punishment is the sole cause of depression, suicidal ideation, or alcoholism and acknowledge the tentative nature of their findings.

The position of bias and the impetus for this thesis are founded in my sense that corporal punishment of children is at root an issue of social injustice. Arguments concerning the effectiveness or the benign nature of the practice, both of which I

dispute, are argued from a position that accords the right of one group in power: parents (and to a limited extent teachers) to inflict pain on another group without power: children. Considerations of parents' right to physically discipline their children ignore a child's right to his/her physical integrity. We now find it unthinkable that women be subject to the use of force by their husbands or partners, as a means to "keep them in line," but it was only in 1982 that this was acknowledged in law in Canada. Section 43 of the Canadian Criminal Code specifically allows the use of "reasonable force" on children by parents, teachers, and those in *loco parentis*. Recent Canadian court cases have allowed the use of belts, sticks and fists on children (Robertshaw, 1994).

Attitudes toward children are beginning to change. Five European countries have made "moral conduct" laws banning physical punishment of children. These include Sweden (1979), Finland (1984), Denmark (1986), Norway (1987) and Austria (1989) (EPOCH, 1991). The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Canada ratified in 1991, specifically encourages countries to "take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence" (EPOCH WORLDWIDE, 1994). In Canada there is an increasing number of individuals and organisations calling for both repeal of Section 43 and the establishment of public education programs concerning alternatives to corporal punishment (Durrant, 1995). The impetus for educational programs and legislative reform is motivated by three main factors: (1) research indicating the potential for physical punishment to escalate into physical child abuse; (2) the psychological and physical dangers associated with the practice and (3) the rights of the child to his or her physical integrity.

In summary the use of corporal punishment carries substantial risks and arguably exerts a profound negative influence on North American society. Increasing frequency of corporal punishment is related to increasing risk of hitting

siblings, peers and later spouse assault and adult crime. Increasing frequency of corporal punishment experienced as a child is associated with increased risk of adolescent and adult onset depression, alcoholism, and diminished earnings and educational attainment (Straus, 1994). This extensive list of social ills suggests that research into processes and effects of the cessation of corporal punishment will be useful for two purposes: 1) to document what actually occurs when the risk factor of corporal punishment is removed from a family; and 2) to document the most important precursors and processes involved in cessation of corporal punishment.

In contrast to the widespread documentation of the risks of corporal punishment, research into families that have stopped using corporal punishment and altered their approaches to child discipline is sparse. Mishkin (1987) and Carson (1986) have both interviewed parents in whom non-hitting practices were long established. Haueser (1988) surveyed effects of changes in legislation in Sweden on the development of new parental discipline strategies. (These studies are discussed in Chapter Two). The current study will increase understanding of the effects of parents changing from hitting to non-hitting practices and the concomitant effects on their children. To date the majority of research into corporal punishment has concentrated on documenting the accumulating risks of corporal punishment and the distribution and frequency of the practice. In contrast this study will provide information on the effects of corporal punishment cessation. Investigating changes that occur when corporal punishment stops will add a further dimension to the accumulated research, strengthening or challenging the kinds of claims that are made about corporal punishment. Furthermore the current research has been done at a time of increasing social awareness concerning the risks of corporal punishment. It is probable that there are other families who are questioning their

disciplinary methods. Very little is known about these families. This research will begin to provide information on these families and the process of cessation.

### Summary and purpose of the proposed study

In view of: (1) the historical development of children's rights; (2) the increasing research into the harmful effects of corporal punishment and (3) the increasing demand for public education programs concerning alternatives to corporal punishment both in Canada and elsewhere, the purpose of this study is to investigate what happens when parents do decide to change their childrearing behaviour; that is, what happens within individual families when the very goals of an education program begin to be achieved. This research will provide information on parents' successes and difficulties in developing non-violent approaches to discipline. It will also provide some initial information about two conflicting propositions; (1) that children and parents will benefit from the absence of corporal punishment, and (2) that corporal punishment is necessary to maintain discipline in the family.

### Research question

What are the experiences and perceptions of parents who substantially alter their methods of childrearing from use of corporal punishment to alternative methods of discipline in mid-family?

In order to address the research question I interviewed parents about a number of issues. These interviews are described in Chapter 3 on methodology.



### Definition of key terms

Corporal Punishment: I define corporal punishment after Leach (1992) as any punishment which uses physical force to cause deliberate discomfort including slapping, spanking, beating, whipping and confining children in small spaces and tying them up.

Physical abuse: Any intentional practice that results in physical injury to the child. Abuse may be caused by harsh corporal punishment or other practices.

Positive Parenting: Parenting practices that encourage the development of internal discipline for the child through secure attachment, modelling and proactive intervention. These practices do not rely on corporal punishment for discipline.

### Literature review

My literature review focuses on the following areas: the gender, and socio-economic correlates of corporal punishment; the effects of corporal punishment on children and subsequently in adulthood; the experiences of parents who use corporal punishment, and the experiences of parents who don't use corporal punishment. I also review research on approaches to parenting.

### Outline of other chapters in the thesis.

In Chapter Two I review research into corporal punishment and the educational steps taken to reduce it. Chapter Three includes an examination of the methodology of qualitative research in general and this study in particular. In Chapter Four I report on the findings from the interviews and in Chapter Five I discuss the implications of the findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review Of The Literature Concerned With The Cessation Of Corporal Punishment

To establish clearly what happens when parents cease using corporal punishment, it is necessary to provide a context by examining the research on corporal punishment of children. I examine three main areas. In the first section, "Who hits who and when", I examine the socioeconomic, cultural, age and gender correlates of using corporal punishment. In the second section, "Hitting and abuse", I examine both the connection between corporal punishment and physical child abuse, and the intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment and physical child abuse. In the third area, "Effects and beliefs", I examine research into the effects of corporal punishment on children and subsequent effects in adulthood, beliefs of parents and children about the efficacy of corporal punishment, and a brief survey of the theoretical approaches to parenting that inform common types of parenting classes.

#### Who Hits Who and When

#### The Socio-Economic, Cultural, Age and Gender Characteristics of the use of Corporal Punishment

#### Socio-economic Status and Corporal Punishment

Due to the pervasive effect of socio-economic status (SES) in our culture it is important to explore the links between SES and the use of corporal punishment. A common perception is that corporal punishment is a predominantly working class practice. Evidence suggests however, that this is unfounded. Erlanger (1974a) concluded that SES differences were slight and that they were probably of little significance. More recently Straus (1995) used

data from the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, in which 7,725 women were asked how many times they had found it necessary to use spanking in the previous week. Straus found significant relationships between SES and both prevalence (numbers of parents spanking) and chronicity (frequency of spanking). As SES increases prevalence decreases slightly and chronicity decreases. Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit and Bates (1994) also found that as SES increased corporal punishment chronicity decreased. Unlike the research data on physical child abuse however, Straus (1995) found that increases in education were not associated with lower rates of corporal punishment. This finding is supported by Holden, Coleman, and Schmidt (1995) who found a high frequency of corporal punishment among college educated mothers (approximately 130 incidents a year). These findings appear paradoxical; one would expect SES to be linked with education and rates of corporal punishment to vary in a similar fashion.

In the U.K., Newson and Newson (1989) found that for children up to eleven years old, the prevalence, chronicity, and use of an implement varied only slightly with class. Slight decreases and increases occurred in the highest and lowest classes respectively (Class 1, Professional, Managerial; Class V, Unskilled). In the U.S., Straus and Donnelly (1993), using both adult recall and contemporaneous data derived from interviews, found that the highest prevalence of corporal punishment on adolescents was near the middle of the SES distribution. When chronicity was measured Straus and Donnelly found that the higher the SES, the less often the adolescents were hit. Straus and Donnelly suggested that the differences in findings concerning SES may derive from earlier studies only having considered prevalence of corporal punishment rather than chronicity.

Little research has been carried out specifically in Canada to determine the socio-economic correlates of physical punishment. Durrant (1993b), however, found that support for the current law allowing spanking was correlated with the respondents' discipline history rather than education and income. Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell and Babonis (1994), using non-random sampling, asked 449 parents to report childhood experiences of punishment, parents' current approval of different kinds of punishments and to rate the level of risk of those punishments. In support of Durrant (1993b), Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell and Babonis (1994) concluded "Our results show that having had physical or emotional punishment experiences is the most significant risk factor [for approval of that form of punishment], more so than race, income, gender, or education" (p.952). Due to the small size of the sample in this study in comparison with the survey data of Straus (1995), and the fact that none of the prevalence studies cited above investigated participants' own childhood histories, it is difficult to assess whether SES or childhood history is a better predictor for approval of corporal punishment. I was unable to find any research into corporal punishment cessation and SES. Mishkin (1987), however, noted that parents who didn't spank in spite of their own childhood experiences were likely to be older, have education beyond a degree and have a milder temperament. These factors may be indirectly associated with higher SES, although Mishkin (1987) did not report a direct connection.

In summary, given the fairly similar SES backgrounds of the participants in my study and the research findings of the high chronicity at all levels of SES, discipline history may be a more salient factor than SES. In light of the findings of Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell and Babonis (1994), I propose that participants who experienced frequent corporal punishment as children are likely to initially have had a high approval rate for corporal punishment.

Furthermore, if cessation has effects on parents and children, these effects are likely to be most visible in participants who previously had a high spanking level. The extent of their change from frequent spanking to cessation would highlight both the processes and the effects involved.

### Age, and Frequency of Corporal Punishment

Establishing the ages of children at which parents most frequently use corporal punishment and when parents most frequently begin and cease corporal punishment is important for this study. Knowing this provides a background against which parents' assertion of cessation can be assessed. Research into age and gender correlates of corporal punishment are unavailable for Canada, but are probably somewhat similar to those of the U.S. and U.K.. In the U.K., Newson and Newson (1989) carried out a longitudinal study on 700 families. Mothers were interviewed as their children reached their first, fourth, seventh, eleventh and sixteenth birthdays. Newson and Newson found that 50% of their sample of mothers had already physically punished their one year old infants. Research in the U.S. indicated that corporal punishment was used by parents in increasing amounts on their children up to four years old. After six years of age the rate of corporal punishment declined (Straus 1994). In the U.K., Newson and Newson (1989), found that of those parents who continued to use corporal punishment, the proportion who graduated to using or threatening to use an implement increased. The result was a proportion of parents continued to escalate the severity of their punishment as their child became older.

In the U.S. using National Family Violence Survey data, Wauschope and Straus (cited in Straus, 1994) found that corporal punishment was used most frequently with three to six year old children (by approximately 91% of the U.S.

population). Three to four year old children were hit on average ten times a year. Although mothers tended to hit more than fathers and boys tended to be hit more than girls, the differences were not large (Straus, 1994). Straus notes that this study relied on both adult recall and a telephone survey. Therefore it was likely to provide a "vast underestimate" for two reasons. The first is that only one parent was reporting on their own use of punishment. As both fathers and mothers spank with similar frequency, this could conceivably result in an estimate of double the number of spankings. The second is that many incidents of corporal punishment are simply not regarded by parents as either punishment or significant and were therefore not reported to the researchers.

Studies that did not rely on the use of memory extended over a preceding year but rather used observational or home interview studies have produced higher rates of chronicity. (Newson & Newson, 1989, reported a proportion of parents hit their children during the course of an hour long interview!). The U.K. has a similar number of parents endorsing corporal punishment as the U.S. (83% U.K. and 91% U.S.) and like in the U.S., corporal punishment is used most frequently on three to six year olds (Newson & Newson, 1989). Newson and Newson, however, reported a much higher rate of chronicity (75% smacking at least once a week) than did Straus (1994). Newson and Newson (1989) found 68% of U.K. four year olds were smacked on between one and six days a week. When their children were age seven, 41% of parents were using corporal punishment at least once a week. In confirmation that Straus' (1994) apparently low estimate of ten incidents per year may be due to poor adult recall, Holden, Coleman and Schmidt (1995) found three quarters of U.S. college educated mothers hit their three year old children an average of two and a half times a week. This would give a minimum of 130 incidents involving corporal punishment per year for three year olds. Holden et al. collected data

by telephoning mothers daily for two weeks and interviewed them about a range of disciplinary procedures (mothers were unaware of the research focus on corporal punishment). The frequency of research contact in this study likely gave a more complete picture than relying on adult recall over the previous year, as was the case in Straus (1994). It should be noted, however, that Holden, et al. did not record incidences of paternal corporal punishment, so children's total experience of punishment may have been underestimated. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, and asking 7,725 mothers about spanking incidents within the past week, Straus (1995) arrived at a similar estimate of a mean of 150 incidents of corporal punishment a year administered by mothers on 3 to 5 year olds. For the purposes of the current study I will use this estimate as a guide to chronicity. An average rate of one spanking every second day suggests that corporal punishment may be a significant factor in many parents' and children's lives.

Although chronicity of spanking declines after six years of age, 54% of 6 to 9 years old, and children above age 10 are hit on average once a week, (Sims, Straus & Sugarman, 1995). Wauschope and Straus (cited in Straus, 1994) report that about 50% of U.S. adolescents ages 13 and 14 are still being hit at least once in a twelve month period with a mean of seven times a year. After this age the incidence of punishment declines still further. Straus (1994) noted however, that a significant number of adolescents had been hit by one of their parents in their last year of high school. Durrant (1993a) found that Canada has a lower approval rate of the use of physical punishment than the U.S.. I assume that both the prevalence rate and the chronicity would be lower in Canada. This would, however, still suggest a significant number of adolescents being hit in Canada.

In summary, estimates of frequency of corporal punishment with children aged three to five years old range from more than 10 to 150 + incidents per year. Cessation of corporal punishment for parents punishing this frequently would clearly involve a major shift in behaviour and discipline strategy. Parents who stop using corporal punishment when their children are between the age of one and six years are doing so contrary to the U.S. and Canadian norm. Parents who stop after their children reach the age of six are acting congruently with approximately 20 % of the U.S. population (Straus, 1994). In light of Sims, Straus and Sugarman's (1995) finding that 20% of mothers of 6 to 9 year olds are spanking a mean of two times a week, it is conceivable that parents in the current study may have continued spanking for a number of years more had they not decided to stop. Indeed Straus (1994) found that 50% of adolescents are being hit an average of 6-8 times a year.

For the purposes of this study, I have accepted at face value participants' self-evaluation as ex-spankers. Participants stated that they would have continued to spank, had they not consciously developed alternatives. The participants' statements are congruent with the high frequency, chronicity and the extended period over which a significant proportion of parents use corporal punishment. Parents in this study stopped when their youngest children were between the ages of 0 to 5 years. As this is within the period of maximum chronicity (up to six years), it lends further support to their own assertion that cessation occurred as a result of conscious decision rather than "growing out of the habit".

#### Gender and Corporal Punishment

It is also important to understand the gender correlates of corporal punishment, both in terms of the punisher and recipient. Both mothers and



fathers tend to hit boys more often and more severely (Carson, 1986). Newson and Newson (1989) found that at age seven, gender differences were more significant than class ones with boys being hit more often than girls. Although Straus and Donnelly (1993) noted a tendency for mothers to hit adolescent daughters and for fathers to hit their adolescent sons, the predominant tendency was for both parents to hit children of either sex. Fifty-eight percent of U.S. adolescent boys and forty-four percent of the girls reported being hit by their parents. Newson and Newson (1989) and Straus and Donnelly (1993) note that mothers tended to use slightly more corporal punishment than fathers and that this probably resulted from them being culturally assigned more childrearing responsibility and spending more time with their children.

In summary, because mothers are marginally more responsible for corporal punishment their reports are likely to be slightly more informative than those of fathers. In this study I interviewed 12 mothers and one father. In view of the tendency of both mothers and fathers to hit sons harder and more frequently than daughters, maternal reports of consciously stopping hitting boys may contain slightly more information than reports of cessation with daughters. Participants in this study had twelve sons and nine daughters.

### Culture

Although the majority of cultures endorse hitting children, the frequency of hitting may vary from culture to culture, from highly punitive to moderate levels of punishment. Newson and Newson (1989) studied a sample of seven year olds and found that British-Jamaican children were corporally punished significantly more than 'indigenous' samples and British-Punjabi children were corporally punished significantly less. Both Carson (1986) and Straus (1994) suggest that the more a particular culture values conformity relative to self-

reliance in economic, family, political, and religious realms, the more frequently corporal punishment is likely to occur. In contrast to Newson and Newson (1989), Cazenave and Straus (cited in Straus, 1994) report some evidence that white parents in the U.S. are more likely to slap or or spank a child than minority parents.

Without being able to establish the typicality of each participant with respect to their culture it is hard to assess the way in which culture affects cessation in this study. Although the level of corporal punishment varies in different cultures it is nevertheless frequent in most cultures of the world. The participants in this study were from a range of cultures, the majority being from white, U.S. and Canadian European backgrounds, with corresponding high rates of corporal punishment. The high frequency backgrounds of the participants may allow a clearer assessment of the effects of cessation on both parents and children, than if participants were drawn from cultures in which corporal punishment was less frequent.

## Section Two, Hitting and Abuse

### Physical Child Abuse

Research indicates a number of connections between corporal punishment and child abuse (Zahn-Waxler & Chapman, 1982). I will consider physical abuse in some detail because, as many people have argued, the processes lie on a continuum with "normal" physical disciplinary encounters and as I intend to delineate, share many of the same features (Kadushin & Martin, 1981). A number of studies suggest that corporal punishment and abuse are linked in three ways. The first occurs when parents overextend the use of socially sanctioned force in a highly emotionally charged moment. This overextension may have been a result of childrearing beliefs, an expression of feeling or a

combination of both. The second way is that the higher the frequency of corporal punishment received as a child the greater a person's risk is of being physically abusive to their own children. The third is that the more committed a parent is to corporal punishment the more likely they are to abuse their child (Straus, 1991).

Zigler and Hall (cited in Durrant, 1993b) note that corporal punishment accounts for 60% of all forms of child abuse cases. In response to a perceived indiscretion, parents either attempt to discipline a child and then lose control of their anger, or parents underestimate their strength. The difference in size and the force employed between an adult and a child can cause the child to be hurt through falling or to receive "severe abrasions, hematomas, broken bones, whiplash injuries ... and sciatic nerve damage" (Durrant, 1993b). In extreme cases the parent's use of corporal punishment may cause the death of the child (Robertshaw, 1994). The possibility of injury occurring as a result of corporal punishment may be one reason parents stop using it altogether. Kadushin and Martin (1981), in a major qualitative study on physical child abuse note that "the problem lies in distinguishing discipline which is 'legitimate violence' toward children from abuse which is excessive and inappropriate and, hence, unacceptable violence toward children" (Kadushin & Martin, 1981, p.12). Straus (1991), Newell (1989), and Miller (1983), however, all conclude that such a distinction is impossible to make and that there is no "acceptable" level of violence against children. As Miller notes, "Although people tend to make a distinction between "spanking" and "beating", considering the former the less severe measure, the line between the two is a tenuous one" (Miller, 1983, p. ix).

Further support for corporal punishment and physical abuse lying on a continuum was found by Zahn-Waxler and Chapman (1982). These researchers trained "normal" mothers (parents of one to two year olds) to report

on the antecedents to particular kinds of discipline measures. Zahn-Waxler and Chapman note, "Normal mothers often reported extreme negative behaviors toward their young children and sometimes came close to inflicting harm" (p.191). Also in support of a continuum hypothesis, Safran (1981), found that over half of the 400,000 respondents to a questionnaire on child discipline in Redbook magazine, reported that they had come close to harming their child "at least once or twice" when they were spanking their children. Newell (1989) reports a U.K. magazine survey in which over a quarter of the respondents admitted losing control when they were disciplining their children. While the figures in both these studies are imprecise due to non-random sampling, they do give an insight into how parental frustration during punishment can lead to abuse and why child abuse researchers have been reluctant to pathologise physical child abusers as being abnormal. Robertshaw (1994) notes that in a culture such as Canada, whose laws both respond to and play a part in maintaining a norm of the use of force in childrearing, it is inevitable that a certain number of people will go beyond the norm and batter their children. Straus and Moore (cited in Straus, 1991) found that parents who believed in the efficacy of corporal punishment had a child abuse rate four times the rate of parents who did not approve of corporal punishment. Parents who endorsed the use of corporal punishment both hit more often and used punching and kicking, which carry greater risk of injury for the child.

Kadushin and Martin (1981) conducted interviews with 66 parents who had admitted to physically abusing their children. They concluded that almost all the cases had started with a non-abusive physical disciplinary action that escalated out of the parent's control. Abuse most often occurred as extensions of "disciplinary actions which at some point and often inadvertently, crossed the ambiguous line between sanctioned corporal punishment and unsanctioned

child abuse" (Kadushin & Martin, 1981, p.263). Typically the abuse event started with the child acting in a way of which the parent strongly disapproved. The parents may have then sought an explanation of the child's behaviour or begun to see the situation as a contest of wills. The parent's use of corporal punishment was intended to change the child's behaviour: either to act or to halt an action. Punishment was intended to "teach the child a lesson" or to reassert parental authority. Other parents reported that they had responded impulsively. A father responded "I didn't have any intention of doing what I did, it all just happened" (Kadushin & Martin, 1981, p. 189). The parents defined their behaviour and intentions as disciplinary and not abusive at the time of the event. Parents said "I want him to learn to take orders and to listen." "For one thing hopefully he would start listening to us when we say something, we mean it." One mother, who used an extension cord on her 13 year old daughter, said "I wanted her to know that I did care and I was worried ... I just came to the point where I just didn't know what else to do" (Kadushin & Martin, 1981, p. 190). Although reflecting a greater use of force, many of these phrases are similar in kind to those I have heard made by non-abusive parents in reporting their use of corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment was used by some of the abusive parents in Kadushin and Martin (1982) as expression of strong feeling. One mother who slapped her daughter for throwing and breaking a statuette during an argument, said "It was just - she hurt me. It was something I cared about ... and all I could see was I wanted to hurt her back ... And I couldn't think ... maybe it's what they call a blind rage" (Kadushin & Martin, 1981, p. 196). The child's response, which had been regarded by the parent as inappropriate may have included responding with a verbal or physically defiant gesture. Parents' reported feeling overwhelmed, out of control, and feeling hate, and anger during the course of

the abusive incident. When the incident was terminated the dominant thought was regret and the dominant feeling was one of guilt or depression. "I just sat down and and started crying," "I felt sorry for him and I felt sorry for myself because I showed myself that my temper can get out of control and that's something I feel everybody should be able to control." (Kadushin & Martin, 1982, p. 197).

Kadushin and Martin found that after the event parents realised their actions had affected their children. Parents thought their children were bitter or resentful and wanted to avoid the parent. Parents thought that their child; "probably hated me," "she was feeling that maybe I didn't love her because if I did I how could I treat her this way?" Some of these parents thought that they would do things altogether differently next time. They would use more non-physical procedures with greater persistence: explaining more, talking to the child, giving the child more time and attention. "I would listen more to his side of things. I didn't really get what I wanted by just beating him ... Just by letting him be a child I found out he is much happier. It made me much happier too" (Kadushin & Martin, 1982, p. 218).

Although the level of force used in the above incidents is greater than used in an average spanking there are three themes that are relevant to this study. The first is the parental emphasis on compliance noted by Holden, Coleman, and Schmidt (1995). Parents mostly frequently used corporal punishment to enforce a rule like no hitting. The second is the parental feeling of being almost out of control during the discipline incident, as noted by Zahn-Waxler and Chapman (1982). Carson (1986) found that parents who used spanking but regarded it as ineffective reported that they spanked because they lost control of their anger or became so frustrated that they did not know what else to do. The third relevant theme centers around parents' reported feelings of hate, anger, being

overwhelmed and out of control during the course of the abusive incident, then feeling variously guilt, sadness, anger and depression after the incident. Mothers who used mild-to-moderate hitting reported similar negative affectual states in Berry's (1990) phenomenological study.

The processes by which corporal punishment and physical child abuse are passed on to the next generation, constitutes a possible further connection between these practices. I found no research on the intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment, so I will briefly review the research into the intergenerational transmission and discontinuity of physical child abuse. (I have used the terms 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' to signify the passage or interruption of child abuse or corporal punishment from one generation to the next).

#### The Intergenerational Transmission And Discontinuity Of Abuse And Corporal Punishment

Berger, Knutson, Mehm and Perkins (1988) in a survey of U.S. college students found that only 43% of those students who had their bones broken in the course of parental "discipline" considered themselves abused. Berger et al. (1988) found that many university students described their own upbringing as "harsh", "strict" or "uncompromising." These same students, however, labelled identical backgrounds of others as "abusive." These respondents appeared to be excluding the nature of their own history from their awareness. The authors suggested "that recipients of extremely punitive discipline fail to recognise the inappropriateness of specific acts of discipline" (Berger et al., 1988, p. 262). This failure may result in abuse being perpetuated on the recipients own children.

A large percentage of people who experienced childhood abuse do not perpetuate abuse when they become parents. Estimates of transmission rates vary from 5% to more than 70%. Although the factors that account for discontinuity of intergenerational transmission of abuse are not fully determined, several authors have found that reflection in adulthood on abusive childhood experiences is a key process in discontinuity (Egeland & Susman-Stillman, 1996; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Kaufman & Zigler, 1987). All of these authors report that mothers who were abused as children and then went on to abuse their own children were not able to remember their childhoods, or provided fragmentary or idealised accounts. In contrast, childhood abused mothers who were non-abusive as parents were able to give the researchers coherent accounts of their childhood. These accounts integrated thoughts, painful feelings and memories. Non-abusive mothers "recalled their childhood experience in an integrative fashion and they talked about their history in a way that sounded like it happened to them. They didn't avoid their experience and they reflected on it in a way that indicated that their life had advanced" (Egeland & Susman-Stillman, 1996, p. 1128). Kaufmann and Zigler (1987) conclude that one of the most important mediators of intergenerational transmission of child abuse is the degree to which painful childhood experiences are left unconsidered and unexamined and become absorbed into the unconscious. They suggest that the presence or absence of critical reconsideration and emotional processing is a crucial factor in the varying rates of transmission of child abuse.

When considering the intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment, many authors note that parents tend to use disciplinary methods learnt from their parents as children. For example, longitudinal studies conducted over a twenty year period by Eron, Huesmann, Dubow, Romanoff,



and Yarmel (1983) found that the level of a child's aggression, as judged by school peers at age eight, relates to how severely the child was punished at home and in turn how severely they punish their own children as an adult. Straus (1991) found that the more a person experienced corporal punishment as a teenager the more likely they were to use it on their own children. (After 11 or more instances, they used less corporal punishment on their own children than they themselves had experienced).

Corporal punishment is transmitted at higher rates than abuse. This is probably a function of legislated and societal sanctions against abuse on the one hand and the tolerance and legal endorsement of corporal punishment on the other. Researchers into child abuse accept that abuse results in trauma for the child (Miller, 1983; Herman, 1990). More recently, Straus (1994) has conceptualised corporal punishment as traumatic. Because punishment and abuse lie on a continuum of escalating severity and trauma, it is possible that similar processes are involved in the discontinuity of intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment. I hypothesize that the process of emotional processing of past experience may be important in the discontinuity of corporal punishment. (Later in the text I have termed this process "reevaluation"). In support of this hypothesis, Carson (1986) found that non-spanking parents who had clear memories of past childhood maltreatment were amongst the most committed non-spankers of her sample. These parents made spontaneous remarks concerning the importance to them of raising their own children in an environment that was safe from parental use of force. Several non-spanking parents in Mishkin's (1987) study also reported that they remembered the pain and humiliation of corporal punishment in their childhood and did not want to pass on the experience to their own children. Intergenerational discontinuity of corporal punishment is mediated by several

other factors and processes. Mishkin (1987) found age, milder temperament, education beyond a college degree and witnessing corporal punishment to be additional factors for non-spanking parents who had experienced corporal punishment as children. I would argue that these factors are likely to provide an opportunity or stimulus to reflect on childhood experience, which could result in the parents using less corporal punishment with their own children.

