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A Darn Good Hiding or the Naughty Step? Ideas on child discipline in New Zealand, 1890-2008.

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the history of child discipline in New Zealand since 1890, taking into account both trends in child-rearing advice and the common practices of ordinary parents. It explores the common stereotype that children "these days" are ill-disciplined in comparison with their earlier counterparts, and argues that while physical punishment is used less often than in the past, and usually in a milder form, it is still used more frequently and harshly than would be expected from the results of recent opinion polls.

Child discipline has always been about setting a child up to live a happy life. As ideas on how to achieve this goal have changed, so too have the acceptable forms of punishment. During the 1890s-1920s, the difference between good discipline and abuse was simply a matter of frequency, and this idea was shared by both parenting advisors and the general public. Since the 1930s, however, parenting experts were frequently out of step with the parents they were trying to teach, and that their influence on parenting practice was at best delayed, and at worst entirely contradictory to that which they intended. Letters, magazine and newspaper articles and contemporary studies on attitudes to discipline are used to show that parenting practice was often very different to that promoted by parenting advisors. Finally, this thesis concludes that a contextualist approach best suits the history of child-rearing advice in New Zealand, while an evolutionist approach is more appropriate in terms of common practice.

Introduction: "Back in My Day"

We're going in the wrong direction. I don't know what has caused this but the youth of today do not have the sense of respect and discipline that my generation had when we were young.... I got hammered as a kid and I hammered my children, not often, but they [knew] they'd get belted if they did something wrong. Now they throw you in jail for that. I just can't get my head around that.¹

Sir Bob Charles was obviously confused. He could not believe that the form of discipline he used when bringing up his children would now be considered abuse. His idea that children "these days" are badly behaved, and that things were different "back in my day" evokes a time long past when discipline was stricter, children were better behaved and in the main, New Zealand was a nicer place to live. Sir Bob's sentiments have been shared by many New Zealanders, both at the present time and throughout our history. Whether the problem is teenagers wearing hoodies and spreading graffiti over public property in the 2000s, or teddy boys hanging around outside milk bars and engaging in "immoral practices" in the 1950s, or the street corner larrikins harassing passers by in the 1890s; Sir Bob was echoing a concern with children's behaviour that goes back deep into our past. The 2007 repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, which removed the legal justification for parents to use "reasonable force" in the discipline of children, has only reignited an old debate between community members, parenting experts and parents themselves. At each of these times in our history, often referred to as "moral panics", some have responded by calling for harsher punishment of children to prevent juvenile delinquency, while others argued that understanding and kindness were more effective deterrents. Those calling for harsher punishment have, most often, been in the ascendancy. The idea that children behaved much better and discipline was much stricter in the past is one that is deeply ingrained into our collective consciousness. This idea is so widely accepted that it has not yet been closely examined. In this thesis, I will seek to provide some context to the on-going debate over child discipline in New Zealand. I will examine how ideas on discipline and punishment have changed over the years, both in terms of official

¹ 'Sir Bob Charles - A Living Legend', *The Cut*, Jan-Feb 2008, p. 24.

child-rearing advice, and how an ordinary New Zealand child could expect to be disciplined.

The accepted wisdom on discipline in New Zealand is that Victorian children in particular were treated harshly, even perhaps cruelly by their parents, but since that time discipline has become gentler with each generation. This change has been driven, it is believed, by a greater understanding of psychology and a growing respect for children as people in their own right, rather than as simply possessions of their parents. This idea has traditionally been shared by academics, politicians and talkback callers alike. Sir Bob reflected this stereotype, along with its commonly accepted logical conclusion, that the softening of discipline has gone too far, allowing children to run wild with no form of restraint or respect for authority. Over the years there have been many attempts to gauge the New Zealand public's attitudes towards disciplining children.² However, these studies tend to focus on attitudes at one point in time, and, with the exception of Jane and James Ritchie's later works, do not provide any comparison with any other time period. They also have paid little attention to the role of child-rearing advice, and its impact on parenting practices. There have also been several overseas studies of the changing trends in child-rearing advice, but little done here in New Zealand. My intention is to provide a longer survey of discipline in New Zealand, to build a picture of the changing nature and expectations of discipline, both by child-rearing advisors and by ordinary parents. I will consider how advice from the experts, the public's interpretation of it, and the expectations of ordinary parents have changed over the years, and therefore impacted the way New Zealand children experience discipline.