In view of the research suggesting that reflection on past painful experience is a significant factor in the discontinuity of both abuse and possibly corporal punishment, I asked participants about their memories of their own childhood. I also asked how their memories related to their discipline of their children before they stopped corporal punishment and their current practices. Although I didn't ask directly about the extent of their reflection on their childhood memories, I have subsequently looked for this in the analysis of my data.

### Section Three. The Effects and Beliefs

#### The Effects on Children of Corporal Punishment

The common sense view is that the child's feelings of pain, hurt, anger and fear associated with corporal punishment are short lived, transitory effects (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981). Research suggests, however, that the effects of corporal punishment continue to play a part in the later behaviour of children and adults (Straus, 1994). Miller (1983) has argued that the feelings engendered in the child by punishment go on reverberating unconsciously through childhood and into adulthood. As outlined in Chapter 1 these may affect adult behaviour. Corporal punishment may also affect social and moral development in children. In examining the effects of corporal punishment on children, Herman (cited in Newell, 1989) summarised a series of studies.

Children who fear physical punishment for their transgressions tend to have less guilt over their improper behavior, less willingness to confess and to accept blame for such behavior, less resistance to temptation, and in general a lower [moral] orientation than children whose parents tend not to rely on physical punishment (Newell, 1989, p.47).

One of the most consistent observations in the literature, however, is an association between the childhood experience of corporal punishment and aggression against peers or siblings (Sears, Maccoby & Lewin, 1957; Straus, 1994; Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994). Many authors (Newell, 1989; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981; Bandura, 1973) note that corporal punishment provides a model of the use of force. "When the parents punish they are providing a living example of aggression at the very moment they are trying to teach the child not to be aggressive" (Sears, Maccoby & Lewin, 1957, p.36).

Straus (1991) found that children who were physically punished during the year of the 1975 Family Violence Survey were almost three times more likely to severely and repeatedly assault a sibling during the year. Durrant (1993a) reported one of the most frequent reasons parents use corporal punishment is for their child hitting another. It is likely that in many of the families she studied, punishment was for hitting a sibling.

Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit and Bates (1994) investigated both paternal and maternal disciplinary practices toward kindergarten age children through both interview and parents' responses on the Conflict Tactic Scale. Six months later they observed the parents' children for instances of aggressive behaviour in the classroom and on the playground. Aggression by children whose parents used corporal punishment was significantly higher than among children whose

parents did not use corporal punishment. Although there were some differences related to gender of both parent and child, in general the "behaviour of both parents is associated with both boys' and girls' person directed ... aggression" (Strassberg et al., 1994, p. 457). Although this data is correlational rather than experimental, it is consistent with the hypothesis that corporal punishment is one of the causative factors involved in childrens' aggression towards their peers. Similarly Bellak and Antell (1974) in a study of children's playground behaviour, found a clear association between the aggressive behaviour of the children and the aggressive behaviour of their parents towards them. A positive relationship has been found between frequency of corporal punishment and the frequency of use of force toward siblings and parents among samples of preschoolers (Larzelere, 1986), schoolchildren (Eron, 1982) and adolescents (Larzelere, 1986).

The consistency with which peer aggression has been observed in the corporal punishment literature and the strength of the effect, especially with boys, initially suggests that presence or absence of peer aggression before or after cessation of corporal punishment may provide a useful marker of the effects of cessation on children. It is not, however, clear from the literature whether stopping using corporal punishment would result in children also ceasing to aggress against their peers. Factors which may have an impact on whether or not peer aggression is altered by parental cessation include the age of the child when their parent ceased to use punishment, and the duration and severity of corporal punishment. In order to gather some preliminary data on this subject, I asked parents about their children's behaviour at home and school and their relationships with their peers both before and after cessation.

### Children's Beliefs About Punishment And Discipline

In one of the few research investigations into children's beliefs about punishment, Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) asked samples of 12 and 13 year olds in New Zealand, what they thought about being hit by their parents. Over 90% of the children did not think that hitting or smacking was effective in changing their behaviour. The great majority recommended reasoning and talking to the child about his/her misbehavior and explaining what they wanted the child to do. Less than 10% recommended spanking. Carlson (1986) in an interview study of 201 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in the U.S., asked children to recommend a disciplinary procedure in response to a series of vignettes of a same sex child misbehaving. The overwhelming majority recommended reasoning with the child and explaining what they had done wrong. Less than 15% recommended corporal punishment. More recently, in a survey in Ireland, 55% of the children aged 12-15 years reported that reasoning, extra chores, parents modelling the desired behaviour, grounding, taking away privileges, and time outs were acceptable disciplinary procedures. Even shouting was rated as acceptable by four times more children than corporal punishment. A small minority (8%) thought that spanking was acceptable. Children aged 8-15 years thought that the three most important things that make a good father or mother were: 1) to be kind to the child; 2) to keep promises; 3) to listen to the child. (Irish Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1996).

Although I did not interview children in the current study, I found it remarkable that children in three different countries consistently rate reasoning and removal of privileges as the most fair form of discipline. This is in marked contrast to rates of adult approval of corporal punishment. This discrepancy in beliefs suggests one obvious source of division in spanking families. The adult's wish for power assertion on the one hand and child's desire for more

empathic and co-equal treatment on the other. I thought it possible that parents in the current study would change their disciplinary procedures towards the practices endorsed by children in the above studies. Consequently, I asked parents about the kinds of procedures they used instead of corporal punishment, how effective they were and how their children reacted.

In the next section I consider parents' attitudes to corporal punishment.

### Parents' Reasons For Using Corporal Punishment

For the purposes of the current study it is important to understand both why and when parents use corporal punishment. Holden, Coleman and Schmidt (1995) found that parents use corporal punishment for two main reasons. For teaching children desirable behaviour and for communicating parental negative mood to children. Holden et al. (1995) found a strong correlation between approval of corporal punishment as a useful discipline procedure and parent's reported rate of spanking. Carson (1986) found a significant portion of spanking parents used spanking to communicate their anger. However many of these parents also regarded spanking as ineffective in teaching children discipline.

Durrant (1993a) found that the most common reasons for parents to advocate the use of corporal punishment were endangerment of the child, stealing and hitting a parent. These were closely followed by hitting another child and damaging another child's toy. Zahn-Waxler and Chapman (1982) found that one year olds tended to be punished for damaging property, but not for hitting an adult. This discrepancy may reflect age differences. Newson and Newson (1989) reported that mothers smacked their 4 year old children for enforcing obedience, telling lies, and for hitting the child's mother. Holden, Coleman and Schmidt (1995) found that children were spanked for aggression


against other children or after a series of sequences of exchanges involving non-compliance, warnings and commands. Kadushin and Martin (1982) found that many abusive parents used corporal punishment as a way of asserting control and authority. It is not clear to what extent this finding applies to non-abusive parents, but I hypothesize that this is a factor in non-abusive punishment as well. Books which advocate corporal punishment specifically encourage parents to spank in order to assert authority over a child, (Carson, 1986; Dobson, 1970). In summary, children are hit because of frustration in parents, to enforce rules against hitting children or adults, damaging property or for endangering themselves.

Durrant (1993a) found that the majority of the 75% of people who supported the use of corporal punishment also thought it was ineffective and that parental guilt was a likely outcome. Similarly Carson (1986) found that 43% of parents who spanked, thought that spanking was ineffective as a disciplinary procedure. In a phenomenological study, Berry (1990) found that mothers who used mild-to-moderate hitting experienced such dysphoric feelings as anger, frustration and aggravation before hitting. Afterwards they felt guilty, sad and sometimes angry. All of the respondents regarded hitting as necessary, but all but one expressed doubt, concern or dislike about their behaviour. Six out of the eight participants expressed interest in learning effective alternatives to hitting. Clearly many parents oscillate between two opposing poles; a belief in the efficacy and the necessity of corporal punishment and at the other extreme, doubt about its efficacy and negative affect.

In the current study I asked participants about their experiences both before, during and after incidents of corporal punishment. For comparison I also asked about their experiences with discipline and guidance procedures after cessation.

In Sweden, in the initial years after the anti-spanking campaign and legislative change against corporal punishment, parents reported that they found it necessary to think twice to prevent themselves hitting out (Haeuser 1988). Initially they depended on yelling and shouting in order to discipline their children. Later parents' disciplinary procedures became more effective. Those parents interviewed in 1988 reported that using alternative methods had become automatic. Parents used timeouts, rewards, denials of privileges, and conflict resolution through verbal means instead of corporal punishment. They reported using more discipline and more frequent intervention into a child's activities to avoid situations that had previously led to a smack. Haeuser's investigation into parents changing from hitting to non-hitting was conducted in a country in which social support for not hitting was strong. Haeuser suggests that in terms of pressure to conform it became easier for parents to fit in with the dominant norm and to use alternatives to physical punishment. Carson (1986) proposed that social conformity pressure was exerted in the opposite direction in the U.S.: non-hitting parents occupied a deviant position and tended to not to publically broadcast their practices. I anticipate that parents in my study will have experienced social pressure closer to that experienced in the U.S. than in Sweden. In accordance with this research I asked parents about their experiences of conformity pressure to spank in accordance with the dominant childrearing norm. Such pressure could be expected to come from their own parents, neighbours, peers and colleagues.

In summary, parents who use corporal punishment fall into two main groups. One group of parents use corporal punishment to deter negative behaviour and ostensibly to promote positive behaviour. This group is most likely to regard it as effective. A second group use corporal punishment to express their anger. These parents are less likely to see corporal punishment as an effective





disciplinary tool. The participants in my study could have been similar to members of either of these two groups.

There is evidence, as cited above, which shows that children can become increasingly aggressive, resentful and non-compliant over time as a response to spanking (Straus, 1994). As these behaviours are all themselves sources of parental frustration and the very target behaviours for further parental punishment, the possibility of a negative feedback cycle occurring is apparent. This cycle could start early. Newson and Newson (1989) noted that 40% of mothers in their study were hitting their one year old infants. Patterson (1986) found a somewhat similar cycle occurring at an older age in the families of antisocial boys aged ten to twelve years. Parents' use of a range of negative parenting processes, including corporal punishment, prompted the children to then use similar behavior coercively against their parents. Vuchinich, Bank, and Patterson (1992) however, proposed a range of interacting processes including poverty, child temperament, inadequate parental discipline and even traits for anti-social behavior, that could account for this cycle. One major drawback of both these studies was that they used measures of parental discipline that didn't specifically record corporal punishment incidents.

Corporal punishment may attain compliance in the short run but tends to be ineffective in the long term. Powers and Chapieski (1986) observed one year old infants playing with their mothers in a room containing fragile objects. Those infants whose mothers employed physical punishment as a means of discipline took less notice of their mother's verbal suggestions and commands to avoid the objects. The children also lagged behind on a series of developmental tests. The authors suggested that their study did not prove that corporal punishment caused less responsiveness. However a longitudinal study by Main (1980), that followed patterns of infant attachment from birth

onwards, found that after one year infants showed specific styles of response to maternal behaviour. Infants who had started at birth with similar levels of responsiveness to their mother by the end of the first year showed secure, insecure, or avoidant attachment behaviour. These attachment patterns matched the parenting behaviour of the mother, that is the infants' pattern of responsiveness was influenced by their caregivers' behaviour. In light of Powers and Chapieski's (1986) finding, I propose that as a result of the child's intermittent experience of sharp pain from corporal punishment, the child learns to avoid or become desensitised to the caregivers' milder commands. Parental guidance is then less effective because it is being either screened out or is unnoticed by the child. I could find no studies investigating a relationship between corporal punishment and attachment patterns.

Because a child habituates to a particular level of punishment, parental use of corporal punishment often escalates in severity over time (Newson & Newson, 1989). What becomes stabilised as a level of punishment has to be superseded in order to emphasise the particularly bad nature of the event. This suggests that over time spanking creates more difficulties for parents.

In corroboration of this supposition, Carson (1986) found that non-spanking parents tended to see their children as less difficult to deal with than other children. They reported not using spanking because other things worked to resolve interactive conflicts. Carson (1986) suggested that the question of whether not spanking their child causes parents to see their children as easier to care for is unanswerable. In support of Carson's finding, Haeuser (1988) found that nine years after the passage of the no-spanking law in Sweden, the number of parents using corporal punishment had declined considerably. Teachers reported children were more cooperative and easier to teach, and that teachers were able to demand more of the children. The teachers believed that

because children were being provided better models of self-discipline at home they had less desire to act out in class.

Carson (1986) found no significant differences in education and SES between non-spanking and spanking parents, (this may have been due to the small size of the non-spanking sample,  $N=52$ ). Carson did however, find a number of important differences between the two groups. Non-spanking parents believed that spanking would promote a violent means of problem solving, harm their relationship with their child and/or hurt the child's sense of dignity. She found that 94.7% of parents who didn't spank, evaluated reasoning as an effective technique compared to 84.1% of parents who spank. Non-spanking parents were also less likely to use punishing techniques such as grounding, taking away privileges or allowances. No non-spanking parents evaluated spanking as an effective technique as opposed to 59.7% of the spanking parents. (It is also important to note that 40% of parents who spanked didn't regard it as effective).

Non-spanking parents stressed the importance of mutual open communication with their children. They reported explaining socially appropriate rules of conduct or spending time to help the child interpret his/her own feelings. Non-spanking parents reported having started this process when their children were infants and were still spending considerable amounts of time talking with their children about their thoughts and feelings. These parents reported high involvement in organised activities with their children, particularly sports. They made considerable efforts to reduce potential conflict between themselves and their children, by the way they structured their lives and their households. Non-spanking parents placed strong emphasis on promoting positive rule-following behavior. They provided clear explanations for the background to rules and used contracts and agreements to reach a mutual

understanding of their expectations. Their close involvement with their children and open communication allowed them to quickly become aware of potential conflicts and intervene early to prevent them escalating. When conflict did arise some of the parents reported that their children were extremely sensitive to their parents' expression of displeasure. Some parents reported that if they have stipulated that there would be consequences for misbehavior they followed through with them. The majority of the parents had been tempted to spank, but felt that this was more related to their own frustration rather than their child's behavior (Carson, 1986).

These observations of American non-spanking parents correspond to Haeuser (1988) report of interviews with Swedish parents nine years after the passage of Sweden's no-spanking law. Swedish parents reported intervening much earlier into situations that would previously have resulted in a spanking. They also reported being more closely involved in their children's activities, and using discussions, rewards and timeouts as means of encouraging self-discipline.

In summary, non-spanking parents reported a less punitive approach to their children overall. They stressed exemplars of desirable behaviour and conduct rather than criticism after the fact. They also reported close involvement with their children's activities, feelings and thoughts. I asked parents in this study about their approach to childrearing in the absence of corporal punishment in order to ascertain points of correspondence and difference with the findings above.

### Childrearing Theory and Parenting Programs

Philosophically a commitment to non-spanking reflects a different orientation toward children. Gordon (1970) and Ginott (1965) both express orientations which focus on guidance rather than punishment, on influence rather than control and on defining conflict in terms of the needs of both the child and the parent. They concentrate on guiding the child to develop self-discipline. In contrast, punitive approaches hope that adult-imposed discipline will become internalised by the child and then result in self-discipline. Positive parenting principles reflect an orientation that children want to learn as part of their own desire for development. They also want to learn how they are to behave because they want to please their parent(s) (Leach, 1988). Gordon (1988) stresses the importance of acknowledging to the child the rightfulness and reality of the child's feelings and acting on the basis of the parents' greater knowledge and capabilities. Parents are encouraged to use a range of skills: active listening, reflection of the child's feelings, clear setting of limits, modelling desirable behavior, and communicating with I-statements. I-statements directly convey the parent's feeling. In contrast, "you"-statements blame the child, e.g., "you never tidy up your toys," "you are a lazy boy." These methods stress conflict resolution by defining the conflict in terms of the needs of the child and the adult, then generating possible solutions, evaluating the possible solutions and then reaching an agreement on the best solution.

Punitively oriented parents believe in restricting, setting strict limits, demanding certain behaviors, giving commands, and expecting obedience. For example Dobson (1970) advises parents to use a switch on children as young as fifteen months.

"It is not necessary to beat the child into submission: a little bit of pain goes a long way. However the spanking should be of sufficient

magnitude to cause the child to cry genuinely ... After the emotional ventilation, the child will often want to crumple to the breast of his parent, and he should be welcomed with open loving arms" (Dobson, 1970, p. 23).

These parents use threats of punishment to influence their children to obey and mete out punishment when they do not. The child may be further confused if this is done under the guise of "love." When conflict arises between the needs of the parents and those of the child these parents structure the situation in such a way that the parent wins and the child loses. The child's feelings are seen as wrong or a threat; "stop crying" or "you shouldn't think such thoughts."

Gordon (1970) notes another group of parents who alternate between restriction and permissiveness. One parent said "I am permissive with my children until I can't stand them. Then I become strongly authoritarian until I can't stand myself" (p. 162). Lastly, Gordon reports a group of parents who allow the child to win at the expense of the parent's needs. When he was training parents in childrearing skills, Gordon (1970) found that as children became older both parents who had been restrictive and those who had been alternately permissive and harsh with their children had less and less avenues available to them for either rewarding or punishing their children's behaviour. As these children matured they became increasingly able to get rewards from peers or elsewhere. They were able to withdraw or become devious in order to avoid parental punishment. This left the parents with essentially no way in which to guide their children in middle adolescence. Gordon argued that the adolescent rebellion so common in North American society is an unnecessary tragedy.

Pardeck (1988) suggested that most U.S. parents see discipline as meaning both punishment and a means of control. This primarily reactive strategy is

contrasted with a parent proactively intervening before a crisis and instructing the child until the child matures sufficiently to control his/her own behaviour, through self-discipline. Holden and West (1989) examined the relative success of reactive and proactive maternal behaviour in an analog supermarket situation. Holden and West (1989) found that children responded to proactive behaviour by engaging in respectable behaviours longer and with less rule-breaking than in the reactive condition. Reacting in a negative way to children's exploratory behaviour was the least effective method for gaining compliance. Although this study did not address corporal punishment, a reactive process *per se*, it does suggest that not spanking and using proactive interventions with the child would result in more effective discipline. It also provides an explanation and further research support for Carson's (1986) observation that non-spanking parents see their children as easier to guide than children typical of the spanking norm. One proactive intervention encouraged by the Swedish Government in 1979 was child-proofing the home environment. This helped reduce situations in which the child or the parents' property was endangered and thus lessened the potential for corporal punishment (Haeuser, 1988).

Ginott (1965) and Gordon (1970) both stress the importance of letting the child know that the parent is annoyed as a means of direct communication. A communication from the parent that can convey different intensities of feeling without resorting to "insults ... name calling ... prophesying ... threats ... accusations ... [or] ... bossing." For example: " 'It makes me angry to see that' ... 'it makes me mad to see that' ... 'It makes me furious.' " (Ginott, 1965, p.73).

In summary, parents who are childrearing without the use of corporal punishment draw on a large number of skills and behaviours that emphasize proactive interventions: communicating the parents' feelings, setting limits and empathising and reflecting the child's own feelings. Parents who are using

corporal punishment are also likely to be using some of these interventions. A number of studies cited above suggest that the use of corporal punishment, through its effect on the child and as a result of weakening the parent-child bond, may render non-punitive approaches less effective as well. I anticipated that given the wide dissemination of parenting programs, some of these non-spanking approaches will be reported by parents in my sample. I also anticipated that parents will have moved from corporal punishment to a combination of non-corporal approaches outlined above. These new approaches could emphasise mutual communication between parent and child or involve a substantial verbally punitive component.

### Summary

Corporal punishment is prevalent in all social classes and is used extensively by the majority of parents in Canada and the U.S.. While there are differences in the frequency of corporal punishment between groups from different classes and cultures, parents' use of corporal punishment has been found to be related more to their own experience of corporal punishment as a child than to their race, class or level of education. In the U.S., children are spanked most frequently up to the age of six. Although estimates vary as to frequency, it is clear that corporal punishment is a frequent occurrence for the majority of U.S., and possibly Canadian, children. The prevalence of parents using corporal punishment declines after age six. Over half of children aged six to thirteen however, are hit on average once a week. Corporal punishment is used by both mothers and fathers although marginally more by mothers, on both sons and daughters (marginally more on sons).



Having been corporally punished as a child is a significant risk factor in adulthood, for perpetuating crime outside the family, spousal assault, physical child abuse, alcoholism, and for developing adolescent or adult onset depression. Most cases of physical abuse were found to occur when an adult lost control when physically punishing their child. Coming to terms with their own childhood experiences was a significant factor in parents not abusing their own children.

Corporal punishment increased the likelihood of children hitting siblings or peers, being defiant, or having low self esteem. Any of these factors could increase stress for parents. Parents however, regarded corporal punishment as a necessary means of rapidly enforcing rules. They spanked children for stealing, lying, hitting, damaging property, endangering themselves, and not complying. They also spanked to re-assert parental authority. Parents frequently experienced negative affect during or after spanking. They were ambivalent about spanking and thought that guilt was a likely outcome. A significant percentage of normal parents reported that had come close to losing control when spanking.

From their perspective, children saw corporal punishment as unjust and preferred instead that parents talked to them and explained what they had done wrong, or gave them extra chores.

Parents who didn't spank stressed the importance of close mutual communication between their children and themselves. These parents promoted discussion of feelings, positive rule-following behaviour, and structured family activities so that the child's enjoyment was enhanced and conflict was reduced. These parents' actions were consistent with current parenting theories that value guidance over punishment and influence over control. Parenting theories that did not endorse corporal punishment

emphasized proactive strategies. Research suggests that proactive interventions were more successful in guiding children's behavior than strategies that reacted to children's misdemeanors. The relative ineffectiveness of reactive strategies, including spanking, may partially explain why spanking parents consistently regarded their children as more difficult to guide than did non-spanking parents. Despite the longer term ineffectiveness of spanking and its attendant risks the majority of parents in the U.S. and Canada, continue to spank.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology I have used to obtain and analyse the data. I also discuss the theoretical context for this methodology.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

Posner (cited in Hammersley, 1990) suggests that the justification for social research lies in solving either practical or conceptual problems. Hammersley (1990) argues that a study should contribute to the existing body of knowledge. As outlined in Chapter One this study researches a gap in the literature: the experiences of parents changing their childrearing practices. This change is taking place in a context in which the majority of Canadian parents both support using corporal punishment and are ambivalent about using it themselves (Durrant, 1993a). In this chapter I consider qualitative research methodology, issues of credibility, reliability and validity in qualitative methodology, generalisability, ethics, access, data collection and data analysis.

#### Qualitative Methodology.

As noted in Chapter One I have chosen to use qualitative methodology as a means to comprehend the experiences of a specific group of parents. Research based on "discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied" offers the promise of increasing understanding of changes in childrearing patterns (Merriam, 1988, p.3). The usefulness of qualitative methodology is indicated by the context dependent nature of childrearing, the unrepeatability of the phenomena, the lack of any pre-existing theory of corporal punishment cessation and the importance of comprehending the intentions and experiences of the participants. Qualitative methodology provides opportunity for inductive theory generation (Merriam, 1988) and, to a more limited extent, for theory testing (Stiles, 1991; Merriam, 1988).

In this investigation I worked within the ethnographic tradition. Positivistic inquiry assumes a neutral detached observer able to record information as it exists outside any theory. This concept is based on research in the physical sciences. Post-positivistic research in the social sciences assumes that what is attended to is already structured by, and affected by, the social relationship between the investigator and the investigated. Post-positivistic research accepts a multitude of viewpoints in an ongoing state of mutual interaction. Post-positivistic methodology is used to record and interpret the meanings and actions of the participants and the researcher within a specific context (Hammersley, 1990).

Critical theorists have noted methodology applied in the social sciences, under the guise of neutrality, may itself mask social values and political relations that oppress the participants or serve oppressive ends (Lather, 1986; Popkewitz, 1990). The form of inquiry I employed accepts the principle of reflexivity in which the researcher is both part of, and exerts influence on, the phenomena under investigation. The researcher's theoretical orientation and training will affect how the phenomena are attended to. Rather than attempting to avoid bias as positivist research does, post-positivistic research makes the orientation and presence of the observer explicit (Hammersley, 1990). I examine the assessment of the trustworthiness of my research findings and analysis in the next section.

Credibility, Reliability and Validity

*"Relevance without rigour is no better than rigour without relevance"*

E. Guba (cited in Lather, 1986, p. 65).

Qualitative researchers working within a post-positivist paradigm employ concepts such as "dependability" or "consistency," rather than reliability (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Merriam, 1988, p.172). The positivist use of the concept "reliability" implies that there is a single reality which if studied repeatedly and accurately will yield the same results on subsequent occasions. These results can then be used as evidence for the formulation of laws. The field of social science has largely abandoned the search for social laws. Complex human actions are subject to developmental influence and are not repeatable by nature (Merriam, 1988).

Stiles (1991) suggests reliability refers to the trustworthiness of the observations and validity to the trustworthiness of the interpretations of the data. In order to allow the reader to assess my observations and interpretations and their trustworthiness, I have provided the reader with information about the processes of this research. I have also based the results chapter on the verbatim responses of the participants. Brief descriptions of the participants are provided in Appendix D. I have included a discussion of how the investigation affected me, any difficulties that occurred, and how my ideas changed. The final reports may be incomplete due to my bias, but they will allow others to make further assessment of the trustworthiness of my data and interpretations.

Stiles (1991) suggests several forms of validity that apply to qualitative methodology: coherence, testimonial validity, catalytic validity and reflexive validity.

"Coherence includes internal consistency, comprehensiveness of the elements to be interpreted and the relations between elements and

usefulness in encompassing new elements as they come into view."  
(Stiles, 1991, p.16).

Coherence in the study has been addressed by the use of the participants' verbatim responses, and by the analysis of consistency in their responses to questions covering a wide range of different time periods and different aspects of their parenting. This coverage was designed to be comprehensive and uncover the important processes and factors in the participants' cessation of corporal punishment. The resulting theory may then encompass or be modified by further research.

Testimonial validity can be increased by returning the transcript and preliminary interpretations to the respondents and then including the responses into the research. This increases the confidence of both researcher and reader in the accuracy of both data recording and the interpretation of the experience of the participants. Due to time constraints, I decided to abandon respondent validation. While returning my conclusions and documentation back to the participants would have been highly informative and further strengthened my conclusions, I have found the extra commitment in time and energy daunting. My participants are now stretched out across a 1000 mile radius from Alberta to Nelson, Vancouver, Vancouver Island and Seattle.

Catalytic validity refers to the degree of empowerment, change or energising of the participants as a result of the research (Friere, 1968; Lather, 1986). Specifically in this study, this may be an increased commitment to positive parenting or increased understanding of the participants' relation to the larger more punitive childrearing culture. Several participants developed ideas for aspects of their parenting that they would like to change. In order to illustrate this point, I find it necessary to anticipate the results chapter briefly. Both the

following examples illustrate new parenting ideas occurring to the participants during the course of the interview. The mother in Case 2 said,

[Her daughter will] say to me, 'remember when I was three and a half you used to spank me and R. used to make me sit in the corner when I was bad?' 'Yes, but why do you keep reminding me that I did that, that wasn't very long and that wasn't very much?' I said 'you can't just run around and do whatever you want'. I guess I could ask them what they want me to do when they're bad, couldn't I? I didn't think of that yet.

The mother in Case 4 referred to a period of time in which she used to play with her son exactly according to his wishes. This had been recommended by her family psychiatrist and had proved very helpful to her son.

With all the things you have to do in a day you end up just being tired and not [playing with her child]. I suppose it'd be good to do that sort of a thing at the beginning of the day when you're still fresh and probably it would have lasting benefits the whole day. But it's just a matter of not seeming to have the time for these kinds of things. But you have to make the time, that's what I realize, cause it does help him, (Case 4).

Reflexive validity refers to the way in which I documented my changing understanding and theory as I conducted the research (Stiles, 1991). I discuss this later in this chapter, in the section headed "Issues of Bias and Assumption" Lather (1986) suggests that considerations of the above forms of validity be employed to guard against researcher distortion. Lather also suggests that researcher's triangulate their information with other sources and look for instances that disconfirm theory. In the interests of manageability of data I did not use triangulation of sources external to the family such as teachers and parenting advisors.

#### Applicability and Generalizability

Generalizability is the extent to which the information gained from the study can be expected to predict events in other circumstances. Stiles (1991) notes

that this concept is more applicable to positivist research, in which the goal is prediction and control, rather than post-positivist methodology. Qualitative investigators do formulate general theories but they expect that there will be unpredictable exceptions to these theories. Lincoln and Guba (cited in Stiles, 1991) suggest qualitative results and conclusions may be better judged for their applicability - the extent to which they "facilitate readers adapting the ideas to their own contexts rather than for the conclusion's literal generalizability" (Stiles, 1991, p.7). Within the context of this study the focus of applicability is less on the prediction that other families will be able to make similar childrearing changes, but rather on the usefulness of the information to researchers and to families who may consider changing their practices.

#### Ethical Considerations

I obtained ethical approval for this study from Simon Fraser University Ethics Review Committee, and from the Directors of two social service agencies in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. All participants were assured that information pertaining to them will remain confidential. Names, location, employment, and any other identifying features such as notable illnesses of the children will remain confidential. Potentially identifying information was not included in the transcripts. Information was not shared with other family members, other participants in the study, agency or university staff. The transcripts of the interviews were seen only by the two members of the thesis committee, the audio transcriber and myself. Audiotapes of the interviews are kept in a locked filing cabinet, with the signed consent-to-participate forms kept in a separate drawer. Audiotapes will be destroyed on completion of the study or within two years, whichever was sooner. Any publication of the study will maintain the anonymity of the participants. At the beginning of each interview



with each family member, participants were reminded of their right to refuse to answer a particular question, to withdraw from the interview or to withdraw from the study at any time.

### Access

I contacted participants using a variety of means. My original intention was to contact potential participants through agencies, but this did not work. Neither did letters or notices left at various agencies. Three participants were contacted through visiting a neighbourhood house, and one responded from an inquiry at an agency. I contacted two participants in response to media articles on corporal punishment; one through a newspaper article and the other through a local television show. I interviewed two mothers with whom I had intermittent contact as a result of their work at my practicum site. Both participants were very frank with me concerning the high levels of force that they had used on their children. Most participants were contacted through word of mouth. After a frustrating year and a half of intermittent attempts to contact agencies, I became somewhat weary of the sharp intakes of breath at the other end of the phone as I explained my topic. Out of this frustration, for a six month period in the spring of 1996, I asked anybody I met if they knew anyone who had stopped using corporal punishment. Participants in turn recommended people to me. Word of mouth which was followed up with a letter and phone call proved the most effective way to gain participants. Due to the difficulty of finding participants the process of interviewing and contacting people was spread over two years. My impression was that people became more comfortable with the subject during that time and that it became easier to find people. During this time coverage of the issue in the media appeared to increase substantially. I also co-organised a

forum on corporal punishment with the Institute for the Humanities at Simon Fraser University. This forum also contributed to media coverage of the topic.

I was concerned that participants not be influenced by my activities or views on corporal punishment so I made no attempt to discuss or inform participants about my activities. The mother in Case 4 found out about them through a mutual acquaintance after she had appeared on a T.V. program. On the show she was more forthright in her appreciation of alternatives to spanking than she was subsequently when interviewed by me. I conclude that the knowledge of my activism didn't result in distortion. The mother in Case 7, though she had even less knowledge of my activities, may have seen me more as an "expert". As her opinion of experts was low, however, I had an impression that if she was influenced by me it would be to minimize the effect that not spanking had on her family in her responses.

I found all the participants' willingness to disclose their painful and sometimes joyous work with their children very moving. Participants were extremely open with me about the levels of force they had used on their children and their own associated misery and feelings of guilt. I found that my own journal reading and theoretical knowledge seemed very thin when coupled with my lack of practical experience of childrearing. I was aware that participants had real knowledge of the responsibility of caring for children on a daily basis, through extremes of tiredness, hunger, illness and exuberance. It was in these lived situations, not in the abstracted sentences of journals that were available to me, that the parents' patience and commitment to respecting their children was really tested. I could only listen in appreciation of the complexity of the task as parents recounted how they guided and cared for their children.

Most of the participants felt that in abandoning spanking, they had been through an important process which had brought considerable benefits to those

closest to them. They wanted to share their experiences and several participants made spontaneous and encouraging remarks about the potential usefulness of this research.

### Selection of Participants

Criterion-based non-probabilistic sampling was used to select those families that no longer used physically punitive disciplinary methods with their children. The sampling combined features of both unique-case and reputational-case selections (Goetz and LeCompte, cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 48). Families selected ranged from those with children under five who had stopped spanking within the last year, to those with children under ten who had changed their disciplinary methods several years ago. I also interviewed two parents who had made a determined effort to stop using corporal punishment when their children were under seven and whose children were now adults. In the literature review I noted that in many families children are hit most frequently up to age six. The families interviewed described themselves as middle class, with two exceptions. They were from Anglo-, Scottish-, Irish-, Indo-, and Peruvian Canadian and U.S. cultural backgrounds and from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Sikh religious backgrounds. The range of backgrounds and different ages at cessation allowed the generation of a wide range of properties and categories. This increased the possibilities of theoretical development.

Participants had started their families when they were aged in their twenties and thirties, and taken several years away from paid employment in order to raise their infants, with the exception of the father in Case 3. Ten out of thirteen participants had either completed two years of college or had obtained university degrees. Nine of the participants were involved in the fields of

education, social work or nursing. The remainder, with the exception of the mother in Case 8, were particularly interested in issues concerning children and parenting. This was expressed either by their attendance at parenting classes, or activism on behalf of children or through self-education. Three participants taught parenting education classes. Although I didn't ask directly, from having conducted interviews in many of their homes, I assume that most of the participants owned their own homes. All the participants were married except the parents in Cases 3, 6, and 10. Five of the partners' work involved technical aspects of mending or installing complex machinery. One spouse was studying in a similar field. Two other spouses were doctors, Case 3 worked as a mechanic. One spouse owned a small business and one was a construction supervisor.

I am including a description of my own background because of its relevance to both the kinds of questions I asked and the ambience of the interviews. I have a degree in science and a graduate degree in art. I have spent the majority of the last ten years teaching art to pre-schoolers, children, and teenagers, and to a lesser extent teaching adults, and adults in jail. I am currently teaching at an art institute. I was sensitised to the issue of corporal punishment by my own experiences with two of my school teachers. I also co-founded a group in order to distribute research information about corporal punishment through print, radio, and television media. Beyond discussion of my counselling program, none of the participants asked about my background, though some inquired after the interview how I had become interested in corporal punishment.

It was only after all the interviews were completed, and during the preparation of the penultimate draft of this thesis that I became a parent for the first time. My lack of experience as a parent was not problematic for the

participants, but I am certain that there were aspects of childrearing that I would have asked more about had I been a parent. On the other hand my lack of experience may have conferred some advantages, during the interview I didn't internally compare or contrast participants' experiences with my own. Such a process could have adversely affected the interviews by impeding my responses to participants' statements.

#### Interviewing (Gender Concerns).

As I reported in Chapter Two, the influence of gender on corporal punishment is complex. Women are held marginally more responsible for disciplining children than men, and boys are hit somewhat more often than girls. The direction of subsequent influence on childrearing appears to be gender linked with boys more likely to model their later adult disciplinary practices on their fathers than their mothers. In view of this complexity I originally intended to interview both parents. However in the course of searching for participants, it was mothers who overwhelmingly presented themselves as interested in both the subject and willing to be interviewed. (The study is based on interviews with twelve mothers and one single father). All the mothers in the study reported that they had initiated the move to stop using corporal punishment and that their husbands had then followed suit. In order to test this claim and to increase gender parity, I decided to interview an additional two fathers. Both insisted that their wives initiated the family's change in discipline practices. I decided not to include these extra cases and concluded that interviewing the person most invested in changing disciplinary practices was providing me with rich and sufficient data.

### Interviewing: Information Concerns

I conducted interviews in order to elicit replies from respondents that were concrete narratives rather than causal speculations. My questions were concerned with "what happened?" rather than "why did it happen?" (Stiles, 1991). My purpose in the interviews was to obtain a rich, thick description of the following: how parents disciplined their oldest children, how this differed from their current practices, their motives for changing parenting approaches, and their memories of their own childhood experiences of discipline. I also wanted to know if the parents noticed any resultant changes in their overall relationship with their children and any differences in the children's behaviour at school and home. I was also interested in the parents' experiences of difficulties, benefits, and their emotional reactions to changes in disciplinary practices.

I expected the above areas of concern to form categories for coding but in order to maintain multiple hypotheses of research outcome (Chamberlin, 1890/1965) I did not commence categorizing until all data collection was completed. All interviews were audio-recorded. In addition I made notes of my impressions immediately after leaving the site of the interview.

### Interview Schedule.

The questions in Appendix B formed the basis for a semi-structured interview. The purpose of the interview was to "access the perspective of the person being interviewed" rather than to impose my categories onto their experience (Patton, cited in Merriam, 1988). Using a semi-structured interview allowed me to respond flexibly to the concerns of the participant while at the same time obtaining specific information about their disciplinary practices. Having a prepared list of questions was a way of both motivating respondents to

share their knowledge and communicating the research areas of concern to them (Denzin, cited in Merriam, 1988).

I endeavoured to be sensitive to the fact that disciplining children is a highly charged subject about which participants were likely to have conflicting expectations both within themselves and from their social, family, and work networks. Several participants cried at different points of the interview. Throughout the interview, I used language that was commensurate with the level used by the participants and that made sense to them. I respectfully presupposed that they had experiences that were valuable to both themselves and to me, the student researcher (Patton cited in Merriam, 1988). I attempted to maintain rapport with the participants and to refrain from openly judging the content of their responses. I also listened far more than I talked, and reflected back information, and summarised occasionally in order to check my comprehension (Whyte cited in Merriam, 1988, p.75).

### Subsidiary questions

My intention was to collect information on the age and gender of the children, the ages and socio-economic status of the parents, how parents disciplined their oldest children and frequency of corporal punishment, how this differs from their current practices, their motives for changing parenting approaches; the parents' attitudes to their memories of their childhood experiences of discipline.

#### Questions about areas of success and difficulty.

According to the parents' evaluations, how well did their new discipline approach work? What difficulties and successes had the parents noticed in pursuing a policy of no-hitting? How did the parents now resolve the three most

common situations in which children are hit: 1) endangering themselves or others, 2) hitting another child, 3) damaging property (Durrant, 1993a)?

Questions concerning alternative discipline strategies.

What childrearing practices had parents developed that were effective? Had changes in their childrearing methods resulted in any detriment or improvement in their relationship with their children?

Questions concerning motivations and affect.

What were the key factors in maintaining their commitment to no-hitting? What was the relationship between how they themselves were treated and how they now treated their children? If they had impulses to hit how did they handle them?

Data Analysis

I conducted a preliminary analysis of data after each interview in a recursive process in which information from one interview was used to inform the questions of the next (Miles, 1984). After I had completed all the interviews and they were transcribed, I coded them and looked for patterns. Patterns and regularities in the parents' reported experiences were then transformed into categories into which items were sorted (Merriam, 1988). I used the computer program HYPERRESEARCH to expedite the process. These categories were then grouped into broader and more abstract conceptualisations. Theory concerning changes in parenting practices was thus induced from the recorded data.

Issues of Bias and Assumption

I have noted my bias against the use of corporal punishment in the introductory chapter. Some of my assumptions were apparent in the direction of the questions in the semi-structured interview. A further source of bias is my participation in the Counselling Psychology Program. My orientation and



training may have led me to focus more on intrapsychic phenomena rather than social factors. One assumption I had is that desisting from using corporal punishment would reduce conflict in the family and any deviant behaviour of the children. Another assumption I had is that those families in which one or both parents had undergone counselling might show one of two patterns: more successful adoption of new childrearing practices than non-counselled families; or alternatively, they would show less successful adoption of new childrearing strategies; if the families were more in need of external help.

Prior to interviewing I thought that some families might not be able to alter their childrearing practices without counselling. In all families I was curious to understand the importance of reflection on the parents' own childhood experiences. A further assumption I made was that parents who had been through parent training programs might have minimized the frequency with which they used corporal punishment. I attempted to counteract this possibility by asking for specific incidents and attendant details of the parents' current relationship with their children. Those accounts which lacked richness I regarded as less useful.

My initial impetus for this research was the story of a mother who had stopped spanking which was conveyed to me through a colleague. The mother had reported that she felt better and that her son's teachers had reported that either his behaviour or his schoolwork had improved. I wondered if there were other parents and children like her and if they had had similar experiences. I knew that in Canada, corporal punishment was widespread and in many instances, severe. In the course of my teaching, children from very affluent backgrounds had mentioned being paddled, hit with sticks or belts, or hit severely enough for them to want to run away. (They did not "report" this to me as "abuse" but rather as a fact of their lives).

The literature on corporal punishment is consistent about its negative effects on children. Consequently I thought it possible that parents would report improvements in their children's behaviour after stopping spanking. As I have mentioned at several points in the thesis, I thought that a child's resentment in response to spanking would in time, make them less compliant and create more difficulties for the parent. Conversely stopping spanking, I hypothesized, could result in greater wellbeing for the parent, through improvements in the child's behaviour. Although these hypotheses have been confirmed in the study, the effects were stronger than I had imagined. What I had not foreseen, furthermore, was the extreme distress that parents reported during their spanking phase. This was from their fear of losing control, from their rage with children and their subsequent guilt and disquiet. Cessation brought substantial relief from these feelings, which in itself resulted in improvements in parental wellbeing. Not having foreseen the extent of parental distress, I was also surprised by these reports. Finally, although this point will probably seem obvious to readers who are parents, I overlooked the great pleasure the participants reported in the improvements in mood and happiness of their children after cessation.

I conclude this chapter with four excerpts from notes I made after the interviews. These passages document my responses to the research process. A process in which I, a stranger was interviewing people about experiences that were of central importance to their lives and the people they cared most about. The passages also show how I was affected by the experience of conducting the research. Specifically, my increasing understanding of the intensity of the participants' struggle to gain knowledge and patience, and the value of that knowledge in their ability to love and care for their children.

I feel wary of myself getting a degree from the life experience of these people who offer their stories from their insides, their most painful and difficult actions that they now regret. But also I am recording something that represents developing cooperation between individuals [parent and child] and that is something for celebration and recognition.

I felt very moved by the scope of the mother in Case 5 understanding of how the issues of control and obedience that are translated into institutions and the society as a whole are [centred on] this issue of spanking, and by both mothers in Cases 5 and 6 determination to resolve their own backgrounds through counselling. I am moved by both people's recognition of their own discomfort when spanking their children and their determination to find an alternative or many alternatives. And by this difficult struggle for an alternate way, a way founded in closeness and sharing of experience rather than control.

Not to keep passing on what was done to them.

March 1996

I wrote the following notes after interviewing the participant in Case 10 for an hour and three-quarters and then talking about her work of twenty years as a preschool instructor, for a further half hour.

How amazing. I am awed by the knowledge and concern for children- the deep seated respect towards children and their parents. The careful choosing of words- "Shoot bad boys"- 'What is a bad boy? What do bad boys do?

[My remembered version of the mother in Case 10]. When two kids are fighting, 'You sound really angry but he really wants to play with his truck and you want to play with the truck'. 'But no-one was using the truck', 'But I just left it so I could get a drink of water'- 'So you're not finished with the truck?' 'No. I want to keep playing with it.' 'Well when you are finished I would really like to use it.' Even if it takes five minutes, what I've done is to teach a way of reflecting feelings, accepting another person's feelings and point of view and I'm looking for a solution both [children] are comfortable with. It takes more time but in the end I think it is more valuable.

May 1996.

In summary, the decision to employ qualitative methodology led to a number of considerations. The study used a non-random sample which provided a number of different kinds of participants. Parents came from several different

cultural backgrounds, had ceased spanking for different lengths of time, had children of different ages at onset of cessation, and had previously used corporal punishment with different frequency and severity. The wide variation in participants' characteristics increased the pool of potential factors that were significant in the process of cessation. The variation in participants' characteristics strengthened the possibility of theory generation. If themes emerge across differences in class, education, gender, culture, age of children, or other characteristics, then it is safer to assume that these themes are important and not artifacts of education. Linking of such themes allows the formation of theory. Issues of credibility and applicability were addressed by documenting information about my biases and assumptions, participants' background, access, interviewing schedule, data analysis and presentation of participants' verbatim statements.

In Chapter Four I report on the results of my coding and collating of the interviews.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Participants' Reports

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section I discuss the experiences of participants before they stopped using corporal punishment. The second section includes an examination of the resources that were helpful to participants. In the third section I discuss the process of stopping spanking and developing alternatives. In the fourth section I examine participants experiences after they had stopped spanking.

#### Before Stopping: Participants' Experiences with Corporal Punishment

The participants' desire to find alternatives to corporal punishment grew out of a range of unsatisfactory experiences. This section documents their dissatisfaction and provides an overview of how participants disciplined their children before they gave up corporal punishment. This section is designed to provide a background picture which the reader can use to understand the participants' development of alternatives to corporal punishment.

Several factors seem particularly important in leading participants to seek alternatives. These include 1) the considerable level of frustration and distress parents had been experiencing in their relationship with their children; 2) a strong fear of losing self control and injuring their child while using corporal punishment; 3) memories of their own childhood experiences; 4) witnessing an assault on a child or experiencing an assault themselves; and 5) a nagging sense of desiring more harmonious ways of relating to their children. When their dislike of corporal punishment became sufficiently strong, they decided to seek alternatives.

This section is divided into five parts: 1) The Effects of Corporal Punishment on Parents and Their Children; 2) Losing Control; parents report their fear of losing

control and injuring their child; 3) Critical Incident; an incident critical to participants' decision to seek alternatives to corporal punishment.; 4) Reevaluation; parents consider the implications of their own childhood experiences and 5) Witnessing an Assault.

### The Effects of Corporal Punishment on Parents And Children.

#### The participants: how often they used corporal punishment.

The thirteen participants in this study included twelve parents who were determined in their intention to stop spanking. Most of the participants had not spanked for at least a year. I am also including two cases who had substantially stopped hitting within the last eight months but who regretted that they had hit their child on one or two occasions. I discovered part way through the interview that the mother in Case 8 was still ambivalent about the efficacy of spanking. I am including only one brief report from this mother (at the beginning of this section), in order to emphasize a number of important differences between participants in this case and the other twelve. The twelve participants ranged from those who reported less than five instances of using corporal punishment, to those who used it with considerable frequency (up to five times a day). Two participants had hit their children with objects (Cases 3 and 5). The mother in Case 5 used a plastic ruler once and the father in Case 3 had used a belt on his children on several occasions, at least once bruising his eleven year old son's arm sufficiently severely for Social Services to visit him and to temporarily take custody of his children. The mother in Case 10 reported bruising her son's bottom. Further details are in Appendix D.

#### The effects of corporal punishment on the parent.

Two participants reported that spanking their child "worked" in that it immediately stopped the child's disagreeable behaviour, (Cases 5,7). The mother in Case 5 noted;

We used what worked for generations through my family. If the children did something wrong we would give their hands a spank when they were little. It was effective, it was quick. And it got the job done. As they got older... four or five... if they did something wrong [it was] a slap on the backside and up to your bedroom for a few minutes. It was fast. It was effective. What started a change? I didn't like the feeling. I think back that I didn't like the feeling when I got spanked and I didn't like the feeling when I would spank the children. But I had no other skills (Case 5).

The cost of corporal punishment's efficiency was emotional distress. All the participants reported substantial negative affect associated with the use of corporal punishment. They variously reported feeling angry afterwards and that the incident was still unresolved, feeling guilty at the pain they had inflicted on their child or because they had lost control of their actions and anger. Some participants reported crying after the incident. Parents unanimously regarded this loss of control as their responsibility and not something that their child had "caused." For example, the formerly abusive father in Case 3 said "you [meaning himself] are responsible for your feelings and you can control them" (Case 3). In contrast the mother in Case 8 was still partially committed to spanking, and assigned much more of the responsibility for spanking to her three year old daughter than the other participants did.

I wish I could remember what that was for. I was just very upset that day. Some of it was her fault, some of it was her father's fault. I honestly cannot remember what the incident was regarding. Either her not cleaning up something or picking up or something... And I remember I just hit her, quite hard, and that was the first time I felt I had hit her in anger. Cause up till then it was, something she had done, or I felt she had provoked so she had to be punished for it. And this was something that it wasn't as much her fault. She was just refusing, I think it was a matter of just cleaning up or tidying. But I had guests coming or something, but I was upset more. And then hitting her and seeing the mark and... of course, that bothered me. 'Cause it was the first time I felt I had hit her out of my anger, not something she had done to provoke me. So after that I ... I didn't hit her for a long while. And I promised myself I wouldn't ever hit her again, but unfortunately that didn't come true.  
(Case 8). (*My emphasis*).

The participants' willingness to take responsibility for their actions appeared to be integral to their seeking out alternatives to corporal punishment and then using them

successfully. All the other participants in the study had been able to stop and were unequivocal in their own acceptance of responsibility for spanking. This included all incidents of spanking, not just those that left marks on their child. They noted a contradiction between wanting to teach non-violence and discipline through using an act which was undisciplined and intended to cause pain. For the mothers in Cases 1 and 12 the feeling of anger, the loss of control, and the action of striking a child did not fit with the image of the "good" parent that they wanted to become.

I felt so bad, it just left me feeling like I had really lost it. And this is not OK ... it wasn't like he would not want to be around me or anything like that. I just felt so bad about it and it just seemed so wrong. I didn't like the fact that I was hitting a small child it didn't look right, it didn't make sense to me. If I didn't want him to be physically aggressive to me, for instance biting, why would I do that back to him? I would sort of step back and picture myself as if I were able to see myself, in the middle of the behaviour and I thought this is not the kind of parent I want to be, and this is not the way I want to behave with my child. I was clear I wanted to set limits with him, and I wanted to discipline him, but it was also clear to me that hitting was not something I wanted to be doing. I was doing it. I didn't want to be doing it. (Case 11).

I think the child was in diapers, I actually pulled down the pants to make sure that I hadn't made an imprint, which I hadn't. But that's how bad I felt about it. I thought I had done some damage or something ... When they were toddlers, around two. And it was a whack on the behind. It was out of pure frustration on my part because I can't even think now at the time what the child was doing but it was just frustrating and, I just pulled off and whacked him. And then I just felt terrible afterwards. A lot of guilt and everything ... and then knowing that that's not what I wanted to do. But I have done it a couple of times to each kid ... I think I cried just initially, but just kind of felt horrible the whole day ... Oh feeling like I was a terrible mom and that I was an abusive parent, just thinking that I was going to be like my parents, just imposing pain. (Case 12).

I didn't get a good feeling from it. I didn't come away from it feeling like, oh, good I solved that. Just kind of bad. Like well, I lost it. I blew it. And so I felt guilty and I don't think that helps either. I mean if I'm feeling guilty over what I did I don't think that I'm that great of a parent. It just doesn't make me feel like I've really dealt with him. I find I do so much better with him when I just talk to him about what's going on. (Case 13).

I remember times of picking M. up, like not necessarily spanking, but, oh man, this is going to feel terrible to talk about, I would just smack the shit out of him sometimes, on his bum. Like seven times in a row. And it was all because of my own frustration with my whole life, not because of what he had actually done. I have even picked him up like by the scruff of the neck, sort of by the



front of the shirt, and yelled in his little face when he was like three years old. But again it's not because of what he did. It had everything to do with me. Now that same behaviour could take place and I wouldn't ever do that, 'cause of different arrangements that I've made for myself. (Case 6)

I told my husband 'we have to go to counselling. We just can't go on our lives like that.' Just yelling, screaming and spanking the kids and everyday would be such turmoil. So much tension in the house. I would feel like I didn't want to be here because [the air was] so thick. You could cut the air with a knife. (Case 9)

Two parents reported feeling very angry with their children even after the spanking was over (Cases 7 and 10). These parents were more concerned with the lack of efficacy involved in spanking. One participant's frustration at the ineffective nature of her discipline led her to question the mental health of her children (Case 10).

I was very angry when they wouldn't listen. And so I must have felt that I didn't know what I was doing. Except I couldn't understand that because this is what I knew what to do, this is what I had seen and what had happened to me and what I experienced so that there was a real conflict for me because I didn't understand why it wasn't working when it worked when I was a kid ... I was really discouraged otherwise I would never have gone [to the psychiatrist], I thought something was really wrong with them. Spanking was not a moral issue for me. Because I thought spanking was what you did and pulling hair and that, [was] to help children learn to be moral. Well [now] I think what I was doing was violent

*J: L. Five times a day?*

Probably. As many times a day, I didn't even think about it, as I saw it necessary to get him to do what I wanted. So if he was fooling around and I wanted him to dress I'd probably get cross. Or if he left the yard I'd probably get cross. I mean my response was to get angry. I don't think I was thinking about it for the longest time ... it was quite pure. It was something that needed to be done in order for the child to learn what you wanted them to do. Except it wasn't working. (Case 10).

I'd probably feel like there, that's done now. You got what you deserve ... Stupid little bastard. If I was really sad, it wouldn't get to the point of feeling guilt; I wouldn't even have thought about that. (Case 7).

I was more concerned with the fact that if it got to a spanking the actual incident might stop, but I was left feeling it was unsettled. (Case 6).

Two parents specifically mentioned being concerned that their punishment was sufficiently harsh to be seen as transgressive by their community, and that this could

result in public disapproval. The mother in Case 10 reported that she understood at "some level" that it was "wrong" because it was ineffective and had once resulted in her child being bruised. She was afraid of being found out by teachers or her friends. The presence of a law against child abuse acted as a deterrent.

I'm sure that there was something in me that knew that it wasn't working and it was frustrating. Guilty, certainly guilty when I felt I did too much. But guilty because it was starting to get to be known out in the community rather than guilty 'cause I knew it was wrong. It's like the teachers knew, and then some of my friends must of ... it becomes more open. Your children are in school or in public places and so part of the guilt was wanting to be able to stop whatever was happening so that other people, maybe it was shame rather than guilt ... not wanting people to know what was going on ... I remember once spanking S. and he was bruised on his bottom and being terrified. I only remember that once ... What was I terrified of? Probably a combination of things. Being found out because something at some level told me ... what I was doing wasn't working and therefore it wasn't right ... I had a strong enough conscience in terms of society, so I'm not sure it's the right reason, but it was like having a law out there and then not wanting to cross that boundary. (Case 10).

Similarly the father in Case 3 was aware that he had hit one of his children so severely that he suggested that his wife take their children away.

When B. was really young a couple of times things got really out of hand, I wouldn't want that to happen to anybody. Last time was about four and when he was walking about two ... I was looking after him by myself.

*J.L. and then so you really laid into him with a belt and he was bruised?*

Yes. I was quite shocked myself I talked to [his wife] about it. I told her if she wanted to leave with the kids [that was understandable] ... I didn't know if it was going to be a re-occurring thing or not, I sure didn't want it to be. (Case 3)

#### The effects of corporal punishment on the child.

Parents reported different effects on the child. Some children stopped their misbehaviour immediately. But participants also wanted to teach the child an alternative behaviour. In the short term spanking left their child upset, aggressive or withdrawn. This then made it harder for their child to listen them. For the mothers in

Cases 5 and 6 spanking was effective in stopping the misbehaviour but left them feeling either guilty or that it wasn't teaching their child correct behaviour.

It wouldn't calm him down as well. I'd find that one particular friend said 'well, just spank him harder or use a wooden spoon or whatever.' I thought 'no, the more you spank him the worse he gets' ... He would be definitely more upset and more aggressive and it in no way calmed him down and didn't calm me down either. (Case 4).