Children's behaviour, and both its short and long term consequences for themselves and their society, is again in the spotlight. Section 59 of the Crimes

² See, for example, J. Desmond Rainey, 'The Punishment of Children', Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1956. (Qualification not stated); Terry Dobbs, 'Children's Insights into Family Discipline', MA Thesis in Childhood and Youth Studies, University of Otago, 2005; Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns in New Zealand*, Wellington: AH and AW Reed, 1970; Ritchie, Jane, 'Child Rearing Patterns: Further Studies', Psychology Research Series, 11, University of Waikato, 1979; Mary A. Gregory, 'Experiences of and Attitudes to Physical Punishment in New Zealand', MSocSci Thesis in Psychology, University of Waikato, 2006 and Faye Hunt-loane, 'Physical Discipline in Samoan Families', MA Thesis in Social Work, Massey University, 2005.

Act, which justified the use of “reasonable force” against children for the purposes of discipline, was repealed in May 2007. As repeal began to look inevitable throughout 2006 and early 2007, an enormous amount of debate was stirred up throughout New Zealand society. Dr Cindy Kiro, the Children’s Commissioner and one of the strongest advocates of repeal, noted that this issue generated more public submissions than any other in New Zealand history.³ Although poll after poll showed the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders were opposed to repeal and National MP Chester Borrows suggested an amendment to allow “light smacking”, the bill to repeal Section 59 eventually passed into law after a multi-party agreement on 2 May 2007.⁴ Unsurprisingly, the controversy has not died away since the bill was passed. Over 300,000 people signed a petition requesting a referendum on the subject, and various lobby groups reported cases of parents being “victimised” by the new law.⁵

This has created a modern version of that old phenomenon, the moral panic. Opposition to the repeal of Section 59 was driven by the fear that, without physical punishment, children would have no form of discipline at all. The old debate over whether behavioural problems are the result of a lack of discipline or a lack of understanding has been revived once again. With each new generation these issues have been raised, and at different times both sides have had the ascendancy, both within the accepted parenting “experts” of the time and among the general public. I have chosen to start my analysis from 1890, as this, like the present day, was a time of huge interest in the welfare and behaviour of children. While, as will be seen, the problems faced by these two ages had much in common, the solutions proposed by those in authority have been widely different.

³ Beth Wood, Ian Hassall and George Hook, *Unreasonable Force: New Zealand's journey towards banning the physical punishment of children*, Wellington: Save the Children New Zealand, 2008, p. 8.

⁴ Wood, Hassall and Hook, pp. 136-38.

⁵ ‘Petition for Anti-Smacking Law Referendum 15,000 short’, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 April 2008, accessed 31 October 2008 at

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10507015

Also see, for example, ‘Reality Hits Parents’, Family First advertisement, accessed 13 October 2008 at www.familyfirst.org.nz/files/LATEST%20-20%Reality%20Hits_SST.pdf

As Mary Gordon argued, the years 1890-1920 were a time of enormous change in the way that New Zealand children were viewed. Their welfare, education and behaviour came to be considered as vitally important for the future of the country, and therefore the concern of the state, not just parents.⁶ Much like the present day, newspapers frequently reported instances of juvenile crime, and parents generally received the blame for being too lax in their discipline. The government's response was to propose the Juvenile Depravity Bill in 1896, which was particularly aimed at suppressing the "larrikins" who would congregate on street corners and harass passing members of the public.⁷