Well the behaviour stopped, definitely. But there was just so much of my emotion involved in it that I didn't really notice how the child was reacting. They didn't come back to me and I hate you, or whatever, and they ... probably cried for the period of time that it took. I think when I spanked them it was more of the shock. The reaction I got than actual pain. 'Cause I didn't think that it looked like it hurt them but it was a real shock. (Case 12).

The reason I stopped was it didn't seem to work. It made him feel worse and I don't necessarily think it made him listen to me. It just made him really upset. So it didn't help. It didn't solve the problem, I mean, my goal is for him to do what I want him to do and to me if he's upset and not listening to me then he's not going to do it. (Case 13).

The spanking served as a way to stop the frantic behaviour or whatever it was they were doing. The misbehaviour. It would stop it and then allow me to talk to them. I wanted to be able to stop it in a different way and still talk to them and hopefully teach something or show them something. (Case 6).

Parents also noted that their actions were having counterproductive effects.

Children were modeling their behaviour on their parents' spanking. The mother in Case 4 reported being hit by her preschool son; other parents heard reports that their elder children were spanking or hitting younger children, or that their children were getting into physical conflict with peers, teachers or grandparents or acting up at school. Two participants (Cases 10 and 13) reported that their children had difficulty keeping friends because they hit them. One parent observed her own use of corporal punishment being re-enacted in her child's play with dolls. Parents also reported high levels of conflict between their children and themselves that continued even after an individual punishment incident had finished.

I was trying to teach my daughter to negotiate with her brother ... 'Just because someone grabs a toy doesn't mean you hit somebody,' or 'if you think your

brother has done something wrong, you don't need to spank him.' I was uncomfortable with it. And then when her brother came along, she started to think she was his mother. I had to constantly remind her that that was my job and not hers. And she thought it would be OK to spank him if he took one of her toys or, and so, almost as a form of modelling I started to drop the spanking. (Case 6).

I remember watching her play with her dolls and talking to her dolls saying the doll was going to get a spanking and I just didn't like that, she was then play acting this into her life and I thought why should I be doing this? If it's teaching her to do that to her dolls, then she's going to do it to her sisters, and then it's going to go all around in a big circle so I don't think this should be going on anymore. (Case 2).

I would start screaming at him and drag him to the place and he didn't want to go. And I would get really mad. I used to like spank him many times on the shoulder or on the legs and he would crouch down like an [animal] His whole body would shrink, and I remember I was spanking C. at the age when he was like six or seven, I think he even hit my Mom too. 'Cause they have to let it out somewhere. If I let out my anger then they are going to think its ok to hit other people too. So he did. He kicked my Mom. (Case 9).

I think the spinoff for them was that they had a hard time socialising. That bothered me also. They had a hard time making friends, keeping friends. They became physical because I was physical. They hit and punch[ed], so it hurt other kids, it was showing up at school. So that was probably another reason I decided psychiatrist. Because now that I really think back I'm sure that there were problems in school that the teachers used to talk to me about. It was hard for me to go and pick them up and say 'how was their day?' Because I sure didn't want to hear how their day was because there was always some interaction that was not appropriate or acceptable. I'm sure it motivated me to be more strong in my punishment to deter, because I thought that the punishment would deter the behaviour I didn't want to see. I didn't know that that reinforces the behaviour. (Case 10).

And so I just didn't like what it did to A ... I thought he was like hitting other kids ... but that was sort of what [my husband] was doing to him, was hitting him if your parents can do it then you can do it kind of a feeling ... I thought that it was affecting A. with his friends at school and how he was behaving. So I think that's what made [my husband] finally stop doing it too. Case 13).

### Losing Control

Parents reported a variety of other factors in their decision to seek out alternatives to corporal punishment. When participants were asked if they had ever come close to

losing control when disciplining their children, most respondents reported that they had. The intensity of their anger and the depth of their frustration had both surprised them and resulted in some participants feeling that they were risking injuring their child. This was a major factor in their decision to stop using corporal punishment. Both the fear of damaging their child and the intense anger were reported by those who used milder forms of corporal punishment like spanking through a diaper and by those who had hit hard with a hand or an object.

Many participants reported that their use of corporal punishment was associated with very strong emotions of anger, rage and frustration. By giving physical expression to these emotions while attempting to punish or discipline their child, they risked losing control of their own actions and causing injury.

Horrible, horrible. There are times I think when if I start spanking him I would feel it was hard to stop 'cause then he'd hit me and then I'd just really start to get angry. So I realized that this was just something I was sort of resorting to when I was out of control myself, but it certainly didn't help any situation ever... And I think also having a second one you think, 'gee, am I going to be doing the same thing with this one? Is that what I have in store for me?' As a long term prospect, it just yuuugh. I didn't like it. (Case 4).

I can visualize times when M. was little and I would just smack him and smack him and smack him out of anger and frustration and loneliness and everything. And I'd walk away just pulped and I don't think that it had at that point anything to do with changing his behaviour ... I think it had everything to do with accomplishing my need to take out my anger ... I thought that if I stayed there I was going to hurt him. (Case 7).

What I didn't want to do was to continue that behaviour. I wanted to get better control over my anger when my son acted out. And clearly when I chose to swat him across the bottom, I never hit him on the face or.. punched him or anything like that. I would just slap him across the bum a few times. But I never felt good about it and sometimes I found myself hitting him two and four and five times. And thinking 'woah, this is not good.' And it scared me, and I found myself feeling like I really had to get on top of this and put an end to it right away. (Case 11).

That's when I realized I think, that I had the potential to be an abusive person if I didn't get help, because when I squeezed his neck and I was shaming him and it was like... just this rage of anger 'YOU'RE GOING TO DO IT BECAUSE I SAY SO', I could feel it, it was like this horrible person inside me was going to get out if I didn't do something. And I never knew that I had this

kind of capability because never having children of my own yet and I had this idea that I was going to do it all differently. It's like you just don't know what you're doing, squeezing somebody's neck and marching them upstairs. I remember saying, like 'YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY', like it was all him ... Like 'WHY DO YOU ALWAYS DO THAT? THAT'S SO EMBARRASSING FOR ME WHEN WE'RE OUT', like it was all his problem. He was not living up to the expectation I wanted to have. (Case 1).

I never spanked my children anywhere but on their bottom. I remember a couple of times getting at a point of frustration or anger with the two kids and almost wanting, feeling like I was getting my temper was rising, getting to the point where I could understand where people hit their children, just out of sheer frustration. And feeling really upset that I was getting to that point ... but feeling that empathy for people who had snapped or lost control. (Case 6).

One woman noted that she had been able to avoid getting in fights when she apprehended people as a store detective. But that the depth of her anger and frustration as an isolated mother confronted with the behaviour of her three year old child shocked her and eventually produced a crisis.

I realize you have no right to do that to someone else. I mean it's weird, even when you take in people that you don't even know for shop lifting, there's still an element of respect, that you use an amount of restraint just to bring someone in, but I wouldn't hurt anybody more than I had just to contain them, and I never did. I never hurt anybody. I hardly ever was in fights like other people did. I found talking to people and maybe my physical being is less threatening than others and stuff, so I didn't use excessive force on anybody except my own kid. (Case 7).

### Critical Incident.

For some participants stopping corporal punishment was a result of a gradual decision. But many participants reported a particular incident in which they realised that corporal punishment was having deleterious effects on both themselves and their children. Many of the participants remembered one incident when their dissatisfaction became strong enough that they decided to seek alternatives. I have termed this episode 'a critical incident'.

She right away tried to like put her hand behind her back 'cause she didn't want me to hit her. And I was just so mad at her, I just whipped her pants down 'cause I thought 'well it might not hurt with just on her pants,' so I just whacked her about four times, hard, on her butt, and I looked at her butt later and it was a little red. And I thought 'that's not right.' I don't want to start this as a beginning 'cause this isn't something that I want to do, it makes me feel ugly. I don't want to feel like a devil, that's awful. (Case 2).

A. was about four or five months old and T. was about three and a half, and he was just really wild and out of control, and just seeking attention all the time. Whether it be through good ways or bad ways, and we just had a lot of times when he would just be hitting me and kicking me and just really getting my goat and so I found there would be times I'd be holding him down on the floor and actually asking him if he wanted me to spank him and hit him and of course he didn't, but I was just out of control and he was out of control ... Running around, banging doors just trying to hit me and things ... So he just was being very uncooperative. And so one day I remember just holding him down and saying 'I'M GOING TO HURT YOU', and really knowing that I needed help and I remember at times him saying the same thing back to me—'I'm going to hurt you Mommy, I'm going to hurt you'... so I really felt bad about these episodes, and one day I was at my doctor's office, and I said to him 'well I really need some help with T. because we're at each other's throats and I'm afraid that something dangerous is going to happen with him.' (Case 4).

It was totally myself that was losing control. I can recognize that now but at the time I didn't. I saw myself as being the good parent and making sure my children getting the right lesson in life and all of the rest of it. But now that I can look back and I understand what happened. I was losing control, total control of myself... The central thing being is I never, I didn't feel good when I spanked the kids. It was effective, it was efficient, it worked. But I didn't feel good when I'd done it. I felt rotten, I felt guilty, and I realized also that from the spank on the hand to the spank on the bum had to get harder. So I was visualizing, I mean my children were [six] and three at the time right, I was visualizing like what would it be as they get older. What will it be when they are ten or eleven, how hard will the hits have to be then right? ... [My husband] had spanked A. for something she had done, he'd spanked her on the legs as she'd gone up the stairs. And he'd immediately turned around and gone outside... And when I went to look for my husband I couldn't find him. And he was actually in the greenhouse and he was crying. And I said B. this is bloody ridiculous. If you feel like that and I feel rotten then why do we do it? And we sort of both agreed that we'd, well if we didn't [spank] what would we do? So the pattern continued on again, but we started to talk more about not feeling good. So then for the longest time my husband kind of backed off and left all the disciplining to me. He had no idea how to do it, he didn't know where to start, he didn't know what to do. So I became 'the disciplinarian' by using words and talking to the children and all the rest of it. And I wasn't a hundred percent successful. There was times when, in my own inability to know what to do, that I fell back and would give a slap, as a final thing. So I still wasn't fully free of the spanking ...

L. was six, she came home, and she was very upset with a friend of hers and she had a school photograph. And she ripped up the school photograph and started making derogatory terms towards another child. And that was one belief I'd always had. That children ... that it's not OK to be derogatory to other people. But I just saw red and I was furious with her. And she was really defiant and sort of really rebellious to what I was saying to her. And I ended up taking a ruler, a triangular ruler that was on the shelf beside me and spanking her backside with it. And of course she arched her back, and the more she arched her back the madder I got, cause now I'm totally losing control, this child is older, she's very rebellious right, and I'm trying to hit her with the ruler. And I did, I hit her three or four times, put down the ruler, and came out and felt horrible. I felt absolutely terrible and I felt I will never ever ever hit again. Cause it was a whole traumatic frightening episode. My girls had never rebelled before, they had never been defiant. They had never resisted, and here was L. doing all those things. So I realized that spanking didn't work. And then I got stuck because I'd been reasoning, so what was it that wasn't working? So then I became totally confused (Case 5).

Oh, I'd say my son was four ... And I remember I grabbed him and it was the look on my son's face, the fear on his face. I think I did spank him and sent him to his room. And then I sat for a while and thought about it and then went in and spoke to them both separately. And told them what I was feeling, that I didn't like to spank and I didn't want to have to spank them anymore and what did they think I could do so that we didn't have to get to that point ... And they had of course all sorts of ideas and it led to quite a discussion. That was almost like the final one for me. I stepped towards him and he didn't shrink from me, or he might of put his hand back over his bottom and I just kind of really empathised with him, I was three times his height and took a step towards him and he just kind of looked up at me and he knew what I was going to do. He knew what I was going to do, it didn't serve it's purpose of the punctuation mark or the shock value, it just wasn't the way to do it anymore. (Case 6).

The terrible thing is that, the thing that could break your heart is, if you hurt one of the kids, how it hurts the other one so much to see their sibling hurt. And at times when I was taking my anger out on K. and A. would go to him and put her arm around him and everything, or she would cry ... sit down and just cry by herself because she was so scared. I would feel powerful and feel 'yes, that's that with K.' I would look at A. and I remember avoiding looking at A. because that hurt. That she was scared. And that affected me a lot (Case 7).

Like my realization for time to stop spanking K?... when you come towards your kid with your hand up because you're going to pull them some place or something and he winces cause he thinks you're going to hit him, that's when you know that things are awry. That's when you know that your kid's afraid of you, he's intimidated by you. And I also remember having very little respect for my mother and really, I'm hoping that there might be a mutual respect between me and my kids. (Case 7).



### Reevaluation: participants' looking at their own history.

Parents found themselves treating their children in a way which they remembered as unjust and hurtful in their own childhood. Parents' spontaneous use of corporal punishment often appeared to revive or refocus highly charged memories of punishment from their own parents. This reflection strengthened their decision to seek alternatives. Several participants reported thinking over these incidents at various points of their life for example during pregnancy, or discussing them with their spouse. The memory of these events still bothered them. Having acknowledged their own extant feelings of discomfort some participants were very aware of how they didn't want to behave as parents. I have included a wide range of quotations from different participants below because I want to emphasise both the frequency and intensity of the participants' own experiences and the strength of their feelings about these incidents which had occurred some twenty years or more previously. This will allow the reader, in later sections, to clearly grasp the extent of the participants' shift away from their own backgrounds. This shift encompassed both the participants' own values and child rearing philosophy and their actions within their current relationships with their children.

When I spanked him, I mean I tried it because you get to a point when you're just so frustrated, you [think] 'well this is what people do, this is what my mom did to me.' So you try it . I always have horrible memories of my mom spanking me with a hair brush. I mean that's right in my head that I hated that. And I always remember that. She may have done it once, but that one just stuck in my head and so doing it to my son, I did try it once and it didn't feel all that great. I mean I have yelled since then, which I figure isn't that great parenting technique either, but I don't hit him anymore ... Well in a sense I did become like my mom cause I was really, really angry. And in that sense, she could just get really very angry and then spanking was what she did just kind of by instinct. But I don't know that I thought of that right at the time. I probably did right afterwards, started thinking about uugh, I hated it when my mom spanked me. That probably entered into my deciding that 'No, I'm not going to do that.' And [then] I looked for other things to do. (Case 13).

Looking back at my past when we would get spanked it was just to impose pain on someone for something that they've done, I don't see the connection in

how the child is going to get it that they're going to stop the behaviour, (Case12).

I probably thought about my own upbringing a bit. My memory is that my brother got the physical stuff. The girls got slapped and 'don't talk like that and go to your room' kind of thing. In school the girls were put on a time out in the corner with their back to the classroom, the boys were taken out into the hall and hit with a wooden paddle. At home, I only have one brother, my father would discipline him by yelling at him and literally bounce him off the walls. We had a long hallway in our home and I can remember my dad grabbing my brother by the shirt and tossing him against the wall and then he'd bounce off the wall, and my dad would toss him against the other wall. I saw that a few times. I don't remember being spanked. I probably was. But I had a very good friend whose father used a belt on him and that used to terrify me. The father would take the belt off of his pants and hit his son with the belt. Sometimes with the buckle and sometimes just with the leather part of the belt ... Wherever he happened to strike. It didn't appear that it was intended to be on the face or the head, but if that happened well that happened. It wasn't like the child was laid across the man's lap and the bum was the focus. That image of my father pushing my brother and grabbing him and knocking him off the walls, that's pretty big in my mind.

I think that it started for me during my pregnancy thinking about how I was parented [and] immediately post-partum. 'What kind of mothering did I have? Or fathering? What do I want to do differently?' (Case 11).

So then my dad came home and said he wanted to talk to me in that tone and I went and hid in the crawl space where I was afraid. I didn't like it in there 'cause I was afraid of what was down there, but I'd rather hide in there than come out. And I remember my dad saying to me 'you come out, you come out, I won't hurt you, I promise I won't hurt you.' So finally I worked up enough courage, I believed him, I trusted him that he wasn't going to hurt me and as soon as I got out he spanked my butt like there was no tomorrow for hurting my little brother and making him get stitches. But for me it was a creative thing I was trying to do. I guess they thought I was intentionally trying to hurt him, I don't know, I still don't understand that. I never ever remember my mother hitting me. Never. Even in later life I've been very, very close to my mom. My dad I've always been a little bit distant. I guess maybe that one instant 'cause that was where the trust was gone. And I've reflected on this one incident many times during my life. And it's just that one small incident, him saying 'come on out, I promise I won't' and then he did. He broke my trust. Before even I had my own children. Sometimes I would think of that. (Case 2).

My mother was the spanker. She never hit me with wooden spoons or anywhere else again, it was always on the bottom. But she was the one that would spank me immediately cause she was usually the one home. And I wouldn't cry. And being sent to my room and then being told that I would talk to my father about it when he got home. My father would come home and all he had to say to me was I'm disappointed in you, and I would burst into tears and sob for hours. That hurt more than the spanking. And the spanking I can

remember feeling defiant after. Needing to be more devious and hiding my behaviour because I didn't want to get spanked. And that all clicked in again when I was spanking my children. (Case 6).

He [adopted brother] was just the total scapegoat of the family. It was actually my mother who beat him more than my father. She would just go into total rage, and I think her frustration, he was the one it came out. I just remember my dad just like jumping up, grabbing him off his seat in the kitchen table, and he took his shirt and twisted it up and I mean nothing happened to the wall, but just really thumping his head against the wall and saying over and over like 'we're sick and tired of this, and you'd better smarten up buster' and all this kind of stuff. And it was like we all sat at the kitchen table and we never did anything, it was like a movie script going on over here somewhere, but it was just horrible. That's one instance I remember. (Case 1).

I remember being spanked for falling in a ditch. I was spanked for that, which when you think about it I didn't do it intentionally. But my clothes were dirty and I guess she was upset with that. I remember being spanked for beating up a friend of mine, I mean we're talking about six, seven years old. My bike broke one time. I got spanked because my bike broke and I remember feeling great injustice over that cause I didn't break it intentionally, I was riding it and it broke in half and she spanked me for that. (Case 6).

I remember my brother and my dad and my brother and my step-father actually having physical fights, when my brother was in his teens. My brother was not an easy person to get along with, but at the same time I think my father and my step-father were both very immature men and just couldn't cope with him. I can just see that that kind of corporal punishment led to that fighting. My step-father did use his belt sometimes with my brother on his bum. And I always felt that was really wrong. (Case 4).

Several participants reported severe experiences of corporal punishment, in which parents or teachers used objects such as a hairbrush or cane. The severity of these punishments is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, in view of parents' tendency to use punishment levels similar to those experienced as a child, the participants' determination to change their approach is significant. Secondly, their own experiences illuminate their initial treatment of their own children. Having been brought up to regard such force as normal, an awareness of the extent of force that they were using wasn't immediately clear to them.

One woman related her experience in Catholic school in Ireland:

We went into class together and the nun said 'your answers are the same, who copied from who?' ... It was a long pointed stick, the friend of mine would get this cane on a regular basis in front of the whole class, maybe two or three times a week ... I was supposed to have one on each hand, and as I put my hand out I was petrified. I'd never been hit with anything other than a hand before and the stick scared the hell out of me. I pulled my hand back, and the nun hit her foot, and she had a bunion. So, she gave me six on each hand and my hands were so swollen up that I couldn't close them, they were like rubber gloves full of water, or full of air ... So I ended up getting a licking from granny anyway because I had to eat my supper but I couldn't pick up my knife and fork. And eventually I had to put my hands on the table and when she saw they were so swollen she said 'what happened?'. And I said 'Sister Mary Ansetta hit me with a cane today.' No doubt granny just gave two good slaps on the backside and sent me to bed because I had to have done something very wrong at school. (Case 5).

If my mother got after me it was, when was it was going to end? Enough I got the point please, (Case 3).

I can probably remember two or three very vivid times that we got spanked. And what we used to have to do is go out and pick a switch from our tree and bring it in. We'd have to choose it. And then they would switch us. It was either that or get the belt a couple of whacks. But I only really remember about three times. But there was more threatening of giving spanks than anything. (Case 12).

### Witnessing an assault.

Several participants reported witnessing or experiencing an assault. Participants connected the victim's experience of violence with children's experience of corporal punishment. Two participants mentioned witnessing their spouse spanking. They both empathized with their child and saw an unpleasant mirror image of their own actions. Witnessing or experiencing an assault further sensitized participants and increased their empathy for children. When I asked what had led her to stop spanking, the mother in Case 2 recounted three incidents. These were strung together in her memory; one incident reminded her of the others. The first incident she recounted was when she had intervened on a child's behalf. The incident with the young girl revived the memory of her father hitting her "like there was no tomorrow". She described herself intervening on behalf of a young girl.

He was trying to shove her boots on. Shoved her down on the ground and shook her and then she wouldn't stop crying and he said 'if you don't stop crying I'm going to spank you.' And then he, she wouldn't stop crying, she was almost hysterical with her breathing by that time, and he just with full force struck her twice, once on the back and once on the butt, picked her up in a rage and opened up the door to leave the dance studio and then he just went at it again outside at her. Whacking her back and her butt through her winter coat and she was crying. And at that point the one lady close to the door there intercepted and confronted him and said 'hey.' And then I just got up out of my chair and I couldn't hold myself back and I confronted this fellow 'hey' I said 'what are you doing? there's other ways to handle the situation, you don't have to do that'. And he said 'hey shut up, it's none of your goddamn business.' And I said, 'excuse me, I said any child's business is my business.' And he said 'shut up'.

She stood her ground when he threatened her, and later reported the whole incident to the police. The vulnerability of the child reminded her of her own plight when she was hit by her own father. She then recounted being attacked as an adult and knocked unconscious in a swimming pool. Lastly she recounted her hurt and feeling of injustice at being tricked and spanked by her father, which I reported above in the section "Reevaluation." All three of these incidents strengthened her perception of the vulnerability of children and the need to protect them from any form of physical assault.

The day when that little girl was hurt, that came to me just like it was happening to me again and it wasn't me, it was a little girl that was being hurt by her dad.. But [that incident] basically opened up my eyes ..you can't weigh up whether one strike or five is going to be acceptable therefore its gotta be nothing. (Case 2).

Two other women (Cases 6 and 9) experienced severe assaults from their then husbands. Case 6 saw her husband's use of force on her and her child as being connected. She was concerned about the effect on her child of witnessing the incident, as well as her own safety.

He had punched holes in the walls, thrown things, break things, it was escalating. I said to her 'it's not ok to hit things and it's not ok to hit people and its not ok to hit the dog and that's why daddy doesn't live here anymore. 'I knew I had to stop it the day he threw me across the room and having her see me thrown across the room, I thought 'what are we teaching here?' I want to teach them, I don't want to drag them up so that 's when I ended it I never felt comfortable with spanking and I know how much it would upset me to see him spank them. (Case 6).

Case 9 witnessed her second husband shaking her step-children hard against a fence and then in turn saw how abusive the oldest stepson was with his younger brother. The disruption in her new home spurred her into a search for books so that "we could discipline the kids without having to use violence." (Case 9).

### Summary

Participants reported a variety of factors in their decision to seek alternatives to corporal punishment. These included: their immediate dislike of the experience, fear of losing control of their actions and damaging their child, feeling guilt for losing control of their emotions. They also reported that having reflected on their own childhood experiences at the hands of parents or teachers, they wanted to spare their children any similar pain. Their consideration of the feelings associated with these memories and times of acute vulnerability enabled them to empathize with their own child's fear and distress when faced with being physically punished. Several participants, having experienced assaults themselves, appeared to be sensitised to any use of force, including spanking.

Some participants also observed that their children's physically aggressive behaviour toward classmates, friends, or siblings was modelled on their own use of corporal punishment. For many of these participants their determination to seek another path became crystallised in particular incidents. This led to participants seeking information from a variety of resources to learn alternative approaches to disciplining their children. These resources are the subject of the next section.

## Section Two. Resources

The participants' frustration led them to seek out a range of resources with which they began to develop alternative discipline strategies. The acquisition of a certain insight into their own and their children's behaviour from one resource sometimes led them to other places for further information. This section examines the resources that participants reported as important in stopping spanking. The resources used can be divided into those areas directly concerned with childrearing and those areas indirectly concerned with childrearing. Although this section is mainly concerned with childrearing resources used by participants, some participants stressed the importance of factors which may appear tangential to childrearing. For example, several participants emphasized the importance of regular exercise. Exercise gave them more stamina and allowed them to be more patient with their children. Conversely, not getting sufficient exercise left them more liable to being frustrated by their children and to a higher possibility of resorting to practices they regarded as malevolent such as yelling. Two participants specifically mentioned that their ongoing training in martial arts had helped them to be more patient and to control their unwarranted emotional impulses.

Practising martial arts has helped me tremendously. It's a good physical outlet for energy, anything that's aerobic or large muscle really helps a person. But I've also become a lot more self controlled over the last several years. And I really attribute that to my martial arts training. There are times when I get angry with my kids but I exercise regularly and I think that helps a lot. I feel a lot more patient after I've taken care of myself and spent time working out. (Case 11).

Other participants mentioned either prayer or meditation and spiritual practices as being calming and of overall benefit to all aspects of their lives, including caring for their children. (Cases 2, 11,12,13.)

Since A. was little, I've done meditating. And that really has made a huge difference in my life. That's part of why I joined the church. I didn't belong for twenty years 'cause it wasn't important to me. And I joined for him [my son]. And then I found something for me. It just makes life a lot more meaningful if you believe in something you're much less angstful. Much less worrying about what's going on. And I think that helps [my son]. (Case 13).

Resources that were directly helpful in changing their childrearing practices were wide ranging. Participants reported using varying combinations of books about child development and books that advocated alternatives to corporal punishment, (see Appendix D for list); parenting classes; La Leche League; a local Neighbourhood House; a pre-school co-op; and seminars from a local University Pediatric Department. In addition participants observed and sought parenting advice from neighbours and friends whose way of relating to children they particularly respected. Two participants reported seeing a psychiatrist, one briefly for less than ten sessions, the other for over a year. The mothers in Cases 7 and 4 also consulted a medical allergist concerning their children's high level of activity and frustration. The mother in Case 7 said that gaining an understanding that children's behaviour had a potentially understandable basis led them to seek out an allergist. "The spanking stopped when we began to try to figure out why things were happening, and one of those was 'oh well does he have allergies?'" Both mothers reported that this allergy treatment helped their children become calmer. This was particularly true in Case 7. Her son K. (age 4) had been having five temper tantrums a day and the mother reported that he calmed down considerably when the family radically altered their diet and stopped spanking.

Having made a decision to stop spanking, participants appeared willing to gather information from whatever sources appeared helpful. This part is divided into five sections: books, peers and mentors, parenting classes, neighbourhood centre, and counselling and psychiatry. I report briefly on each of these resources in turn.



## Books

Most participants reported seeking out helpful parenting and child development books. This was particularly true for those participants with degree level education and middle-class income. Parents in Cases 2, 3 and 7 did not find books useful. The mother in Case 2 reported being guided by her close observation of her relationship with her daughters. She was also guided by her strong dislike of corporal punishment resulting from her childhood and adult experiences. The single and formerly abusive father in Case 3 reported being unable to absorb useful information from books. He found parenting classes more helpful. These included single fathers' groups, Parent Effectiveness Training and awareness groups. He has attended these classes, such as Living in Families Effectively (L.I.F.E.) for over four years, starting when he was living away from his children. These classes required commitment of at least one evening a week. At one time he was attending three groups.

I can't read that well. I'll be lucky if I got through a page before I fall asleep and my intake level is next to nothing [its] disappointing but seems to be the way I am. I pursued a course called L.I.F.E., I could see where I made major mistakes with the kids ... I always participated when I had the kids, I went to a meeting on Thursday nights even if they complained, I said 'listen this is important its not just for me, its for you too.' (Case 3).

The mother in Case 7 emphasized the importance of having a family centre to go to rather than books to obtain information and support.

You can have a book around but you may not ever get the chance to read it. Believe it or not, a whole day could go by, I remember when M. was little, I would be having these terrible cramps and realize that I haven't had a bowel movement for two days cause I just haven't had the time to have an uninterrupted bowel movement. And people don't realize how hard it is to get used to being with a little baby. And so to have a place like this [family drop-in centre] to get to I think is one of the most important things to find out when you first have a kid. (Case 7).

One woman directly mentioned incorporating information she had read in a book. This was specific training in using I-statements to avoid blaming her child.

Not like 'you guys are like this and you are like that.' It's very important. That's one thing that they mentioned in that book. To talk about our feelings. Like 'I feel like this,' (Case 9).

Beginning a statement by referring to their own feelings allowed the parent to communicate clearly without further alienating their child or making them feel guilty. The mother in Case 9 felt that the book helped her understand whether a particular problem e.g. untidiness, was going to only affect the child or was going to affect her or be dangerous.

If C.'s room is messy, it's not my room that is messy. It's not affecting me in any way. Now I think, 'is that causing a big trouble?' OK, if he throws his clothes all over the stairs you trip on the clothes. I say 'hey C. I want to go up those stairs and I don't want to trip over the clothes, it's dangerous for me.' And then he would pick them up. (Case 9).

### Peers and Mentors

Several participants reported their pleasure in learning from friends or from pre-school teachers who were particularly kindly and skillful with children. They sought practical parenting advice and also learnt from observation. Participants found being able to watch these people defuse potentially volatile situations particularly helpful. Children were both shown a more acceptable form of behaviour and spoken to in a firm, respectful way. The mother in Case 5 reported getting an entire Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (S.T.E.P.) course informally from a friend. Participants also reported learning from friends who met at a neighbourhood centre or from other preschool parents. For the mother in Case 7 it was important to have friends from whom she could learn alternatives and who could provide support and "understand what it's like to have a three year old and a one year old at home. Or a four year old and a two year old. It's hard work, it's frustrating". Not being isolated from either friends or information allowed her to change.

I read lots of things. Talked to lots of people. We'd been spending more time with one family that I really liked the way that they parent, they're very calm.

And I remember one time being over there and the little five year old boy was desperately wanting these scissors and the dad was saying 'No, no, no, you don't have these scissors.' And the kids waving them around and the dad's very calm and I know that it wouldn't have been such a calm situation in our family. But his calmness basically defused the situation. I just really I loved to watch them in action because I really think that they're great parents. He just talked very calmly and slowly 'this is dangerous, I'm going to put them away. Why don't you do..?' But just basically never lost control, he just talked through the whole thing.

*J.L. And you mentioned how it would have been a different situation in your family?*

Oh yeah, 'GET OVER HERE RIGHT NOW' Daddy would have screamed and 'GO TO YOUR ROOM' and, it probably would have been dealt with a lot faster, but it would have been more, I don't like to say violent, but louder and just [a] more aggressive situation everybody being all riled up and upset. (Case 4).

I saw the pre-school teacher in circle time with twenty kids and ten parents and there would be one or two kids really being disruptive and rather than say 'Johnny, stop that, or Johnny sit down, if I have to tell you one more time,' she'd say 'Katrina you're doing such a nice job sitting there.' And Johnny would look at Katrina and do the same thing Katrina was doing. And I thought 'whoa ... this is effective.' So I saw those kinds of things being modelled and tried them myself. (Case 11).

I also have a friend that is to me an exceptional mother. That I use somewhat as a model. She's a kindergarten teacher, so she was very used to dealing with children around that age and had a lot of ideas for me. Her children are quite a bit older than mine so I could see the benefits of learning alternate methods ... [her children] were always able to talk about their feelings. They were able to sit down and negotiate with each other. You could see them get angry at each other, they would still fight, they would still argue. But if she took them and said 'OK, we're going to sit down, we're going to have a family meeting about this, they would do that. It used to shock me she would say 'I know the two of you can work this out', and leave the room, which was totally alier to me. So it also helped me to define just what my job was as a parent. And that I wasn't there to discipline as much as I was there to teach. (Case 6).

Each of the above quotations illustrates participants learning from peers that they could guide children more effectively from the standpoint of adult and child being more equal and without using force.

Even participants who had considered not spanking before the births of their children (Cases 4, 11 and 12), found the process of trying to treat their children non-violently in the face of their own childhood training sufficiently disorienting that they

sought out colleagues and consulted them. Participants reported talking to their friends and colleagues for practical learning and for support in their decision to stop spanking. For some participants this involved a sense that they were touching on a controversial subject. Their trepidation may reflect these participants' sense that their decision to stop spanking was outside the cultural norm.

I talked to people at the cooperative pre-school and ... it was scary because I felt like I was talking about something that other people might really disapprove of. But I found them approachable. We talked about a lot of meaty issues, sexual relations within our marriage, discipline issues, children having special needs, attention deficit disorder, whatever. We talked about things that were hard and were painful. Most of us were parenting our first born at the time, so we had high expectations for our child and for ourselves. I think talking to people really helped me. (Case 11).

For one participant, who was part of an extended family and an immigrant English-Irish sub-culture that strongly supported spanking, the process of changing involved negotiating between opposing viewpoints. While her colleagues at work and friends were against spanking, her extended family and compatriots criticized her for not spanking enough. She reported that trying to resolve her family loyalties and these opposing views caused considerable conflict and confusion within her. "Because the breaking away wasn't just a breaking away from spanking, it was a breaking away from a whole lifestyle of cultural background" (Case 5). This mother also experienced a strong sense of guilt about how she was disciplining her children. Being able to learn about child development provided her with support for her own sense of discomfort with spanking and taught her new approaches.

A. was six. I was sort of caught between two cultures. My in-laws who put us down because we didn't spank the children when they needed it, and living in a North American culture at the time of Dr. Spock and the promotion of non-violence. Where we were preaching don't hit, don't hit. Reason, talk with your children. So I was trying to keep away from my friends the fact that I spanked, and tried to convince my in-laws that yes, I was spanking enough. So it was a very confusing time for me. And I'd volunteered in a special class and no matter how difficult those children were it never crossed my mind to be physical with them. Which is a turmoil I was going through myself. 'Why am I spanking my

own children who I love and yet I care dearly for these children and I don't have to spank them to get cooperation?... So I was really confused and didn't know what to do, didn't know where to turn at that point I started going to [childcare] courses and finding out about child development. [which] I knew nothing about. And started to realize that now I have got some roots to argue my point of not spanking. So then it was much easier for me not to spank although my husband found it much more difficult not to. For the longest time I felt really guilty about it. (Case 5).

This process of change and conflict between opposing norms was sufficiently difficult for her to hide her spanking when talking to her peers at work.

With the exception of the single father in Case 3, all the participants reported that they had stopped spanking before their husbands. With the exception of the mother in Case 4, whose husband still spanked, the women had then influenced their husbands to stop hitting. Several participants reported that their husbands then left all disciplining up to them. After a period of time the husbands had learnt from them sufficiently to discipline without hitting.

### Parenting Classes

Eight out of thirteen participants reported attending parenting classes. These were conducted at a variety of centres including a pre-school, a family place, and a social service agency. Participants reported that these courses, although helpful, were only part of the resources they used to change. Participants mentioned learning about child development and gaining support and understanding from other parents as benefits of these classes. The mother in Case 11, who read books, attended parenting seminars at the local Children's Hospital and parenting classes at her child's preschool said "I took my parenting seriously and I felt that I needed resources and I needed some instruction. So those were the kinds of things I did to educate myself". For the mother in Case 7 parenting classes such as Nobody's Perfect taught her alternatives to spanking: "that there's alternatives. Physical alternatives for me instead of that

wonderful sensation [of release] you get from spanking your kid," (Case 7). The mother in Case 1 noted that she regarded parenting classes as a starting point; they had provided her with an understanding of the purposeful nature of her child's behaviour and the motivation to be responsible for her own behaviour.

I certainly felt less isolated, I felt less alone in my quest. I felt that just being out there and hearing other people's stories and having a chance to articulate my own, that there were a lot of other people out there experiencing the same things that I was, if not worse things. Problems with parenting and marital discord and those kinds of things. And I got some suggestions, like the behaviour charts [and] rewarding my child, setting up successes for him rather than giving him attention when he acted out. (Case 11).

I started taking some other courses too in how you deal with the kids, how you talk to a child [treating your child ] as you would your neighbour. [Like] would you tell your neighbour to 'sit down in that chair and don't move and shut up? And you're are not going to move from that chair until you drink your juice or milk.' I don't think they would appreciate it. I think it is important learning what children are, understanding their development as they grow up would help a lot of parents with frustrations. But where you've got a chance of losing control because of frustrations, [it's very important, I've] seen from my own experience not understanding why a six month old baby couldn't get up and walk, catching myself thinking 'why am I carrying this child around?' (Case 3).

I was going to throw out all the ways that my parents raised kids and I was going to it quite a bit differently. And everything went swimmingly until my son became about three and then by the time he was four I was really frustrated and I was getting a lot of advice, particularly from family members that what he needed was a good spanking, and that would get him back in line. So there was part of me that just knew that was not what I wanted to do, so I was feeling really torn with being really frustrated with him, not being able to do anything with him and really struggling with not wanting use physical punishment to control him. So I found a book called Children The Challenge by Rudolf Dreikers and I read that book, and I thought wow, this is great stuff. I really like these ideas and principles in here so I worked along with the book for a while, and of course, not having any support I kind of put it back in the bookcase, and went back to being frustrated again. And then just by chance I happened to find a parenting course that was based on this particular book, so I thought 'well, that's just right up my alley.' So I went and took my first parenting class, and now I lead those parenting classes. Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, They define behaviour in four major goals. [They're attention, power, revenge and a display of inadequacy]. So you get to understand the reasons behind children's behaviour, because all behaviour is purposive. So once you are in a position to understand that the behaviour is paying off to the child in some way that you are in a position to change your behaviour, and thus affecting the child, rather than trying to change the child, you actually change yourself, and

through changing yourself you change simultaneously with the child. So what it is really doing is training you to be completely responsible for yourself. So it's self-responsibility. Participants are not quite aware of that on the first couple of sessions, that they go to this because we all go there saying 'I have this terrible child and I need help.' They come wanting to fix their children thinking, 'well that's where the problem is,' when really it's the parents that need retraining. Like I think that parenting group everyday of my life I think. I mean I would be an abusive parent by this point and my child would have extremely low self esteem and he would be in two cycles of revenge with me. (Case 1).

Participants reported that parenting classes had been highly beneficial in helping them understand both important aspects of their relationships with their children and the necessity for taking responsibility for their own feelings and behaviour towards their children. These involved both new philosophical issues such as treating children with respect as opposed to demanding obedience, and practical issues, such as controlling anger. I will amplify these points in the following section: "Alternative Means: What The Parents Actually Did."

#### Family Place, A Neighbourhood Centre for Parents and Children.

Several participants reported that a small drop-in storefront neighbourhood centre with early childhood education trained staff and a large play area with kitchen, had been very important in providing them with support from peers, informal counselling and parenting courses. This place had been a major source of information concerning alternatives to corporal punishment for one participant and a source of support for another. For the mother in Case 4, the Family Place had allowed her to learn about other ways of parenting and gain encouragement.

I think having a support network was really important for me too. Just to feel that I wasn't a complete failure and I wasn't doing everything wrong. Because really how you feel about, I think how I felt about myself was very important to how I was dealing with my kids too (Case 4).

In the course of my research I visited this place and was impressed by the light-filled and playful atmosphere and friendliness of the staff. Three participants stressed

the importance of having a place where they could talk to other parents or staff, while their children played safely. Family Place was seen as providing a very important breathing space that broke their isolation. For the mother in Case 7, it was a resource that responded to her acute need for help in a non-judgemental manner, when she felt in danger of seriously harming her child. She noted that such resources can play a great part in reducing abuse of children.

I think that places like a Family Place or free programs and stuff like that, can play a huge role in the success of parenting and breaking some cycles. Just having a safe place to go. Even if you're open to discussing anything with the staff, just having a safe place to go and having peers, I think is really important when you're suddenly thrown into parenting. (Case 7).

If a kid can do one thing one day and the same thing the next day and only the second day do you want to smack the hell out of him, it's obviously not what the kid's doing it's how you're coping with your own self and stress. And I learned to respect that and to separate those stresses. And I guess I learned that because I used to be able to come here to Family Place in, my nightshirt with my sweat pants on and no socks, with a box of cereal and they'd take care of me. I thought if I stayed [at home] I was going to hurt him. (Case 7).

I spent a lot of time at Family Place and there's a lot of parents and people who have training in Early Childhood, so talking to them was very supportive. 'Yes, you're doing the right thing. Yes, it's a slow process and it's frustrating. And yes, we've all lapsed and done the bad things and so you're not a failure,' and just that kind of support was really good. (Case 4).

### Psychiatry and Counselling

Several participants consulted counsellors or psychiatrists, as a result of difficulties with their children. For the mother in Case 4 this was for five visits. But the mothers in Cases 9 and 10, both of whom were single parents coping with young children and a divorce, attended therapy for longer periods. The mother in Case 10 reported that she stopped spanking decisively after about a year of seeing a psychiatrist, but continued to see him intermittently for four years. The mother in Case 9 substantially reduced spanking over a period of several months of therapy. She also attended counselling briefly after she formed a new family with her second husband and his two children.



The mother in Case 7 attended counselling briefly for consultation on specific family problems. The mother in Case 10 visited a psychiatrist because she was concerned that her children's persistent misbehaviour indicated that there was something wrong with them. The mother in Case 4 consulted a family psychiatrist because she wanted to prevent herself injuring her child. Two other participants briefly consulted counsellors to reduce conflict in their family (Cases 7 and 9). The mothers in Cases 4 and 9 both received advice for giving structured attention to their children.

We went to the family psychiatrist and she really has encouraged us to do a lot of one-on-one play with Z. where we just follow his lead. And although we've done that a lot, we haven't done it so much recently but I really do find when we really make an effort to do that kind of play with Z he's a lot calmer and happier. Even twenty minutes a day of just playing with him ... just doing whatever he does, not giving our own agenda is amazing. And yet at the same time we stopped doing it, we lapse out of doing it so easily, which is a shame. (Case 4).

With the mother in Case 9 the counsellor suggested setting aside time for one particular child each weekend.

My husband [was] hitting his kids and I would feel frustrated and I would let it out on my son. But I told my husband 'we have to go counselling because we have to talk about these things' ... [the school counsellor] would suggest different things we could do with the kids, maybe one weekend [her husband] would take one of the kids out so that he could spend more quality time with each kid instead of everybody and big chaos every time. That was really effective, kids appreciate time, good time with their parents, not all the time parents telling them what to do ... Simply by just saying 'how are you doing? how was your day?' [I have a closer relationship]. (Case 9).

The psychiatrist working with Case 10 astounded her with his assertion that children's willingness to listen to their parents does not grow from a sense of duty to one's elders but rather is an outgrowth of the child's sense of participating in a relationship.

Anyhow, so this psychiatrist told me that there you know, children listen to their parents not because they're parents but because there's respect. And there's communication. And which totally baffled me. And so we talked about that for a while. And he suggested that I go and take the courses in early childhood education. That I would be, really make a very fine pre-school teacher. Of course I thought he was out of his mind because I was afraid of children. It took a long time for me to go back into my history because what he

did was he started to see me. Without my kids. So he took me through a process of looking at my life and through that process I saw a lot of different reasons for why I was doing what I was doing and could see some value obviously in changing. I don't really remember spanking my kids much after a year or two. (Case 10).

I think maybe the family psychiatrist was good because we went together as a family, [my husband] came too, and having both of us talking about, and using the same strategies. Because I do most of the parenting, but if I don't feel that we're heading towards the same goals then I just feel it's pointless, because I'll do something ninety percent of the time and then he'll do something else completely different [e.g. spank] and it'll sort of wipe out all my good intentions. And so it was good to be working on the same strategies together, even if we didn't necessarily agree on everything. (Case 4).

The mothers in Cases 7, 9 and 10 also found that working on other personal issues helped them care for their children more proficiently.

I used to get really irritated and let out my frustrations on him and then I'd feel really bad. I'd cry at nighttime. I'd say 'it's not fair for me to do that to him' and then I tried to stop myself. Anyways I went through therapy when I was thirty three [then] I'm thirty-nine now. I was actually abused when I was five, but I'm not consciously aware of it ... but I know my mum told me about it ... and somehow I had very, very little self esteem. So part of it was like frustration from inside. I think once I started talking about it more and more, and it was all in the open, I think I felt better about myself and then well I probably hit C. once in a while but it wasn't like before. (Case 9).

Well my husband and I talked about it and I knew that the reason that I spanked K. was because of my anger and frustration between [my husband] and I. So he and I started going to counselling. We started taking care of ourselves, our relationship, and then I also started to respect that I needed to be taken care of too. (Case 7).

While limited periods of counselling and psychiatry were clearly beneficial to several participants, they also used other resources such as parenting classes or early childhood education classes.

### Summary

Participants reported that a wide range of resources had been helpful to them. Several participants noted that being able to get outside support from peers or an informal institution like a preschool or family place had been very important in

reducing the likelihood of harming their children. This was particularly true when their children were pre-schoolers or younger. Other participants incorporated suggestions from counsellors, and psychiatrists concerning ways of relating to their children. Most parents incorporated ideas from books. Only one participant reported being guided more by her own observations than from outside resources.

### Section Three, Developing Alternatives to Spanking

Participants' responses suggest that stopping spanking wasn't simply a straightforward process of substituting one disciplinary or childrearing technique for another or even several others. In earlier sections I have shown how the practice of corporal punishment was deeply woven into the participants' own histories and experiences. Developing a new disciplinary approach in some cases occurred alongside a re-examination of their own childhood experiences and observation of different childrearing approaches. This resulted in participants developing a philosophical approach to child rearing which was considerably different from that employed by their parents.

Section Three is divided into five parts: 1) Respect; 2) Self Control; 3) Acceptance and Communication of Feelings; 4) Choices; and 5) Reasoning, Angry Dances and Timeouts.

#### Respect

*So learning that children need as much respect as adults do was really good. That was probably the biggest factor in the change. (Mother in Case 1).*

Several participants referred to their parents having had a "seen and not heard" or "controlling" approach to childrearing. For the participants' parents' generation using corporal punishment was often seen as a necessary part of instilling obedience. In contrast almost all the participants noted that their core belief was that their children deserved their respect as individuals in their own right. Corporal punishment came to be seen as a profoundly disrespectful action. The mother in Case 5 saw that the major

part of her Irish culture and Catholic background was founded on a hierarchy of rights held together by obedience and corporal punishment of children and violence against women. In attempting to discipline non-violently she was not only reappraising her own childhood training in the use of corporal punishment, she was also challenging a predominantly male hierarchical chain of command (exemplified by her father-in law). Both she and her critical relatives seemed to have sensed that in challenging the legitimacy of corporal punishment she was questioning both one of the hierarchy's main socializing agents and her own lower status within her extended family.

I keep coming back to obedience, the Catholic church is controlled by obedience. [My husband's] family was controlled by obedience. My family back in Ireland was controlled by obedience. And when you've got obedience, you don't have true people. You don't have people who can be upstanding citizens, who will stand up to society for what's right. And I saw many, many times within the Catholic church, and I still see it, they will not stand up for what's right. They will stand up for what's decided upon them as being the thing to do, and if you don't believe like that, then you're not part of what they are. (Case 5).

For the mother in Case 5 challenging an entrenched belief that was an extensive part of her own upbringing and was moreover endorsed by her circle of only partially integrated immigrant relatives, caused considerable confusion and demanded considerable resilience.

I really stood my ground with [my husband's] family and said 'No more hitting. Forget it.' Which caused a lot of problems because they were still spanking their children. And I wasn't spanking mine. So things got really hot within the family. My father-in law accused me of breaking family traditions and that [her children] would grow up to be hellions and I'd be responsible for it ... A lot of negative guilt. It was really difficult to take and caused an awful lot of anxiety and bad feeling. Hence started a very difficult time of my marriage. (Case 5).

Several other participants were criticized by their own parents for not spanking. The mothers in Case 1 and Case 11 reported avoiding their parents to escape this. "In fact they thought I was right off my gourd. They thought I was just nuts. I actually didn't see them very much for long periods of time just because they weren't

supportive and they thought I was doing it all wrong" (Case 1). The mother in Case 2 got very angry with her father for spanking her child and he respected her demand that he not do it again.

I didn't ask directly whether participants thought that they had different childrearing goals for their own children than their parents had had for them. It seems likely. The mother in Case 6, as in Case 5, also reported a shift from her parents' philosophical emphasis on children's obedience to parental decisions to a philosophy of valuing her children's choices. The mother in Case 6 said her parents' values were:

'Children are seen and not heard.' 'Do as you're told.' 'Always consult your parents in any matters.' 'You're living under my roof you live by my rules.' I would never have been given any sort of family meeting, any part of a family decision. None. They were totally in control. I really had to look at that ... the way I was raised as opposed to the way I was going to raise them. I really want [my children] to make their own choices whether I agree with them or not. (Case 6).

Parents discussed their goals of childrearing, that is what values they hoped their children would have as teenagers or as young adults. Rather than valuing obedience and training their children to fit to pre-existing societal norms, participants valued their children's agency, authenticity and integrity. Often when parents discussed their goals of childrearing they emphasised self-confidence, independent thought, strong willpower. Parents wanted their children to be honest to their own feelings, to be kind and sensitive towards the feelings of others, to be able to speak out and voice one's views. Often these values were explicitly contrasted with the values that the participants had absorbed from their own childhoods. Corporal punishment was seen as an inimical training toward achieving those new goals. Raising children to be adults with these new kinds of attributes necessitated the participants and their children practicing them in childhood.

I'd like her to be sensitive as much as I am with other people's feelings, not hurt people's feelings. But also be herself. I want her to really be herself. I don't want her to be like somebody else. (Case 9).

I wanted them to speak up and speak out. I didn't realize it was assertive, I didn't know the word was assertive at that time. All I could think of was defiant. [I had] no knowledge of communication skills. [We never] dare[d] learn that at school. I started to realize that people who are battered physically or emotionally never have assertiveness. (Case 5).

My father was a sober alcoholic, and I was raised to be a caretaker and never in touch with my feelings, always trying to fix other people's. And I'll be damned if that happens to my daughter. She has a tremendously strong will. And a tremendous spirit. And I don't want to control that. And I don't want to squash it. I want to guide it a little and there's times it's really frustrating but I don't want to squash it. (Case 6).

I wanted [my children] to say thank you because they felt there was something to be thankful for, not just a pat phrase they said that pleased adults. I wanted them to be authentic and be the people they were born to be. (Case 1).

The corollary of these values was that for children to show respect for themselves and others they would have to be treated with respect. "I think if you treat other people with respect, then the kids learn how to treat other people with respect too" (Case 13). Corporal punishment was seen as a profoundly disrespectful action which impinged on their child's integrity. Treating their children with respect was the centre from which all other considerations flowed. There also appeared to be a feedback process, in which treating their children with more respect resulted in benefits to both adult and child. More parental respect and concomitant cessation of corporal punishment led to children improving their behaviour, greater mutual understanding, less inclination to hit and more determination to develop alternative strategies. The father in Case 3, said:

Just the awareness, being aware of what you are dealing with - that they are just little people, figuring out how to talk to them, showing them respect makes a big difference. You get a much better reward. I think in just two years there's been a lot of reward for me, it's changed my attitude. I don't even think about hitting them now.

*J.L. When you first started?*

Oh yeah I had to think about it then it was hard and it got better, a lot better. Now I am just amazed at how well they are turning out. (Case 3).

I think respect is important, learning that as well. I've started to do things which really made him feel unique and special and cherished by me. If we were reading a story I used to, if the phone rang and it was a friend, well sorry, the stories gone for a dump I'm listening to a friend of mine for half an hour, and now he's sitting there with a little book in his hand, and he finally realizes I'm not coming back so why wouldn't he be bugged? I'd be bothered if I was here with you and I did the same thing. So I finally realized how disrespectful that was. So learning that children need as much respect as adults do, was really good. That was probably the biggest factor in the change. (Case 1).

For the mother in Case 6, respecting her own self and needs as a person was a necessary condition for developing respect for her child. After counselling she began to treat both herself and her son with more consideration. She also began to learn more childrearing strategies.

What happened was one day [my husband] came home and I told him about what I had done to [my son] And he said I had no right to do that. I think when I started respecting [my son] and respecting myself as separate people, I think that's the key, is that I can't treat M. like I treat myself. I guess I started taking responsibility for myself as a separate person from M. (Case 6).

The mother in Case 10 contrasted her current understanding of children from her work as a preschool director, with her knowledge at the time she was looking after her first two children. She had shifted from a childrearing philosophy and practice which employed frustrated attempts to enforce orders and rules, to one of using ethical principles to guide children and develop ideas to solve their problems.

I didn't think that the children could have discussions about anything. I know today that they can. So I encourage people to talk with their children. You have to explain things to them. To have limits for reasons of safety. Self-respect, consideration for others. Those are the only three things that I think are worth intervening for. They just cover a myriad of situations. But I don't believe in rules 'cause I think that rules are very limiting and don't fit each situation the same way. So you're always backtracking and making an adjustment to a rule. I'd much rather work with any issue that happens, or problem as it happens. And be very up front and say well, this is a real problem let's talk about it. Because children have ideas of how to get out of their problems. What I want them to learn is how to think about their problems. To give them opportunities to have ideas, validate their ideas, help them use them in a productive way. If it doesn't work to try another way. But it's not a tragedy to 'fail'. And I use fail in quotations cause for me failing was a tragedy. That was forbidden to fail



anything. So I think that I use the word 'try' a lot. 'Try this and try that. 'You can work it this way,' 'well it doesn't work this way so we'll try that way,' (Case 10).

### Self Control

Part of treating their children with respect necessitated self control and refraining from hitting or angry outbursts. All participants, except the mothers in Case 6 and Case 8, reported that they had been hit as children, and the effects of these experiences were particularly likely to become explosively apparent at moments of stress. Their childhood training would likely result in rapid automatic impulses to spank and in volatile expressions of anger that were disproportionate to the situation. The mother in Case 10 described this as "a physical response that was built into her."

I tried to yell less. I tried to think about what I really wanted. I tried to be clearer. I started to learn what my expectations were in relation to what my kids could do. Those are the kinds of things that I started to understand. And I started to understand that what I was doing was a physical response because it was built into me. And that I could stop it. And I'm a pretty strong lady. I probably stopped spanking very quickly. Obviously not yelling. I yelled for a long time. 'Cause the frustration was still there. I've said to people and that I almost did a 360 degree turn when I understood enough about who I was, where I was coming from and what was motivating me. I probably stopped cold. (Case 10).

As a way of thwarting their own rising irritation and impulses to hit, participants developed several strategies. One woman deliberately promised to her children that she wouldn't hit them any more. She felt that this would reinforce her decision to stop spanking. Almost all the participants reported monitoring their own rising irritation and then removing themselves from their child. Participants often preferred to leave the situation themselves rather than attempt to send the child away. This avoided risking further non-compliance or defiant behaviour by the child, greater irritation for the adult and a further escalation of conflict. One participant said if she was getting angry she preferred to leave herself. "Because he might not go and then I would have to take him in a not pleasant way" (Case 11). This brief period of removal (less than fifteen minutes) allowed the parent to calm down, and then return to deal with the situation.

The mother in Case 11 tried to put herself in the vicinity of other adults so as to inhibit her impulses to spank and curb the risk of endangering her son. She also consciously trained herself by setting out in the morning with the intention of not hitting him.