In addition, child abuse (or cruelty, as it was then known) was an acknowledged problem. The 1885 Fleming cruelty case hit the headlines in a comparable way to the 1991 Delcelia Whittaker case, bringing the horror of child abuse into the consciousness of ordinary New Zealanders. Mr Fleming, the court was told, tied his son to a bedpost and whipped him seven times with a cart whip, for hitting his little sister.⁸ In a separate incident, Mrs Fleming, the children's step-mother, had forced the daughter to lay face down on the bed, and then had "beaten [her] with the cart whip for wetting the bed".⁹ Much to the outrage of the general public, the Flemings were acquitted, as the jury agreed that they had not exceeded their parental rights.¹⁰ As more of these cases began to emerge over the following years, organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children were set up in response, and at a government level, the 1890 Child Protection Act was intended to give the state power to intervene in abusive situations and protect the children from further harm. However, as will be seen, the drafters of the Child Protection Act had no thought of preventing parents using physical punishment on their children. In the late 19th century, there was believed to be a difference between good discipline and cruelty to children. Just where this line fell, however,

⁶ Mary McDougall Gordon, 'Australia and New Zealand', in *Children in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (eds.), Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 118.

⁷ Jeanine Graham, 'New Zealand Childhoods (18th-20th c.)', *Children and Youth in History*, Item #93. Accessed 31 October 2008 at

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/teaching-modules/93?section=primarysources&source=74>

⁸ 'Judicial', *Otago Witness*, April 18, 1885, p. 3.

⁹ 'The Dunedin Cruelty Case', *Evening Post*, March 27, 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰ 'Alleged Gross Ill-treatment of Children', *Otago Witness*, March 28, 1885, p. 11.

proved very difficult to determine. This same problem has kept reoccurring throughout our history.

Any attempt to define how New Zealand children have been treated over the years begs a major question. It is not possible to know how every child in this country today is disciplined, let alone those who were children many years ago. How then, can this thesis hope to draw any meaningful conclusions? In answer to this, I have attempted to build a picture of the generally accepted and expected forms of discipline used at various times in our past, using both information gathered from child-rearing advice manuals and popular sources discussing children's behaviour. Advice manuals must be used carefully, as they cannot necessarily be taken as evidence of child-rearing practices commonly used at the time. They do, however, provide evidence of changing trends in child-rearing advice, and insight into the way children were viewed in their society. The Plunket Society is New Zealand's longest running and most popular source of child-rearing advice, so provides an interesting case study of the impact of these changing fashions. I have used many of their publications, reports and records throughout this thesis. As one of the main drivers behind the scientific method of child-rearing in the early 20th century, Plunket's stance on many issues, including discipline, was very dogmatic in its early years. Change did come to Plunket, but at a much slower rate than other child-rearing advice sources. As well as Plunket, I have used a variety of sources, including advisors in newspapers and the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, popular overseas parenting experts such as Dr Spock and Supernanny Jo Frost, and local parenting advisors such as Nigel Latta and Diane Levy.

As well as providing advice columns, newspapers and the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* have also been a useful source of information on popular attitudes towards discipline at different times in our history. When a local newspaper was not afraid to call for delinquent boys to receive a "good birching",¹¹ it is clear that they were expecting their opinion to be shared by the majority of readers. In earlier years, especially during times of moral panic, it was not uncommon to have advice pages

¹¹ 'Notes and Notions', *New Zealand Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, July 1, 1899, p. 14.

supporting a more liberal form of parenting, while the rest of the publication promoted the exact opposite. Writers to the editor or journalists who referred to occasional physical punishment as “necessary” or “just common sense”¹² also gave clues to the accepted practice at the time.

In addition to media sources, I have also relied heavily on various studies that have focused on discipline methods at different periods in our history. It has been possible to learn how, when and why different forms of discipline, particularly physical punishment, have been considered necessary at different times. Even more telling, however, were the parents’ reactions to questions on discipline. Studies in the 1950s and 60s noted that parents were comfortable talking about their use of physical punishment, but studies since the 1970s have noted a growing reluctance to discuss it, and an admission that although most parents used physical punishment, many also felt guilty afterwards. This in itself shows the changing attitudes towards physical punishment over time, even if, as will be seen, the practice has not always kept pace.