I would also sometimes just leave the situation and take deep breaths in another room. Sometimes I'd take at least five minutes. Sit on the bed, lie on the bed, just close my eyes and do some deep breathing. Sometimes call a friend. Just getting outside of the house. Either with him or without him. He wasn't someone who had to be supervised at all times, so maybe just say OK, I'm going to go outside and pull weeds for fifteen minutes [he] didn't like that. But usually I would choose something that would get me around other people. Or get me out of the house. Either go out on the front sidewalk where I was likely to see a neighbour walking by, kind of a reality check, (Case 11).

It wasn't like OK., today at two o'clock I'm going to give my son a spanking. But there were days when I would say to myself I'm going to try really hard not to hit my son today at all. So there were days when I woke up and consciously set out to have a day without hitting. And sometimes I was able to be successful and sometimes I wasn't. But this was primarily when my son was between eighteen months and two and a half years of age. I'd say by the time he was four and five it was much less of an issue. Still an issue, but much less. (Case 11).

I think about it more consciously now, 'am I close to hitting or am I close to going out of control?' so I do tend to stop myself a lot sooner than before. And I'll even say to him sometimes, 'well I'm going to go outside by myself because you're not being nice to me and I'm getting mad and upset.' He can see me right outside the window. And I think it is important when I feel like I'm close to losing it that we put a space between us so that I can't get that angry and upset. [I'm] Protecting him and protecting myself. (Case 4).

I feel very different from the kids, so I deal with it totally differently, there's lots of times I say to myself 'if this had been back then, it would have been a smack across the ears for what just went on,' lots of times get into a power struggle, basically walk out of it, 'I'm not going to argue with you, I'm going over here, leave me alone.' (Case 3).

### Acceptance and Communication of Feelings

Many participants also reported making a conscious effort to accept their child's feelings. A corollary of being accorded respect is that one's feelings are at very least heard and acknowledged. In the past parents reported that they would have disallowed or punished the child for displaying either anger or crying. Children were increasingly given more opportunity to discuss and express their feelings. The parents also accepted responsibility for their own feeling states. Several parents reported apologizing for yelling or making a mistake. Several participants reported clearly beginning sentences with I-statements that emphasized their own irritation or feelings as opposed to focussing on the faults of the child and blaming him or her. This process, which some participants had learnt from books or parenting classes, allowed the children to hear the parent's displeasure without feeling criticised. It also allowed them to hear what it was that the parent wanted them to do. Several participants mentioned that they were conscious of modelling the acceptance and communication of their feelings for their children.

Allowing children to express themselves. I may not [have] always allowed them to express themselves get angry or slam the door. I'd probably get right in there after and whack them. So now if my daughter gets mad and slams the door I just let her do it. Just let her have her feeling and express herself, nine times out of ten she comes in and apologises. So if I make a mistake I have to apologise to her. We have an argument then we both have to apologise and carry on. That's the freedom of expressing feelings. 'I feel hurt [about] what you are saying.' [If] they can hear [how] you feel then they get a chance to respond. and then [they] can change, (Case 3).

He may yell and scream in his room. He goes in there and shuts the door and mumbles and screams a little bit and then he's OK. So I think he's learnt to take himself off when he's angry and just let it go. Wait till its done and then come out and rejoin the world. But not so as to hurt anyone else. It's just kind of expressing his feelings and letting it go so that he doesn't hold it in It's getting it out there. And then he comes out and he's fine. (Case 13).

He has good feelings too, he's very emotional like me. And he expresses his feelings a lot and I like that. I encourage that since he was a child. Many times my mom, she would say 'why is he crying?'. And I just said 'leave him alone if he wants to cry, he wants to cry.' 'But he's a boy he shouldn't be crying.' I'd

never stop him from crying. Maybe I did once in a while but I don't believe in that, (Case 9).

In contrast the mother in Case 1 had developed a more behavioural orientation. She focussed more on her child's behaviour and reported monitoring its effects on herself. She avoided reinforcing her child for certain behaviours such as whining or crying and rewarded good behaviour. This difference in approach may be reflection of the orientation of her particular parenting course.

The majority of the participants' responses reflected their awareness that their actions were being modelled by their children; children were learning by example.

I think about it [modelling behaviour] a lot. Because it takes so much energy and because you do have to really spell things out, especially for this age group. [I] really talk about things all the time and really repeat things and go through the same things several times a day because he's still in the learning process. He still has to learn his behaviours, whereas most of us just take politeness and all that sort of thing for granted, (Case 4).

Participants reported monitoring their own reactions and their children's tension level. This allowed them to sense a developing conflict situation and intervene earlier, either through offering more attention or a different activity or situation. This required more work and vigilance but tended to avoid situations that had previously led to spanking.

I found too that if I intervened, like when I saw a behaviour that I wasn't going to like starting up, then I wouldn't say 'let's do this instead,' I would just say 'hey look at this' and distract him from continuing in that behaviour. And then I wasn't really having to discipline him because I had some tools. I'd learned to distract him just before he peaked. To get him involved in something else. It was more work to be thinking on my toes all the time but it paid off a lot more. (Case 7).

Several other respondents reported that they tried to plan for situations in advance that had the potential to cause conflict. This was particularly important when they were occupied with an important task. Participants reported telling children what they

wanted them to do or provided them with things to occupy them. Preparing in this way provided the child with a positive statement of the desired behaviour. The mother in Case 11 noted that "I tried to put more emphasis on acknowledging his good behaviour. And I think other people helped me with that. I don't know as that would have necessarily come naturally. And it became very much a part of my parenting."

In practicing 'I'm going to make a telephone call. It's an important one, what are some of the things you think you could do at the table while I'm on the phone?' It was learning to set things up. Before just going like oh, pick up the phone, phone somebody. Now this child is bugging you. It's like the forethought that goes into things that you didn't really think about doing before. And then getting off the phone and right away giving encouragement. 'I really like the way you entertained yourself while I was on the phone. That was so helpful'. Because children really do want to be accepted by you. They really do want to please you. But if the only way they get attention is through the negative then they'll keep that up, (Case 1).

One of the things I've learned is to try and say things positively instead of negatively. Instead of saying 'don't forget,' I'm learning to say 'please remember.' And so on everything that I possibly can to phrase it positively. And say 'I'd like you to do this' instead of 'I don't want you to do that'. The more I do that, he reacts much better. Whenever I can go on the plus side and get him, 'Oh, OK., that's what she expects,' it's so much better than giving him a big 'NO'. Sometimes it's inevitable. You just have to say 'No. I don't want you to do that.' But it's not as much I think, (Case 13).

I've been asking him to say 'Mommy I need some help, could you please put A. in the playpen?' So we practiced saying those sentences so when it actually happens, lately he'll more often say 'Mommy could you please move A. rather than just knock her down first. So that's helping, just practicing those things. (Case 4).

### Choices

Many participants mentioned their belief in the importance and helpfulness of offering their child some choices in the minutiae of family life that directly concerned them. This stemmed from practical considerations. It was a useful means to guide a recalcitrant child from one situation to another. But it also reflected the parents' belief in taking their child's opinion and wishes into account. Giving their child some choices allowed the child to have some power, exert his or her will, and influence the course of

his or her daily life. Parents saw this as directly following from their respect for and acceptance of their child as a person with unique needs and interests. Parents made sure they could accept the child's choice. They structured the complexity of the choices offered to suit their child's developmental level. Not following through and accepting the child's choice was likely to result in extreme frustration on the child's part. Parents started the process with preschoolers and intended to continue with increasing self-responsibility into the teen years. Giving children choices could be time consuming but resulted in the child feeling more agency, and more part of the family decision-making process. Consequently the child became more cooperative and felt more accepted. Parents believed in the long term importance of being well practiced in decision making when confronted later with teenage or adult choices. "We have to learn to make decisions so the earlier you can get them doing that, then hopefully they'll start making good decisions" (Case 4). The mother in Case 4 also noted that in the past when she thought she was offering choices, her statements hadn't been genuine opportunities for her child to exert his will but rather embodied a threat: "I think there were more threats than choices before, although I thought of them as choices I suppose, 'Do you want to go to bed, or do you want a spank before you go to bed?' No I don't think I ever said that actually. But I don't think I made the choices real choices before". (Case 4).

We are trying to give him choices like he doesn't want to get, dressed to go to preschool, but I'll say 'well, which shirt would you like to wear?' 'OK, I'll have that one' and then he starts getting dressed before he even realizes what he's done. So that's made a big difference with him, just a lot of letting him be part of the process. Letting him make some decisions, he enjoys that. As long as you give some choices that you can stand. And I also feel that by giving him, and hopefully A, a chance to make their own decisions that life will be a lot smoother too, that they'll be more helpful as people. (Case 4).

I was given no choices growing up. There was no 'what would you like to do, A, B, or C?' No. It was mom says 'you're wearing this dress today.' I think the hardest part especially about being a single parent right now is giving your children choices is time consuming, and it breaks down the time management sometime to have your eight year old stand there and decide on which of three

outfits she's going to wear today. It takes much more time than just saying 'this is what you're wearing, put in on, we're out the door.' The authoritarian is easier in the short term but I don't think it pays off in the long term and that's what I constantly reinforce in myself, is I'm looking at the long term rather than the short term. (Case 6).

For several participants allowing children to choose between options that directly affect them, extended to having family meetings, in which children participate as chairpeople etc. (Cases 6,12).

### Reasoning, Angry Dances and Timeout

The participants also reported using standard parenting processes such as reasoning, setting limits, and consequences for a child's actions. In the absence of corporal punishment and the subsequent resentment and distancing by their child, these processes became more effective means of guidance in themselves. Parents also reported spending considerable time playing with their young children and taking children to sports activities. As the intense disruption and upset in both parent and child brought about by using corporal punishment decreased, interaction and play between parent and child became more pleasurable. The mother in Case 10 noted "we spent probably the same amount of time together but the kind of time we spent together wasn't antagonistic, ... it was friendlier, it was happier. In general I felt more comfortable taking them places because they weren't doing things that I felt were unacceptable socially or embarrassing me out there in the world." This mutual enjoyment in turn resulted in greater closeness between parent and child. This allowed children to be more easily guided and resulted in less parental frustration. The mother in Case 11 said "I think the more I found to do with my son that brought me joy, brought him joy, the quality of our time together was better. Then I felt better about what I was doing in general." This mother was able to stay at home with her children during the week. She reported consciously structuring their time together to include things her children enjoyed: swimming, the zoo, walks in mud puddles etc.

Often [I] will sit down with my kids and spend a couple of hours putting a new Leggo thing together because they've asked for help, they can't do it without help. Why not? If that's what's bringing the child joy. Why parent? Why have children if you don't want to spend time with them? (Case 11).

The mother in Case 2, who was working full time, reported, "I do try once a day to do either a walk or craft with them, I always have. So I try to not just do with them, I try to listen hard as well." The mothers in Cases 2, 4 and 7 all reported that playing with their children resulted in the children being content to play by themselves for extended periods later in the day.

It seems easier to just come into the room with him instead of trying to separate them because they want to be in the same room, they want to play together. So I sat in the room, he showed me what he was doing, I helped A. dress up some of her dolls, and then I could walk away and they were fine for a really long time. (Case 7).

As they stopped hitting several participants reported consciously using more reasoning and explaining, in ways that their children could comprehend.

I think my son gets less angry at me if I tell him why I want him to do stuff than if I just tell him, 'all right do this.' Then he's much more apt to yell and scream and say 'no way.' And then I'll say, 'well the reason I really want you to do this, is these reasons here.' Then he's like, 'Oh, OK'. And he may grump a bit, but he's much more apt to go ahead and do it, (Case 13).

So what happened was I started to explain things to the children. I started to talk more slowly. I started to wait for their answers and listen to them, to their ideas about things and so I learned a little bit more about who they were. I probably did that more with H. who was born when Z. was eight years old. I was into a different mode of parenting. I would talk with H. and I would laugh with H. and I would joke with H. and I would play games with H. Things I didn't do with them at all. We'd go down the street and H. would say he was hungry and I'd say 'there's a chicken wing to be cooked in the refrigerator and it's wanting you to come home. Do you hear it calling you?' I'd sing, we'd sing, everywhere we went we'd sing, or chant, or tell stories. H. did things that were unacceptable. And I used to talk to him about it. And then my kids would say 'when we did that you used to pull our hair, or spank us, or yell at us.' It gave me an opportunity to say well what I did was wrong. Although I'd never thought that was enough because I went back when they were adults. (Case 10).



### Fighting Siblings

One of the commonest reasons for spanking is fighting between siblings. Participants attempted to resolve sibling conflict in several ways. Instead of attempting to assign responsibility for the conflict, the mother in Case 6 intervened by reflecting back the children's feelings so that they felt heard and understood. From that point she could help them develop some solution. Two participants mentioned putting on music and dancing as a way of expressing feelings of frustration. Usually through dancing this would transmute the children's anger into laughter.

Time outs or especially at the three or four year old stage, instead of coming in and saying 'what's going on, stop that.' Trying to force them apart or separate them, say 'you two look really angry at each other.' Keep putting it back on them. 'Yes, I'm really angry because he took my truck.' 'And you're upsetting him because he did that?' Asking them questions what was happening instead of just jumping in and assuming that one is beating up on the other.

We did a lot of angry dances. My kids loved that part. They were both angry and I'd say 'OK, so what's a good idea, what can we do with all this anger. You're both feeling angry, what can we do with this? And my daughter would say 'I want to do an angry dance.' So we would put rock and roll on and they would dance. I'd say 'Show me how angry you are.' They'd stomp their feet or throw the pillows on the couch. And then they'd usually end up laughing. And then they could get to the talking. [And doing more reflective listening with them]. How did that feel for you when he took the game away?' 'I was angry at him.' 'Oh, OK. Did you explain the game to him? No, well he's younger than you. You need to explain to him. Maybe we can change the game so he can understand.' [Try] different ways [like] humour. (Case 6).

He still pinches her and actually I don't think he's hitting her as much as he used to, but then he's older too and he just knows the difference between hitting now. But maybe if he was hit still he would hit her. He gives in to her more. He says 'fine' and he walks away. (Case 7).

Parents reported setting clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour. Some parents used time-outs or withdrawal of privileges, or extra chores for transgressions. Participants revealed a range of opinion concerning time-out. The mothers in Cases 11 and 12 regarded them as a positive process and had used them extensively, others felt that time-out could be used either in a negative or a positive way. The

mothers in Case 13, 9 and 10 felt that time-out was a lesser form of punishment. They saw punishment itself as a negative and counterproductive process, and therefore to be avoided. Most of the participants emphasised the importance of rewarding good behaviour through praise and some mentioned ignoring bad behaviour. Case 9 felt that the praise had to be sincere, otherwise when the parent was no longer present the child would be unlikely to repeat the desired behaviour.

And I'll just put my foot down and just say 'No, I've said no, I mean no and this is what you have to do and I want you to do it now.' And usually he'll yell and stomp and maybe go up and slam his door a few times, but eventually he'll do it. And I don't get all up arms about it, I just try to be firm with him. Once he knows that there's no turning back, that I mean no, it's really what I say, then he's fine. It's that small window of opportunity that he sees. That there might be a possibility here. (Case 11).

So validating children, follow through. I think consistency, but not consistency in terms of any kind of rules, in attitude. For me what's really important is that no matter what goes down that everybody's integrity remains intact. So that's the bottom line. (Case 10).

### Summary

The decision to stop using corporal punishment stemmed from an increased understanding and respect for their children as individuals with needs and feelings. From that point the participants attempted to restrain themselves from hitting. They often did this by absenting themselves from the situation until their feelings were safely under control. Parents developed various strategies to provide boundaries and guide their children. These involved an increased tolerance for their children to express their feelings, use of I-statements to respectfully communicate how the parent is feeling, offering children choices so that they had some sense of agency, closer monitoring of their younger children's activities and earlier intervention before a crisis occurred. For older children some parents also used common processes such as timeouts, rewards, withdrawal of privileges and consequences for misbehaviour. Parents also

consciously structured their time so that children were paid sufficient positive attention and frequently involved in highly enjoyable activities.

#### Section Four, Parents and Children after Stopping Spanking.

In this section I examine what happened after parents stopped spanking. This is based on the parents' view of themselves, their children and their parent-child relationship. I was careful to phrase questions neutrally: "Has your children's behaviour gotten worse or better as a result of not spanking?" "How would describe your current relationship with your children?" "Could you describe any areas of tension in your relationship with your children?" "How do you feel about stopping spanking?" "Are things harder or easier?" This section is divided into two parts. I describe the parents' responses concerning themselves and their current relationship with their children in the first part. The second part concerns the parents' description of their children.

#### Parents After Stopping Spanking

Parents were able to describe their current relationship with their children in detail, in both positive and negative aspects. The mothers in Cases 4 and 7 noted that in the period since they had substantially stopped spanking they had both hit their children at least once. Both regretted this. The other participants had stopped spanking completely. (See Appendix D). Participants reported that they had felt better in themselves since they had stopped. They were no longer experiencing the extreme frustration, guilt and/or distress that they reported feeling prior to cessation. As well as stopping spanking, they had also taken steps to reduce their yelling and other negative behaviour such as criticism. While many parents reported that they had yelled occasionally, they felt better able to control their anger and resolve situations without risk of injuring their child. They described themselves as feeling more competent as parents and having a better understanding of their child's needs. This

understanding enabled them to guide their children in mutually satisfactory directions. Parents reported being emotionally closer to their children.

Several participants noted that not spanking required more work and energy in closely monitoring their own impulses. This was true especially at moments of fatigue or crisis. They also reported having to think ahead or more closely monitor their children's activities in order to prevent situations which had formerly led to corporal punishment. This was particularly true with preschool children. However they reported that the benefit to themselves of their own sense of competency and the benefit to their children in more enjoyable relationships outweighed these disadvantages. Parents mostly reported a great deal of satisfaction in watching how their children's values, social skills, friendships and behaviour were developing. The father in Case 3 said "I'm just amazed at how well they're turning out".

I think just the sense of my own self-esteem which was raised. The difference between feeling anxious, angry, frustrated and inefficient as a mother to the point where I felt good about it and I had kids who I wanted them to be who they were supposed to be. I didn't want them to be these little people who didn't know what they felt or what they thought. That they were just being nice all the time. And to sacrifice themselves just to be accepted by their parents. I really recognized the areas where I denied my own self to please my parents and the level of frustration that goes on. That I didn't want for my kids. I wanted them to be them. Creative, spontaneous, happy, just do it my way (laughs), (Case 1)

Showing them respect makes a big difference, you get a much better reward. I think just in two years theres been a lot of reward for me, (Case 3).

I think I feel more in control of the situation and I feel like I know I have a lot more options. I never would have thought about just stepping outside by myself for a couple of minutes, how much better that would make me feel. OK, just get the keys, stand outside, wait till he calms down, and then go back inside. And its a lot better. I feel a lot more like there's a safety valve there for me. (Case 4).

It was more work in that until it became more natural I would have to stop and say 'OK, let's see, things aren't going well here, I'm not going to hit, I don't want to hit, what can I do?' So sometimes I would have to take additional time to think through some other choices and then do them, but it became less of an issue as my son got older and he outgrew some of those unpleasant behaviours, like the biting. [As] my first child reached eighteen months of age, it was a very strained time in my marriage. So that plays a big factor in my

recall. I had to work really hard to take good care of myself. It was a very challenging time. I mean it did take more effort. But it was worth it. I mean I was happier and so was my son. (Case 11)

I'm more close now. I've started to enjoy them and look back, like step back and watch them without looking for things to judge or criticise. And just enjoy them. (Case 7).

Oh I feel much better. I'm choosing to be kind of low key on discipline. I have definite expectations of things that I want him to do and usually he's pretty good about doing them. I mean he's getting to those teenage years so he's starting to act a little more 'this is me and that's you mom.' A little more separate and a little more interested in his peers, his friends, than in me. And, that's fine, that's where he's supposed to be headed. But, he still relates to me and to his dad which is nice. It's fun to be together as a family and do things together on the weekends. And he still likes to tell me all kinds of stuff. But I just feel much more relaxed knowing that he's not upset. (Case 13).

Participants felt closer and more involved with their children's activities and inner worlds. The mother in Case 7 noted that there was more communication between herself and her children. The mother in Case 1 described her relationship with her children as:

Excellent. They're just really neat kids. I have a great relationship with them. Yeah, they're just super, nothing we can't talk about. I mean not that, I sometimes still get in power struggles and rant and rage a little bit but I mean I don't hit them or smack them or shame them. Occasionally I probably shame them, that's a hard one to stop. They're just great. (Case 1).

[i'm] not as authoritarian, there's more communication between us. It feels more like a working unit than a mother with two children. I would say when I was in the spanking phase it was I was in charge and control and I was running the show. I don't feel that now. I get a lot more cooperation from them. There's a lot more empathy from them. But then I also share more with them too, on my feelings and with the family meetings we talk more and they help make decisions. (Case 6).

The mother in Case 9 noted that she was more patient with her daughter age 2, than she had been with her son at the same age. She had continued hitting him until age seven. She had lightly spanked her daughter once and then regretted it.

I think a lot before I act, like 'maybe she's tired,' I think 'maybe this, maybe this,' But when C. was a little kid I didn't think. I just got mad at him and I didn't think 'oh maybe he's tired.'

*J.L. So you would say you look for a reason ?*

Yes. Why she's cranky. And then I don't want to hit her at all. (Case 9).

Parents were not however, describing unrealistic, conflict free families. When asked about areas of conflict they were able to describe particular habits that their children had that frustrated them occasionally or that they didn't like. These ranged from doing school work close to a deadline or in an idiosyncratic manner, fighting with their sibling, to dressing in a way that they disliked. Interestingly, except for fighting a sibling, parents said these frustrations were their responsibility and that they were trying to restrain themselves from over-involving themselves in their child's decision making process. The mothers in Case 1 and Case 7 noted that now that they were able to control the spontaneous eruptions of anger that had previously led to spanking, there were other issues that they wanted to resolve. The mother in Case 1 was concerned about emotionally distancing herself when she felt slighted, the mother in Case 7 thought at times she did not separate herself enough from her children. The mothers in Case 10 and Case 13 noted that the process of moving from a punitive childrearing approach, of which spanking is one example, to a more nurturing one, took time.

Another thing that I still struggle with too is when there are times when you feel that your children have not lived up to some expectation that you held for them in some area, it's usually with school or something like that. I can feel those feelings coming like I want to be cool to them. Because I feel angry and I've sort of learned how to handle the outburst control thing. It's really hard to have those really good boundaries of where do you end, where do your kids begin. That that behaviour is not a reflection of me. That, that choice they made was solely on their own and that if other people judge me because my child did something, well it's about them and not about me. But I mean it's easy to say all that but when the feelings come, I just have a harder time being right there and then I feel a distancing thing happen. I'm aware of it. (Case 1).

Just more relaxed. I think it's kind of been gradual. At first maybe the time outs were kind of more punitively done then, but I've since learned just to let go and not be angry about things. And just tell them what I'm feeling. If there's something I don't like I'll tell him. Tell him why I don't like it or tell him why I want him to do something that he may not want to do. And he usually will end up doing it. He may yell and scream for a while. (Case 13).

Several parents thought that their children may have been affected by circumstances external to their relationship. Four parents in the study had been divorced, (Cases 3, 6, 9 and 10,) and others thought that their children may have been affected by witnessing family violence (Case 6 and 9). In Case 3, the father expressed frustration that his children were still being severely corporally punished when they stayed with their mother and new partner. The children had returned from an extended visit angry and upset. The older girl had been hitting other children with a wooden spoon. The younger boy had been involved in a pushing incident at school.

One mother gave an example of how she had talked to her daughter after having discovered that she had taken a \$3 ring from a store. \*She contrasted this with how she might have handled the same situation in the past.

And she said 'can't I just go put it back?' And I said 'no, you need to go and tell the lady in the store what you did'. And she did go in and tell the shopkeeper that she had stolen it. She said she got carried away and then she forget to pay for it. And I said 'tell the lady what really happened.' She said 'I got carried away and I took it, cause I wanted it.' And I said 'OK.' And then, so the lady told her to put it back and she did. And she thanked me. When we got into the car I hugged her and I said 'I'm very proud of you. That was a scary thing to do.' And she said 'yes, thank you mommy for not getting mad.' I still said 'I'm disappointed but you did the right thing by going back to the store and by telling the truth.' So there's rewards for it. [In the past] had I gotten angry right as soon as I noticed the ring, I would have told her she was lying and probably gone to her and spanked her and said 'you're going to march right back to that store and take the ring back' and done the same exercise but just in a much more authoritarian [way]. I wanted her to tell me what she had done and then we talked later about what it felt like taking the ring and that this was going to happen in life. That you're going to be faced with choices and how did it feel when she took the ring? 'What [was] your gut feeling as opposed to what was going on in your head?' And without her getting upset, it's frustrating the extra time it takes but when you see the benefits, yes, it's worth it. (Case 6).



The mother in Case 6 thought that she had been able to use the theft, an experience which clearly disturbed her, to further teach her daughter a moral viewpoint and insist on honest restitution. She had maintained the integrity of her relationship with her daughter. Similarly when the son of the mother in Case 12 had stolen something from a store, her husband had gone with the son to return it. Both parents have a policy of "letting the kids know that its OK to tell us the things they do because they're not going to get any bad consequences, we'd rather hear about it."

Parents felt that they were successfully able to model values that were important to them and to guide their children in directions that were congruent with the goals discussed earlier. They had found effective methods of teaching the kind of behaviour and morals they wanted their children to develop. "I hear him negotiating with A. [his sister]" (Case 7). As the children grew and moved out into a wider social world, parents observed them behaving in prosocial ways of which they approved. The mother in Case 6 noted with pleasure, that the school counsellor saw her daughter as a leader in being empathic and discussing her feelings. The mother in Case 5 reported that the father-in-law who had criticized her so vehemently for not spanking her children, when looking at them as adults, credited her with "having done a very fine job." The father in Case 3 and the mothers in Cases 4, 6, 7, and 13, reported with pleasure that they had overheard their children successfully mediate conflict with their siblings, cousins or peers, instead of fighting. Children were modelling the behaviour recently learnt by their parents. The father in Case 3 reported that his children had changed markedly in the two years since he had been granted custody. "They are like two different kids."

Parents felt more in control of their own feelings and behaviour and more proficient. They talked with evident enjoyment about their relationships with their children and their children's interests. Because their children were no longer acting in ways that reacted against their physically punitive measures, participants reported that

their relationships with their children were closer and more enjoyable. Parents reported that their children were actually more cooperative and agreeable to their suggestions or requests. Parent child conflict in older children and temper tantrums in younger children, were less frequent. Several parents reported that they still had occasions when the idea of spanking tempted them, but they didn't think it would be helpful and desisted. The father in Case 3, reported that "he no longer even thought about hitting". The mother in Case 12 noted that she had thought about spanking and instead had given her children "Time out and, I think once or twice I've talked to the kids 'you need a spanking but I'm not going to do it and I'll send you to your room.'" (Case 12).

Several parents, especially those of younger children, made it clear that there were issues about their parenting that they still wanted to improve. For example, the mother in Case 2 said that sometimes found herself yelling at her children, which she thought ineffective and unpleasant, she concluded " that might be something I should work on."

I still learn, I still have times where I hit frustration points and think 'this isn't working, why isn't this working.' I still get angry ... I can get angry at my kids. I can get really angry at my kids and I might yell and say 'I'm really frustrated here.' But I've learned to, 'OK, so seek out something else. Let's find another way'. And I always offer my kids choices so if I'm stuck, then I need to find another choice. (Case 7)

The two parents of grown children in Cases 5 and 10, had both explained to their children when younger that they regretted their use of spanking, they had also further apologized when their children were adults.

Even though their relationships with their children were now going well, several parents expressed hope and concern that this would continue into the teenage years. "I'm hoping, crossing my fingers that the things we have chosen to do [that we are]

going to continue to see good things out of in the future. There's a lot of difficult times coming up I'm sure, but so far I think we've been lucky" (Case 12).

Several parents reported that at first they had tended to yell instead of hitting. They realized that this was contrary to their own values and tried to control this.