Like all sources, these have their limitations. Some studies have simply asked people for their attitudes on discipline, assuming that the theory and the practice would be fairly similar. As will be seen, this is not necessarily the case, so these surveys cannot be considered reliable evidence of contemporary child-rearing practices. Even those which specifically questioned parents on their discipline practices relied on the parents actually telling the truth.

I have not been able to access the original data for these studies, so must start from the interpretations made by the authors. Rainey’s description of relationships between parents and children in New Zealand in the 1950s was very different to that of Jane and James Ritchie, less than ten years later. The passage of time cannot entirely account for their very different interpretations, and it must be assumed, their very different ideas on physical punishment must have made some impact on their analysis.

¹² Doris M. Mirams, *Corporal Punishment at Home and School: with special reference to powers of punishment by prefects*, Timaru: Beynon Printing, 1955, pp. 7, 11, 12, 14.

Unfortunately, very few children throughout history have recorded their experiences of discipline and their reactions to it. Instead I have had to rely on memoirs and letters, and attitudes towards children revealed by adult writers, to determine the forms of discipline that would have been most common. In the process of writing this thesis therefore, it has been necessary to make some generalisations. I am aware that even those who agreed with the expected standard of discipline would not have always conformed to it, and that everyone's experience is unique, notwithstanding those who would have been considered exceptions to the rule at the time. The best we can do is attempt to discover what the usual experience of discipline was expected to be, and to learn what would have been a socially acceptable method of child-rearing, according to the majority of people at the time.

I too have come across the problem that has dogged lawmakers for generations. It is very difficult to separate physical punishment from abuse, both in an historical context and for parents choosing the forms of discipline they will use, but despite this I have attempted to do so. Child abuse is a societal evil that, whether acknowledged or not, is a terrible part of life for some children at all times, but it is not the focus of this thesis. I have attempted to determine where the dividing line between what was considered abuse and what was considered acceptable punishment has been drawn at different times in our history. For an excellent analysis of New Zealand's attempts at dealing with the problem of child abuse over the years, I would recommend Bronwyn Dalley's *Family Matters: Child welfare in twentieth-century New Zealand*.

It is not the intention of this thesis to provide an in-depth account of the lead-up to the 2007 repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, or the impact of the recommendations by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). These issues have already been well-covered by Beth Wood, Ian Hassall and George Hook in their book, *Unreasonable Force: New Zealand's journey towards banning the physical punishment of children*.

I have also chosen to focus on discipline in the home, rather than at school, as there has already been substantial work done on the history of punishment in New Zealand schools. I would recommend James Marshall's *Discipline and Punishment in New Zealand Education* for those interested in this area.

Unavoidably, my thesis has a white, middle class bias. As Jay Mechling warned, the vast majority of child-rearing manuals tend to be written by and for the upper middle class, and therefore reflect their values.¹³ The Plunket society, under Sir Truby King, was unusual in that it crossed some of these social boundaries, dispensing advice to the poor, middle class and wealthier families alike. It did not cross them all, however. It was not until the 1950s that Plunket began to make an effort to assist Maori families as well as Pakeha, and even then, this was a low priority.

It was not for some years – indeed, until recent times – that the special efforts needed to improve infant welfare among the Maoris [sic], and the growing Polynesian population, began to be measurable.¹⁴

It has only been since Jane and James Ritchie began their studies of childhood in New Zealand in the 1960s that any attempt was made to compare Maori and Pakeha methods of child-rearing and only since the 1990s that children with names such as Moana have appeared in advice literature.¹⁵ There is a long-standing stereotype in New Zealand society that discipline is much harsher in Pacific Island and Maori families, and that the majority of abuse cases happen to children from these ethnicities. Against this is the argument that physical punishment was not a traditional part of Maori society, but was introduced by the missionaries and therefore a hangover of colonialism.¹⁶ Putting this aside, however, the Ritchies found in their 1963-64 studies that Maori families who lived in a traditional pa were much less focused on discipline than their urban or European counterparts.