I don't know if I have replaced hitting with yelling. But I remembered I didn't like hearing my sister yell and now I can hear I'm yelling at them too. And I don't even know why I'm yelling now, cause if they're not listening to me now when I'm yelling too, why am I yelling? Yeah so, that might be something I should work on. (Case 2).

Other parents noted that they still had occasional impulses to spank, but that they had developed a strong rationale and stricture against spanking. This rationale meant that they could ignore any impulses to spank.

So did I feel [spanking] was an OK thing? That I could do it once in a while if I wanted to? No, I still know that spanking is not something that I choose to do and since those times I haven't done it, although I've thought about it. And certainly thought 'well this would be an opportune time to take to do this' but, no, I've still chosen not to do it. (Case 12).

The mother in Case 9 who characterised her relationship with her daughter as a flow going back and forth, reported that she had spanked her daughter a little, but then right after "I thought this is dumb, it's not going to work." The spanking had introduced a subtle division between her and her daughter.

It's like I'm forcing her to do something she doesn't want to do and she'll cry. But spanking's not going to solve anything. I'll feel bad, she'll feel bad. It'll create tension between us. Our relationship between mother and daughter won't be a harmonious one and we won't be able to connect again nicely. Instead of just being like flowing. Like she'll look at me like 'oh my mom's going to hit me.' She'll be afraid of me. I don't want her to be afraid of me. I want her to feel trust in me. And that's what I couldn't analyze and comprehend when I was younger with C. I was very immature. I've learnt so much over the years. (Case 9)

Instead of punishing her daughter she was concerned to understand and accept her. She had developed confidence that her daughter would communicate her needs, and that attending to them would resolve difficulties.

If you talk to your child like I talk with M a lot. I notice that we have a relationship going on and on constantly. Its fun ... If she doesn't want to eat more food she doesn't want to eat any more food. Maybe she's not feeling good to eat. Maybe she's full already. She'll let me know when she's hungry. (Case 9).

The parents were clear that they had firm limits with their children. For example:

The older boy, when I tell him to stop something, he will stop. And if I tell him to go to his room he'll go directly to his room. The younger one tends to spout off more and say 'no, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to do what I want to do' And I'll just put my foot down and just say 'no, I've said no, I mean no and this is what you have to do and I want you to do it now.' And usually he'll yell and stomp and maybe go up and slam his door a few times, but eventually he'll do it. And I don't.. get all up arms about it, I just try to be firm with him. Once he knows that there's no turning back, that I mean no, it's really what I say, then he's fine. It's that small window of opportunity that he sees. That there might be a possibility here. (Case 11).

One participant (Case 7) thought that the improvements in her family stemmed from her demanding attention for her own personal needs rather than sacrificing them and then becoming very frustrated with her children. At one point in the interview, she downplayed the significance of stopping spanking. Instead she saw stopping spanking as a result of a number of other improvements for herself and her spousal relationship.

Compared to before I stopped spanking. It's so much better. Everything is better not because of the spanking, but the spanking was a result of all the other bad things, and all of those things are getting better. So the relationship goes along with all of the other things. I think the foundation is that I've learned to respect my personal needs and to demand that they be met. Instead of putting that power on someone else and waiting for someone else to offer me a night out or a rest or a change. I make the arrangements and I take the initiative and do it for myself. (Case 7).

Only two participants (Cases 2 and 12) found their relationship with their children unchanged. The mother in Case 2 thought that she had only spanked her children on a few occasions, so that it was hard to see any difference in either her children or her self. The mother in Case 12 thought if she had continued to spank her children they would have either been more aggressive, fearful, or withdrawn. Because she had only

spanked a few times she couldn't report any difference in her children. She reported feeling "very close" to her children. When I asked for a description of the kinds of things they liked to do as a family her description of a close relationship was similar in tone if not detail to many of the families in the study.

Well I definitely like reading with them. We do a lot of reading at our house and that's the kids reading to us and us reading to our kids. We love cuddling. We cuddle in bed that's kind of a treat for us to be able to do that. Love going to the zoo and I love shopping with my daughter, not my son. He does not like to be drug around the stores, so that's not something I do with him. (Case 12).

Participants were changing an aspect of childrearing against a prevailing social norm, albeit a changing one. All the participants noted that they had initiated the change in parenting direction and their husbands had followed their example. Two exceptions were the single father in Case 3, whose ex-wife was committed to hitting with a wooden spoon, and the spouse in Case 4 who was beginning to lessen his support of spanking. The mother in Case 9 noted that, 'It had to be him [her husband] changing too, so a big drastic change happened in the whole house.' Although several participants mentioned disagreement with their own parents or neighbours about spanking, they were sufficiently convinced of the rewards that they persisted in not using corporal punishment.

### Changes In The Children

Participants reported changes in their children. Children seemed happier and more cooperative. Children were less wary and more trusting with their parents. Several parents reported that their children stopped hitting peers after the parents had ceased spanking. As a consequence they were able to make friends or play more easily, (Cases 3, 4, 10 and 13). Most parents reported that their children's behaviour improved at home. The exception was the mother in Case 2, who felt that she'd not

spanked enough to see a difference. In some cases children's academic work had improved, (Cases 9,10,13,).

The improvement in their children's behaviour resulted in parents also feeling better about their parenting. I asked variations on the question "how did your children's behaviour change when you stopped spanking? Did things get worse or did they improve?"

He was a lot happier. He was more trusting. I found too that if I intervened, I when I saw a behaviour that I wasn't going to like starting up, then I wouldn't say 'let's do this instead,' I would just say 'hey look at this' and distract him from continuing in that behaviour. And then I wasn't really having to discipline him. So I guess that was a matter of education for me. He had them [temper tantrums] still sometimes. He still has them sometimes, but not anywhere like before. (Case 7).

*J.L. And you mentioned that he was, just in general, that he was a kind of a happier guy?*

I would say for sure. Since last May, when it was almost like every day having like big fights and blow-ups, we don't have that so often now. Mainly it might be when he's really tired or not feeling very well. I'm starting to make those connections and realizing that as a three or a four year old he can't say, 'Oh, I'm feeling really lousy because my head hurts and I can't breathe properly,' so I have to be more aware of his physical condition. And start to get him to be able to talk about how he's feeling. (Case 4).

I think he was happier and I think he was happier in part because our time together was less strained as I began to think of more creative things to do with him. And I was getting feedback from other people that this is a kid who needs structure so go with that. And I began to structure our time more. (Case 11)

The mother in Case 9 thought that her son's improved sense of wellbeing was reflected in the greater clarity and coherence of his drawings and that he had stopped wrecking his room.

He started doing more things. At school he was better. You could tell by his drawings ... His drawings at school they were like really scribbles when he was really frustrated he'd draw like monsters and anger and stuff. You could tell like later on. Better drawings. That's how he expressed himself more in his drawings ... More like defined images. And also when he was upset [in the past] sometimes he would just start throwing things like making a big mess in his room. He'd throw paint all over the carpet. [Now] He'd come and hug me and say 'Oh I love you mommy.' But before it was like, he didn't want to be close to

me. Or he would feel a bit fear that I was going to spank him or, so if he say something to me, now for instance, if he tells me something I just listen to him. Like I don't say oh that's bad. I don't judge him in the way like I used to be really judgemental right away. And then he would stop and close up and he wouldn't tell me anything. (Case 9).

I would say he does a lot more 'No I don't want to, no I don't want to do such and such'. Before it was just kicking and screaming and rolling around on the floor. Now at least he's saying 'no I don't want to go to preschool, I want to watch Mr. Dressup'. So he's actually telling me things which is good because then I can say well, 'how about we watch Mr. Dressup when you get home from preschool?' So if I know what the problem is, it's a lot easier for me to work on it with him. (Case 4).

Well he had one period there when he seemed to just be really at outs with everyone. And that was right around that time [of spanking] and then he seemed to improve once we stopped spanking and kind of moved back away from being physically hurtful to him. Then I think he just stopped doing it himself ... Doing that to his friends ... Hitting, hitting them, and his teachers noticed they said that his behaviour's improved in school and he's getting along better with the other kids. (Case 13).

They are much happier, people can see that in them now, well I can see a big difference in last couple of years. Before they would always challenge you want to know why they can't do this or that. Say 'you have no authority over me, you're not the boss of me,' kick you and scream at me. I've had lots of comments from people in the groups who have met the children. They think they are wonderful kids. Even though I complain about the fighting. (Case 3 ).

They were happier, yes.

*J.L.: As a result of your not spanking?*

Absolutely. Much happier. Actually they, I think that their socializing started to get a bit better and when that got better and there was a timeline here, their academics got better. Because when they were acting out at school they obviously weren't learning so there were gaps and when children don't have a lot of friends and they're wondering why, and they don't understand that it's what they're doing, they worry about friends and they don't study. Or they don't take in the material. So it's two-fold for kids like that.

*J.L.: And their relationship with you improved?*

Improved, yes.. Well I think that we spent probably the same amount of time together, but the kind of time we spent together wasn't antagonistic, as antagonistic. It was friendlier, it was happier. In general I felt more comfortable taking them places because they weren't doing things that I felt were unacceptable socially. Or embarrassing to me out there in the world. [Their behaviour] improved. Absolutely improved. And as it improved and they made friends, it gave them an opportunity to see what was going on in other people's homes and make adjustments in terms of their own socialization process. (Case 10).

He's just happier and on a much more even keel than he was when I was, being punitive to him. And he just seems to know, he has faith in himself and what he's doing and faith in his ability to have relationships with other kids and so I feel much better about it. (Case 13)

Yeah, more content. Yeah, happier. (Case 9).

OK, I would say he's a lot, not a lot calmer, somewhat calmer, and he's also more verbal now, so he'll say I'm upset about whatever he's upset about, or actually he'll tell other people, he told my father, 'Don't hit me ... you've hit me, I didn't like that'. I think that's good 'cause it gets other people to think about what they're doing a lot more. Whereas before if he would just scream and hit you back, well it just makes you want to hit him some more. I notice with his cousins, when he plays with them, that he will say, 'well I don't want you to take that right now, I'm playing with it,' rather than just hitting them if they did something he didn't like so he's getting more used to talking about things, talking about his needs and I think that makes it easier for him. (Case 4).

Parents seemed content with the overall direction of their children's development. While most parents were able to identify areas of tension, they seemed confident that they had sufficient resources and skill to contain or reduce them. When I asked specifically about areas of tension in their relationships with their children, parents identified feeling concerned about children doing homework near the deadline (Case 9, 13); bragging to friends (Case 13); being tardy getting ready for school (Case 6), and fighting with a sibling (Case 3, 4, and 7). Cases 4 and 7 noted that their children were fighting less frequently. Case 9 said "Sometimes I wish I could start all over again with C. That'd be so neat, but what's done is done. But I love him a lot." Of the two cases that had adult children, the mother in Case 5 reported a close relationship with her children. The mother in Case 10 reported harmonious adult relationships with her sons and finally, after considerable discussion and difficulty, with her daughter.

### Summary.

Parents reported that both they and their children were more content. This resulted in children being more amenable to suggestion and guidance. Both parent



and child enjoyed more of their time together. Although some parents reported that were dissatisfied with the occasions when they had yelled at their children, they were no longer experiencing the guilt, anger and great distress that had been associated with spanking. Parents were more comfortable taking children into a wider social world because their children were no longer embarrassing them. The children's overall improved behaviour and their increasingly prosocial behaviour with peers or relatives, also resulted in parents feeling better about their children and their own abilities as parents. This in turn led them to be more willing to help or play with their children. Children were happier, and played more harmoniously with peers and siblings. They were less wary, and distant with their parents and more responsive and affectionate. Parents were able to describe aspects of their own and their children's behaviour that bothered them or that they would like to improve. Several parents noted that they were still learning and exploring prosocial ways to solve problems with their children.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

In this chapter I summarize the results and considers connections between the current study and previous research. I have selected four major themes from the data. The first theme is the experiences of parents and children before cessation of spanking. The second theme involves the parents critical assessment of their own childhood punishment and other factors germane to cessation. The third major theme concerns the experiences of parents and children after cessation. The fourth theme pertains to the parenting processes used by the participants instead of spanking. Each theme is discussed in turn. The final section combines these major themes into a theoretical model of cessation of corporal punishment.

#### Before Stopping Corporal Punishment and Prior Research

##### Parents

Many participants reported initially using high levels of force and experiencing considerable distress before cessation. This distress was comprised of four main elements. Parents were distressed at their spontaneous extreme anger and their lack of self-control. The mother in Case One referred to a "horrible person" who was going to get out if she didn't do something. Connected to these feelings was the fear that losing control whilst spanking could result in serious harm to their child. After spanking, instead of a sense of resolution, parents described a range of negative affect. Some parents experienced frustration and dismay that spanking was having longer term negative effects on their children's behaviour.

The parent's reports of extreme anger are consistent with reports from other non-abusive parents using corporal punishment. In the Redbook survey approximately 75% of the respondents reported that at least "once or twice" they had been so angry that they were afraid they would hurt their child (Safran, 1981). The parents' reports

are also consistent with Zahn-Waxler and Chapman's (1983) observation of the high risk levels of corporal punishment used by some 'normal' mothers. They are also consistent with the qualitative reports from Kadushin and Martin's (1981) investigation into cases of physical abuse. The majority of these cases had occurred as a result of parents becoming enraged when they were physically punishing their children. Participants in the current study frequently stated that they had come very close to causing harm to their child. (There were however, only two incidents in the current study, in which parents reported actually hitting hard enough to bruise their child). Giving physical expression to anger when disciplining a child appeared to exacerbate the feelings of anger rather than lead to calmness. This obviously increased the risk of harming the child. Making this observation was important for parents initiating strategies for self-control.

The participants' reports of crying, feeling bad, or guilty after spanking are consistent with the findings of Durrant (1993a) and Berry (1990). Four of the participants in the current study reported that they had experienced distress even though at the time they had been strongly committed to spanking. The parent's inner conflict between "parental duty to punish" and their subjective state, is consistent with several studies. Berry (1990) reported a similar contradiction between parents' belief in the "rightness" of spanking and their considerable distress afterwards. Durrant (1993a) found that even though 75% of a Canadian sample thought spanking was sometimes necessary the majority believed guilt was a likely outcome.

Carson (1986) in the U.S. and Durrant (1993c) in Canada reported rates of 40% and 63% respectively for parents who associated corporal punishment with parental distress or guilt. Intuitively, distress is more likely to be a response among those parents who use corporal punishment but see it as ineffective. In the current study negative parental affect after spanking appears to have been one motivating factor in the parents seeking alternatives. Given the widespread report of parental

guilt reported by Durrant (1993a), Carson (1986) and Berry (1990) amongst people who believe in the necessity of spanking, parental guilt or distress may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for stopping spanking.

### Children's experiences and prior research

Participants reported that prior to cessation children variously showed aggressive behaviours that are consistent with those reported in the literature on corporal punishment (Straus 1994). Several parents reported children hitting siblings, and/or peers. Participants were aware that children were modelling parental behaviour. The mother in Case 2 heard her daughter spanking her doll using the same phrases that she herself had used. "If it's teaching her to do it to her dolls then she's going to do it to her sisters." These parental observations are consistent with the Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) "Bobo Doll" study, which demonstrated children modelling violent adult behaviour.

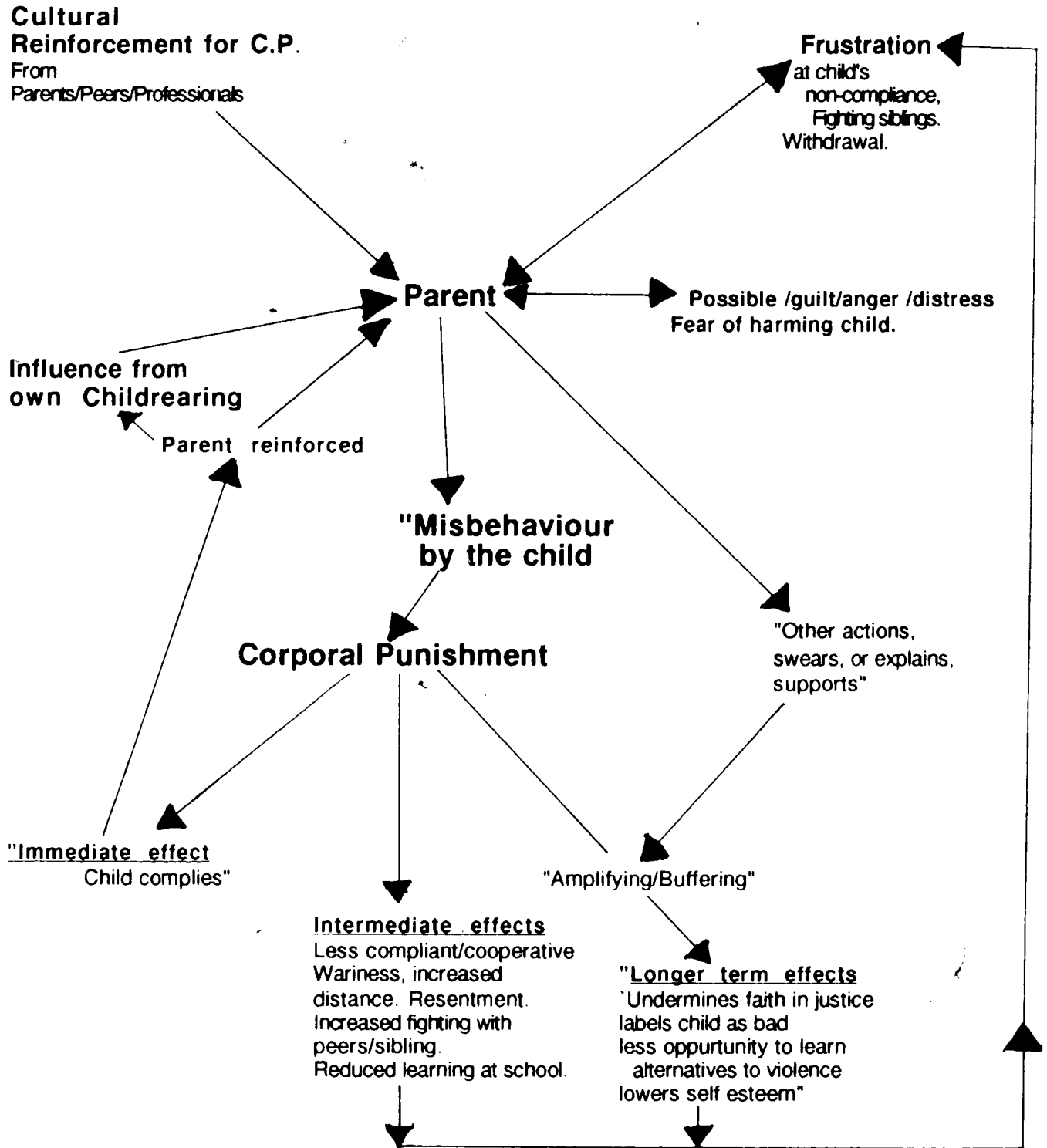
Parents reported a range of angry, destructive and/or non-compliant behaviours in their children prior to cessation. Parents reports of non-compliant children are consistent with Powers and Chapieski's (1986) observations that children of spanking mothers showed consistently higher levels of non-compliance than children of non-spanking mothers. In hind sight, after cessation participants in the current study attributed their children's non-compliance to resentment at being spanked. Two parents with pre-school age boys reported frequent temper tantrums and non-compliant behaviour. One seven year old boy threw paint all over his carpet and wrecked his room. Two boys also smashed things or destroyed objects. Although these events are taking place in younger children, in their destructive nature they parallel delinquent acts by teenagers and adults observed to be linked with corporal punishment by Newson and Newson (1989) and Straus (1991).

Several parents reported children withdrawing from them during the period in which they were spanking. Two parents also reported their children having difficulty making friends at school because the children hit peers. Three parents reported poor academic work. The children's difficulty at school is consistent with Straus (1994) study showing detrimental effects of corporal punishment on later academic performance in high school and university, parents reported other facets of their children's experiences that became apparent after cessation. I will delineate these in a later section.

The data in this study can be summarized in a theoretical model showing a sequential feedback process between parent and child (see figure 1). The model summarizes the stressful tensions and contradictory play of emotional and ideological forces within both parent and child. The model corresponds to the period of time in the study in which parents used corporal punishment. On the left side parents begin to use corporal punishment to communicate feeling, and/or to "correct the child's misbehaviour." The parent begins corporal punishment under the influence of unresolved issues from their own childhood training and reinforced by grandparents, culture, peers and neighbours. Corporal punishment appears to work, the child stops the misbehaviour. The parent may feel self-justified and feel relieved at the misbehaviour stopping, but possibly also guilty, angry or sad. The intermediate effects are that the child becomes more resistant to suggestions or commands, more wary and more aggressive with siblings. In the long term continued use of corporal punishment prevents the child learning prosocial ways of resolving conflict and lowers the child's self-esteem. Both the intermediate and the long term effects then result in more conflict and stress for the parent to resolve. For example, the parent, now dealing with a more aggressive child, has to more frequently intervene in fights between his/her peers or siblings. The parent may also swear, yell, or provide an explanation for the spanking. These actions would either amplify or reduce the effects

of spanking. Over time the effects of spanking weaken the parent-child bond, resulting in the parent having less influence over the child.

Figure 1. Model of Parent-Child Corporal Punishment Interaction (partially based on a model by Straus, 1991)



This model has some similarities with Patterson's (1986) models, specifically the recursive nature of parent-child interaction, the potential for a negative feedback cycle initiated by negative parenting processes, and the child's resulting antisocial behavior toward peers, parents, siblings and school. The current model differs substantially from Patterson's however, in the central place accorded to corporal punishment. In the current model corporal punishment is a critical component of a range of negative parental attitudes and behaviors, such as yelling. Equally the current model identifies corporal punishment as a major source for the children's antisocial behavior, increased resentment, aggression to peers and wariness of their parents. The current model obviates the need for intangible genetic explanations of antisocial behavior.

Reevaluation of the parent's past and the development of more egalitarian childrearing ideals.

Ten out of thirteen participants reported considering memories of punishment experienced or witnessed as a child. Some of the participants had begun reflecting on their past before having children. For others the process had begun as a result of their seeking parenting or psychological resources: Participants sense of injustice about these incidents of punishment was still palpable in spite of the distance of many years. For example, the mother in Case 2 speaking of her father spanking her said "I've thought over that incident many times throughout my life. He broke my trust." The significance of these experiences and the fear of becoming like their parents were motivational factors in their decision to stop spanking. Similarly, Mishkin (1987) found in her sample of non-spanking parents, that parents who saw their own childrearing history as abusive used less severe forms of discipline than their parents had. Carson (1986) also noted several of the non-spanking parents in her sample reported a similar process of critical re-evaluation of childhood. Carson did not however, specifically ask parents about their childhood experiences.



In the current study, none of the participants used common rationalizations about their childhood experience of corporal punishment as being of benefit to them or "instilling discipline in them." Participants instead, regarded their own experience of punishments as errors on the part of their parents. Their reports implicitly accepted the emotional pain of these events. Participants spoke about their past with great clarity. They described scenes in vivid detail with deep feeling. Parents were able to describe both negative and positive aspects of their upbringing. They didn't avoid past events by presenting either a idealised view or a totally negative view.

The participants' acceptance of their pasts and the emotional clarity of their statements are similar to the kinds of statements made by non-abusive mothers about their own abusive childhoods (Egeland & Susman-Stillman, 1996). These non-abusive mothers had resolved their childhood issues sufficiently to parent successfully. The Redbook survey also documented that remembering hurtful incidents in childhood influenced mothers to change disciplinary practices (Safran, 1981). The evidence of the current study suggests that an emotional reevaluative process is important in preventing both intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment and forms of childhood abuse. The fact that similar processes are involved in determining whether abuse or corporal punishment is passed on to another generation, provides support for the statement made by Straus (1994) and Miller (1983) that both corporal punishment and abuse are traumatic for children.

Those parents who did not report actively reconsidering their own childhoods were also those who had either 'slipped' and spanked on rare occasions, (Cases 4,7) or continued to spank (Case 8). (Due to her ambivalence towards spanking, the mother in Case 8 was referred to only at the beginning of Chapter 4). The mothers in Cases 7 and 8 both had little memory of their childhoods before age 6 and both reported that they were not spanked in their childhood. As ages 0-6 years is the key

age range for receiving corporal punishment it may be that they simply were not able to remember relevant incidents.

The fact that some parents began to spank after having already begun a critical re-appraisal of their own upbringing, in some cases before pregnancy, suggests that either the process was incomplete or that reevaluation itself was not sufficient for cessation. The development of a non-violent childrearing ideal may be one result of parents considering their own experiences. At the core of this ideal was a sense of developing respect for the child that was common to twelve out of the thirteen participants. The memories appear to have sensitized parents to their children's pain and resentment after spanking. For some participants this process also flowed in the other direction, comprehending their child's pain after spanking or witnessing an assault, appeared to revive their own childhood memories.

Both reevaluation and the influence of new childrearing information led participants to the development of a new childrearing ideal. Instead of power-assertion, parental authority and obedience, parents developed a more egalitarian ideal which was based on the needs of parent and child. This ideal also gave weight to seeing situations from the child's point of view, to more respect for their child and to taking account of the child's wishes and feelings. In the course of developing this ideal parents sought further sources of parenting information from mentors, parenting programs, and books. Having established a new ideal of self-control for example, parents then drew from a range of sources that would help them establish this, including aerobic exercise, meditation, spirituality, Karate, religion, prayer.

Although parenting classes were clearly helpful to the majority of participants, they may not have directly addressed the issue of corporal punishment. Anecdotal reports suggest that many North American parenting classes tend to ignore participants' punishment history in favour of teaching specific parenting techniques. (Straus, 1994, argues that most American parenting classes ignore the issue of corporal punishment

altogether). In contrast some parenting classes sponsored by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [ISPCC] do ask participants to reflect on their past experiences and are prepared for any accompanying emotional responses (C. O'Tighearnáigh, personal communication, August 28, 1996). The participants' experiences suggest that looking at a person's own past is integral to stopping spanking and that parenting programs could usefully incorporate this process. In addition several participants reported that witnessing adults hitting children had been an important stimulus to stop spanking. This finding supports Mishkin's (1987) suggestion that films with instances of corporal punishment would encourage cessation in parenting programs.

Buntain-Ricklefs, Kemper, Bell, and Babonis (1994) found a strong correlation between punishment experienced as a child and later adult approval of a similar punishment. Even prior to cessation however, most parents in this study seemed to have used less severe forms of punishment than they experienced as children. For example, parents used a hand instead of a hairbrush (Case 13), stick (Case 12), or cane (Case 5). I can think of three possible explanations for this. The first is that Straus (1994) has reported an overall decline in the severity of corporal punishment in North America, specifically in the use of implements. This decline is possibly a result of increasing education, and anti-violence and abuse programs. Parents may have been responding to the norm established as a result of these factors. The second possibility is that parents had already begun to critically re-appraise their own experiences of corporal punishment, perhaps even before their children were born. The mothers in Cases 2, 11 and 12 explicitly reported this. The third explanation is that parents were reporting the most salient and extreme incidents from their childhood. These had typically occurred when participants were older than their own children had been at cessation. Newson and Newson (1989) documented that a proportion of parents escalated the severity of punishment as their children grew older. It is possible that

had participants continued to spank, eventually they would have used levels of punishment similar to those used by their own parents.

It is important to note that this study took place within a context of a range of public resources available for parents. Participants were able to combine their reappraisal of their experiences with approaches learnt from parenting classes and elsewhere. The parents in this study were mostly at least high school graduates and had partners who were well employed, or were themselves employed. Parents were able to assimilate support from psychologists, neighbourhood houses, and pediatric hospitals. The presence of a social network that implicitly supports psychological growth was an important part of the process. If that network was absent, cessation may very well not have taken place. In three cases this could have had tragic consequences.

### After Stopping Spanking and Prior Research

#### Parents

Participants reported substantial improvements in their well-being as a result of cessation. They expressed relief at the reduction in their own negative affect, and the increased enjoyment and cooperation of their children. They often responded to questions about themselves with observations linked to the wellbeing of their children. For example a mother said, "I just feel much more relaxed knowing that he's not upset" (Case 13). Parental distress and frustration both with their children and at their own behaviour was markedly reduced. Participants were no longer feeling guilty at their loss of control or feared harming their child. They were more confident about guiding their children towards acceptable behaviour. This process required effort, energy and sometimes more planning ahead. Their responses are consistent with Mishkin (1987) who found that parents who don't hit their children report greater satisfaction with their role as a parent. They are also consistent with Haueser's (1988) report that parents in

Sweden who had stopped spanking in response to the education campaign indicated greater confidence in their parenting abilities and closer involvement with their children. The responses concerned with increased self control and "a safety valve" also provide an insight into the substantial reduction in physical child abuse and parental killings of children that occurred in Sweden following the education campaign and the passage of the anti-spanking law (Durrant 1996).

### Parent-Child Relationship

In the current study I found that the participants' intermittent infliction of pain on their children had acted as a barrier to closeness and agreement. As parents developed control over impulses to spank and used alternate strategies, children responded by being more cooperative and content. Consequently the parent-child relationship shifted towards more closeness, with greater enjoyment of time spent together. This is in accord with Carson (1986) who found that non-spanking parents rated their children as more easy to manage than other parents. Parents reported this increased closeness with evident pleasure. Parents indicated that their children were more trusting and confided in them more than when they were using corporal punishment. The decrease in wariness some participants observed in their children is congruent with Minton, Kagan and Levine's (1971) findings. They found that boys of mothers who were physically punitive were more avoidant of their mothers during free play than other children.

The participants' statements that they had become closer to their children are also congruent with Straus's (1994) suggestion that each spanking wears away at the parent-child bond. Straus found that a substantial proportion of a sample of students reported that they remembered as teenagers, having hated their parents after being hit by them. At any age children are likely to express this hatred either passively through ignoring parents wishes or withdrawing, or through active defiance. Either of these

results would disrupt the relationship and make it harder for the parent to influence their child. Straus (1991) also argued that spanking's longer term effects were to undermine a faith in justice, label the child as bad, reduce the opportunity to learn alternatives to violence and lower the child's self esteem. The current study does indicate support for several of Straus's hypothesised processes in reverse: parents did report to their satisfaction their children were using problem solving and mediational strategies to defuse conflict with their peers, whereas earlier they had tended to hit out in frustration. This was expressed in even preschool children resolving conflict with their peers through discussion.

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of parental warmth and acceptance on a range of child social and cognitive outcomes. For example, Macdonald (1992) suggests that the function of warmth in parent-child relationships is to make interactions mutually rewarding to both parent and child. This pleasure in turn increases the child's willingness to cooperate and learn parental values. Conversely socialisation that uses pain results in mutual coercion, with a resentful child attempting to fight back and resist the parent thus making guidance or discipline harder (Patterson, 1982). Several parents made direct observations consistent with the above proposals. Parents were aware that introduction of pain into the relationship would reduce the closeness, trust and pleasure, which are also the primary modes of socialisation at the parents disposal.

### Children

Parents noted that children seemed more confident and more content in themselves. These were the most consistent effects reported. This finding is congruent with research findings that spanking lowers children's self esteem (Bryan & Freed, 1982). Children's reduction in peer and sibling conflict after parents had stopped spanking also supports the hypothesis that corporal punishment is a causal factor in

the development of peer and sibling assault, as reported by Straus (1994) and Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates (1994). Several parents observed that their children markedly reduced the amount of tantrums and physical conflict with their peers and siblings after parents ceased spanking. Physical conflict with peers is a form of anti-social behavior that often shows stability as the child ages and is present in children who later become delinquent (Patterson 1986). The marked improvement in child behavior as a result of cessation, contradicts suggestions that the stability of anti-social behavior in young children as they age, is due to a genetic component (Vuchinich, Bank, & Patterson, 1992). An alternative explanation based on the data from the current study is that this stability is due to parents' frequent and continued use of force, commencing when the child is one year old and perhaps continuing into the teen years.

Although none of the parents reported their children as depressed prior to stopping spanking, the consistency with which parents reported improvements in their children's well-being was remarkable. Parents variously reported that children were "calmer", "happier", "friendlier", "more content." This was true for preschool as well as older children, and is consistent with Turner and Finkelhor's (1996) finding that corporal punishment is a significant mental stressor and a risk factor for teen and adult onset depression. This suggests that further research could profitably investigate a connection between corporal punishment and depressed mood in younger children. It also suggests that therapists working with depressed young children could profitably address the issue of parental corporal punishment.

The three reports of improvement in academic work and school behaviour are consistent with Hauser's (1988) report that teachers had found children were generally easier to teach after the 1979 Swedish law and educational campaign against corporal punishment. They are also consistent with Patterson's (1986) general thesis that negative parenting practices can result in children performing poorly in school.

The current study however, unlike Patterson's, indicates corporal punishment as a major source of these children's difficulties in school.

In the current study five parents reported their children using prosocial behaviours such as negotiation rather than hitting, showing more empathy for others, and a willingness to discuss feelings with others. The reports by participants of children using more prosocial behaviour are consistent with the Oliner and Oliner (1988) study of altruism, which found that childhood corporal punishment is negatively correlated with later adult prosocial and altruistic acts. The reports in the current study of a connection between absence of corporal punishment and prosocial behaviour in children suggest an area for further research.

Children's increased contentment and security may also be a product of perceiving that their parents are treating them more fairly. The use of alternative means of discipline may contribute towards children's sense of fairness and justice. Studies into children's preferences and beliefs about just and helpful parental discipline and guidance suggest that participants in this study were using similar approaches (Irish Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, [ISPCC] 1996). This congruence between parents' approach to discipline and children's preferences may also account for some of the reported reduction in parent-child conflict and increased children's cooperation. Research has consistently shown that children believe the most effective form of discipline is to talk to them and explain what they have done wrong. Talking, grounding, taking away privileges and extra chores were regarded by children as significantly better ways of correcting their misbehaviour than spanking (ISPCC 1996).

A study by ISPCC (1994) found that the three most important attributes that children seek in a parent are listening to them, treating them kindly and keeping promises. Arguably, judging from the participants' accounts they were more likely to



fulfill these needs after cessation. This itself would partially account for children's increased level of contentment.

### Parenting processes

Haeser (1988) found Swedish parents using a range of methods instead of corporal punishment. These included talking and explaining more, earlier intervention into situations which were likely to result in disciplinary measures, withdrawal of privileges, extra chores and time-outs. The participants in this study also reported using many of the above strategies. However they also reported a range of other interventions that were more concerned with attendance to children's needs and encouragement of approved behaviour rather than deterrence through punishment. These processes developed from the values they held for their children for example, empathy for others and independent thought.

Haeser (1988) did not however, report the changes in philosophical orientation shown by parents in the current study such as increased respect towards children, or tolerance of children's affect. This may be result of methodology. Haeser reported impressions from a wide range of subjects, rather than a small in-depth sample. This might also be a function of a philosophical shift which had occurred at a societal level in Sweden. In contrast the participants in this study had moved from a position of congruency with a societal norm which did not respect children's physical integrity towards their own more egalitarian position.

Parents first step towards cessation was to exert greater self-control and remove themselves when they were getting angry, rather than risk hitting. Some parents would also ask the children to take time out. Cessation of corporal punishment coincided with an increase in a range of parental prosocial behaviour; parents reported paying more attention and listening more, accepting children's expression of strong feelings, apologising for the parent's own errors, communicating

their own feelings through I-statements rather than blaming the child, earlier intervention, letting children make structured choices, and phrasing requests in a positive form. Most parents also made conscious effort to take frequent part in activities that their child enjoyed. This attention to their children was not designed as a disciplinary process but had the effect of reducing conflict and the need for discipline. Parent's high level of involvement is consistent with Carson (1986) and Haueser (1988) findings concerning the high level of involvement with children in non-spanking families. Haueser reported that parents appeared more involved with their children's activities in Sweden eight years after legislative change and a reduction in the use of corporal punishment.

Parents were also conscious of modelling their behaviour, so that by attempting to resolve conflict through dialogue and sharing of viewpoints and feelings, parents were not only resolving the immediate situation but also training their children in some of the methods they had learnt from parenting classes or from books and peers. Subsequent use of these interventions by the child then afforded the parent a sense of achievement. Parents were also likely to enjoy children's movement into the wider world, children's enjoyment of their peers and closer friendships, and improvements in their academic or creative work. Feedback from counsellors and teachers or neighbours then further enhanced parent's sense of achievement. As a result they were less susceptible to negative criticism or influences supporting corporal punishment from peers, colleagues, neighbours or grandparents.

Half the participants regarded time-outs as counterproductive, perceiving them as punitive and therefore ineffective. Some parents however, also reported using withdrawal of privileges as mild punishment. Holden, Coleman and Schmidt (1995) found an association between overall restrictive attitude and frequency of corporal punishment. This is consistent with parents in the current study shifting philosophical emphasis away from punishment and power assertion, toward interventions that

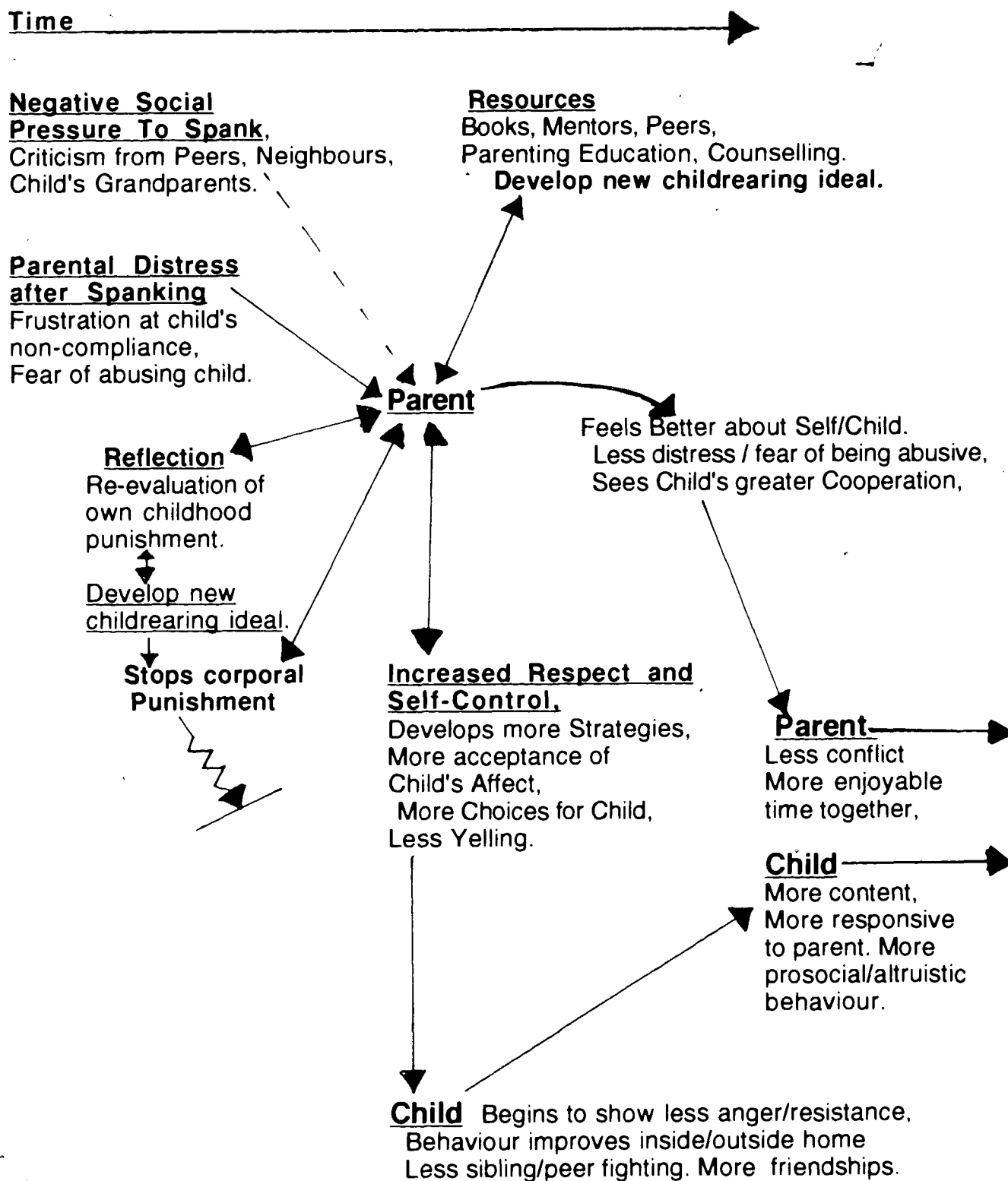
focussed on children's need satisfaction and nurturance. Holden et al. (1995) found that in terms of specific behavioral variables, only the use of time-out and threatening were associated with frequency of spanking. This is consistent with all the non-spanking parents in the current study who made infrequent use of time-outs and eschewed verbal threats. Parents in the current study also regarded spanking as associated with a range of punitive practices and attitudes, such as yelling or punitive time-outs. They subsequently reduced these practices as well as spanking. Holden et al. (1995) found however, that commands and yelling were not associated with spanking. This discrepancy in results may be explained by a difference in research focus and methodology. Holden et al. (1995) were investigating the antecedents of spanking determined by telephone interviews conducted daily over a two week period. In contrast in the current study, parents were able to reflect over a wide range of their experiences and consider a longer time period in response to my questions.

Parents noted a number of costs associated with not spanking. Some parents reported a considerable investment in time devoted to learning about alternatives to corporal punishment. Other parents noted that in contrast to spanking, being able to intervene earlier before conflict situations developed required closer monitoring, more work and more planning. This was especially true for preschool children. Not spanking required greater patience and sometimes allowing their child choice was more time consuming. All the parents reported times of frustration with their children. However they had learnt to control their impulses to spank. The majority of the parents noted that at first this had required conscious effort and more time to choose an alternative to spanking. Similar to this last point, Carson (1986) found that all the non-hitting parents in her sample reported times when they were tempted to hit, but recognised that this reflected their own feelings and struggle for self control rather than an actual need to punish.

### A Theoretical Model of Corporal Punishment Cessation

The data in this study provide the opportunity for the development of a theoretical model of cessation of corporal punishment.

Figure 2. A Theoretical Model of Corporal Punishment Cessation



The items in the theoretical model have been collated and condensed from the major themes of participants' experiences in Chapter Four. The time dimension moves from left to right. The left hand side of the model corresponds to the more detailed schema in figure 1, and is a summary of conflictual parent-child relations prior to cessation. Initially parents experience negative affect associated with spanking, and frustration with their child's non-compliance (model heading "Parental distress after spanking"). Parental use of corporal punishment is reinforced by their own childhood training and pressure from grandparents, peers, culture, neighbours, (see heading "Negative Social Pressure to Spank"). The parents' distress and frustration, their observations of non-compliance and anger in their children lead them to seek out new parenting information ("Resources"). Further impetus to this search may come from witnessing children being physically punished and reevaluation of their own childhood punishment experiences. These both lead parents to become more sensitised to children's vulnerability (see heading marked "Reflection"). Having started to empathize more with their children's pain, parents begin to exert more self-control over their outbursts. The middle area represents the period in which parents seek out new information and began to shift their childrearing practices. The more egalitarian childrearing ideals presented in these resources may also provide further stimulus to parents' questioning of their own upbringing. Parents begin to treat their children with more respect for their physical integrity (see heading "Respect and Self-control") and develop new discipline strategies using information from a variety of sources (marked "Resources"). The arrows between the sections "Parent", "Reflection," "Resources" and "Respect and Self-Control", represent an ongoing interaction rather than a discrete point in time. The right hand side of the model, in which parent and child are shown closer together, represents the participants' reports of improved parental self-regard, less fear of becoming abusive, improved and closer parent-child relationships, and a more cooperative and content child. The latter is expressed both by the child's overall

demeanour and less fighting with siblings and peers, ( sections marked "Child"). The child also begins to use more prosocial means of reducing conflict and show more empathy. Positive feedback from teachers and other adults and more pleasurable parent-child experiences then encourage the parent to continue with their new strategies. This in turn, further strengthens the parent-child bond.

This theory suggests a number of conclusions. 1) That cessation of corporal punishment and the development of guidance improves the well-being of both parents and children. 2) As a result of cessation of corporal punishment and more empathic parenting, children showed increased well-being and are more cooperative and less physically conflictual. The children's behaviour after cessation and increased trust after cessation results in parents and children becoming closer. They also experience more pleasurable interaction. 3) Parents' success at stopping corporal punishment and development of alternatives correlates with two main factors: a) The availability of alternate parenting models and resources, and b) parents' reflection on their own experiences with corporal punishment.

These conclusions could be tested further by using them as falsifiable predictions. For example the first point could be tested by comparing self-evaluations of parenting efficacy and contentment between parents who spank and those that don't. The third point, the significance of critical re-appraisal of parents own childhood, could be tested by comparing the richness of detail and feeling content of parents' accounts of childhood experiences of discipline and guidance. These accounts could then be correlated with parents success or difficulty with developing alternatives to spanking.

I propose that after cessation the amount of improvement in children's behaviour will be inversely related to the frequency, severity and duration of corporal punishment and the child's age at cessation of spanking. The amount of improvement will also be positively correlated with decreased yelling, increased levels of parental empathy,

increased discriminate sharing of decision making, increased use of reasoning, and other positive parenting practices.

The data in this study suggest that use of corporal punishment creates stress for the parent in three main ways. 1) Through increasing the likelihood that their children will be non-compliant and decreasing the opportunities for learning prosocial means of conflict resolution. Their children are also more likely to be defiant, hit siblings, peers, have trouble at school, and contribute to a high level of family conflict. 2) Through parental distress, anger, and/or guilt at inflicting pain on their children or from risking damaging their child. 3) Through decreased mutual pleasure, withdrawal or wariness by the child, disruption of the parent-child bond and subsequent loss of parental influence as the child matures.

### Summary

In this study cessation of corporal punishment was the result of the confluence of several of the following processes. 1) An increasing awareness of the stressors noted above. 2) Reflection on their own experience of corporal punishment and their relationship with their parents. 3) Witness of others' use of corporal punishment. 4) The availability of alternative models from books, mentors, parenting classes, peers etc. 5) Increased understanding about child development. 6) Feedback after cessation, from increasing frequency of pleasurable interactions and successful guidance of their children. This in turn led to greater investment in self-control and responding to their children's needs. The parents in this study reported that they, their children and their spouses had experienced considerable benefit after cessation of corporal punishment, not the least of which was the reduction in the fear of harming their child, or the possibility of doing so. The data suggests that abandoning the practice of spanking didn't involve a straightforward substituting of one punitive measure for another more benign one, but rather a reorientation of their childrearing



away from punishment and control, towards guidance. This involved parents attending to their own need for pleasurable interaction, and a sense of competency and closeness with their children. In addition parents' reorientation gave rise to a more egalitarian childrearing ideal and an understanding of their children's needs for respect, choice, and expression of feeling. The process of cessation is thus one of dynamic interaction, initiated by the parent.

The accumulating evidence suggests that the emotional and economic costs of corporal punishment in North America are vast. I believe the substantial benefits documented in this thesis suggest that the processes involved in the parental cessation of corporal punishment are worth both further research and considerable investment.

## Appendix A

### Copy of letter sent to a participant

Similar letters and/or a verbal explanation were given to participants before the start of the interview.

Dear (possible participant)

I am sending this letter after talking on the phone this morning. I really appreciated reading a little about your positive parenting in the (newspaper). My name is James Lindfield, I am a Master's Student in counselling psychology at in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. I am undertaking research into families who are currently trying or have succeeded in changing their method of disciplining their children from spanking to other methods of childrearing.

While there is a great deal of research into physical punishment, I have found very little on families who have tried to change their methods of discipline. For example it is not clear what resources are helpful to them. I would like to interview you about your experiences. The interview will take about one hour and can take place either in your home or if you prefer, in the office of a colleague. Has changing your methods of disciplining your children been beneficial to you, or your children?

The purpose of my research is to collect information for the benefit of other parents who may be thinking about making a similar change. I also believe that the people participating in the research will gain from the opportunity to discuss their parenting approaches: what works for you and what doesn't work, is there information you would like to pass on to other parents making similar changes?

If you do agree to participate, you will have the option to either refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. I will keep all your responses confidential. Your name and identifying information will not appear anywhere in the study. I will also provide you with a copy of the research when it is completed. If you are interested in learning more about the study, and/or wish to participate, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_. Thankyou for your time, and for considering my request.

Yours sincerely, James Lindfield, M.A. candidate, Counselling Psychology.

Thesis Supervisor, Dr Michael Manley-Casimir.

Appendix B  
Consent to Participate Form

Consent to Participate for Parent

Researcher James Lindfield M.A. candidate Department of Counselling  
Psychology, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

Mailing Adress:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in the research study on the  
perceptions of parents who no longer rely on corporal punishment as a  
disciplinary procedure for their children. I have read the description of the  
study given in the information letter and have had the purpose of the  
research explained to me.

I understand that:

- The interview will last approximately one hour
- The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed and the tapes erased after completion of the study.
  
- The tapes will be listened to only by the researcher, a transcriber and the researcher's faculty advisors. The transcriber will not receive identifying information on the tapes.
- The transcriptions will be kept in a locked drawer and destroyed within three years of the completion of the study. The signed consent forms will be kept in a separate locked drawer.
- Transcripts will be identified only by code number, my name will not appear in any research report published or unpublished.

The content of my discussions with the researcher will be kept strictly confidential by the researcher and his thesis committee.

-Once all interviews are completed, I will be given the opportunity to discuss the collective findings and to check through and modify the parts of the thesis dealing with my interview. (NB. Due to time and distance considerations respondent validation was not undertaken. This part of the agreement was not fulfilled by the researcher).

I have been able to ask whatever questions I have about the research and have had all the questions answered to my satisfaction by the researcher. I understand that I can ask for additional information at any time. I will be given a copy of this consent form once I have signed it and a summary of the research findings will be sent to me once the thesis is completed. A copy of the completed thesis will be made available to me from James Lindfield upon request.

Any complaints about this research may be directed to:

Dean of Education,

Dr Robin Barrow

C/O Faculty of Education. MPX 8622

Simon Fraser University,

Burnaby V54A 1S6 Phone 291-3148 Fax: 291-3203.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

## Appendix C

### The Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interview between participant and James Lindfield. Time approximately one hour to one and three-quarters of an hour. The following are questions used, though not necessarily in this order.

#### **Background**

*Can you tell me a little about yourself and your partner? Your work, educational background? How many children do you have? How old are they? Can you tell me a little about your children?*

(This question gathered information about: ages, gender, talents, abilities, shared activities, quality of relationship and may touch tangentially on discipline).

*How long have been using another method of disciplining? What prompted you to change?*

#### **Resources**

*Is there anything that has been particularly helpful in changing the way you discipline your children? Anything you would recommend to a friend who wanted to change their discipline methods: courses, books, information from friends and media?*

#### **Childrearing in the past**

*Can you tell me about a couple of incidents when you disciplined your children in the past? What sort of things would you spank the children for? In a recent survey only 9% of parents said that they had never come close to "losing control" of themselves while disciplining their children. Did you*

*ever feel as though you had really lost it? Was this a factor in changing your disciplinary practices?*

### **Current childrearing practices**

*Can you think of a similar situation that occurred recently with your children?*

*How did you handle the situation recently? Can you think of a specific incident? What happened? Can you remember an incident recently when your child was: acting dangerously; or hurt another child ; or damaged something? How did you handle the situation?*

### **Participant's own history**

*Can you tell me what used to happen to you when you did something that your parents didn't like? Is there one particular incident that stands out?*

(This question aimed to understand the participant's attitude to their own parents' discipline practices; and how much the participant had thought over what happened to them).

### **Current Relationship with child(ren)**

*How do you rate your relationship with your child now? Would you describe yourself as more or less close now? Are there any particular areas of tension between you and your children? What do you do now if you can feel you're getting really angry? Do you feel that you have to work really hard at not hitting or does it come easily now?*

**Children's Social and Academic Life**

*How do your children get along with their friends and their teachers (at home and at school ) ? How is their school work Has this improved or got worse since you changed your way of disciplining?*

(The purpose of this question was to record parents' attitudes to their childrens' behaviour, and the sociability and school record of the children.

*Are there any differences in childrens' behaviour between the past and present?*

**Grandparents', friends' and neighbours' attitudes**

*How do your own parents react to your changes in disciplinary practice? Have they been disapproving? Have you asked them to respect your methods if the children stay over? Has this caused any difficulties? Have you had any criticism from neighbours, friends , or other family members?*

**Summary attitudes to disciplinary change.**

*How has it been making a change in your disciplinary approach? Has it been worth it? Are there any other points that you would like to discuss?*

***Thankyou for your time and your responses.***

After each interview a detailed letter thanking the participant for their interview was sent.

Appendix D  
Brief Description of Participants

Mother in Case 1, Mother of two children, teaches parenting education classes, married to technician. Two boys, aged four and a half years and two at cessation. At time of interview aged ten and a half and eight years. Only a few instances of corporal punishment before cessation.

Mother in Case 2. Works in clerical job, married to foreman. Three daughters, aged three and a half years and one and a half years at cessation. At time of interview, aged four and a half, two and a half, and ten months respectively. Intermittent instances of spankings, one of which left red marks.

Father in Case 3. Works in manual job, single father. Lives with daughter and son, age at cessation seven and a half and five and a half years. At time of the interview aged ten and eight years old. Several older children not living with him. Frequent use of spanking before cessation, several instances of bruising and use of belt before cessation.

Mother in Case 4. Full time mother, university educated. Husband also has degree level education. One son and daughter. Son aged three years and four months at cessation and at time of interview aged four years and daughter one-year respectively. Frequent spanking of son before cessation.

Mother in Case 5. Works in education, married to technician. Two daughters youngest aged 6 when last spanked. Aged 24 and 21 years at time of the interview. Frequent use of spanking, and one instance of use of plastic ruler before cessation.

Mother in Case 6. Works in social work, single mother. One daughter and one son. Son (last child spanked) aged four years at cessation. Children aged nine and six respectively at time of the interview. Intermittent spanking before cessation.

Mother in Case 7. Full time mother, husband retraining. One son and one daughter. Children aged four (son) and one year (daughter) at cessation and aged five and a half (son) and three years (daughter) at the time of the interview. (Note a few incidents of spanking since cessation). Frequent instances of spanking on eldest child before cessation.

Mother in Case 8. Full time mother, university educated, husband professional. Daughter age three years and three months at time of interview. Some diminution of corporal punishment, no cessation.

Mother in Case 9. Full time mother, trained as secretary, husband small scale businessman. Second marriage. Son by previous marriage aged between six and seven years at cessation. Son aged twelve years,



daughter aged two and a half years at time of the interview. Frequent and repeated spanking on son before cessation. One or two regretted incidents with daughter.

Mother in Case 10. Works in education, two sons and daughter aged at cessation eight, six, and newborn. Daughter from second marriage. Children now aged thirty-seven, thirty-five, and twenty-nine years at time of the interview. Many, frequent incidents before cessation. One instance of bruising.

Mother in Case 11. Part-time teacher, university educated. Husband professional. Two sons aged between four and five years at time of cessation and aged eleven and seven and a half at time of the interview. Regular incidents of spanking (three or four hits on the behind) before cessation.

Mother in Case 12. Part-time student, college educated. Husband professional. Son and daughter, both children around age two when last spanked. Aged eight and three-quarters and six and three-quarters at time of the interview. Only a few incidents of spanking before cessation.

Mother in Case 13. Part-time researcher, university educated, husband professional. One son aged four years at time of cessation and aged twelve years at time of the interview. Only a few incidents of spanking from both parents before cessation.

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