¹³ Jay Mechling, 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers', *Journal of Social History*, 9:1 (1975), p. 47.

¹⁴ Gordon Parry, *A Fence at the Top: The first 75 years of the Plunket Society*, Dunedin: Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, 1982, p. 130.

¹⁵ see, for example, Kate Birch, *Positive Parenting. From Toddlers to Teenagers: A resource book for New Zealand families*, (rev. ed.), Auckland: Reed Publishers, 1993, p. 70.

¹⁶ Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *The Next Generation: Child Rearing in New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 100.

Children were casually supervised but generally allowed much more freedom than other groups of children studied. Punishment, when used, could be "harsh and swift", but was employed only rarely.¹⁷ Their upbringing tended to follow, as will be seen, the more traditional model of New Zealand childhood. Urban Maori mothers, particularly those in small towns, tended to be stricter, following more closely or even exceeding the methods of their Pakeha neighbours, who they felt were watching them closely. The Ritchies noted a heavy reliance on physical punishment among these mothers.¹⁸

However, in more recent years most studies have either not shown any major differences in discipline methods or attitudes by ethnicities, or found a much lower rate of approval for physical punishment among Maori or Pacific Island people. Sue Carswell's 2001 telephone study of attitudes towards discipline showed that while 82 percent of European respondents believed smacking should be allowed by law, only 73 percent of Maori and 69 percent of Pacific Island participants agreed.¹⁹ She did find, however, that the Pacific Island respondents who did agree with physical punishment tended to support the use of implements more often than Maori or Europeans. They were also more likely to use physical punishment on older children, but correspondingly less likely to approve of it with younger children.²⁰ Terry Dobbs supported Carswell's findings, and noted that they were similar to that of the Child Youth and Family service as well.²¹

The only recent study that would dispute these findings was Faye Hunt-loane's 2005 thesis 'Physical Discipline in Samoan Families'. In this she interviewed 12 Samoan community leaders for their experiences of and attitudes towards physical punishment. While all 12 of her respondents reported that they preferred a more inductive parenting style, and only used physical punishment on rare occasions, if at all, they did not feel that this was universal among the Samoan community. All

¹⁷ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 132.

¹⁸ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 113 and 140-41.

¹⁹ Sue Carswell, *Survey on Public Attitudes Towards the Physical Discipline of Children*, Wellington: Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 7.

²⁰ Carswell, pp. 24-25

²¹ Terry Dobbs, 'Children's Insights into Family Discipline', MA Thesis in Childhood and Youth Studies, University of Otago, 2005, p. 61.

participants agreed that more traditional attitudes and stricter discipline methods were still very common among some families they worked with. Without the moderating influence of village life, as experienced in the islands, they shared a concern that physical discipline could easily get out of hand.²² However, as will be seen from Terry Dobbs' results, the more severe forms of discipline are still reasonably common among all New Zealand children, regardless of ethnicity, so perhaps there is no real difference to be found along these lines.

When referring to the practice of inflicting pain on children for the purpose of correction, the literature on child discipline uses a variety of terms; corporal punishment, smacking, spanking, physical punishment and physical discipline are just some of those commonly used. In the primary source documents I have used, physical punishment is often simply referred to as "punishment", or more disturbingly, beating, whipping or thrashing. I have chosen to use the term physical punishment to refer to this practice, and have used "discipline" in the wider sense of the word, including both positive and negative training of children.

Chapter one of this thesis will survey the approaches to the study of child discipline and punishment; including both children's history and psychological arguments about punishment of children. Thereafter, it will be divided into four sections of two chapters each. The first chapter of each section will follow the different schools of thought prevalent at the time amongst child rearing advisors, and then the second chapter will compare this with the common practice among ordinary parents of the day. It is easy to assume that parental practice automatically followed the prevailing fashions in child-rearing theory, but, as will be seen, this is not necessarily the case. This approach allows us to chart the different rates of change in both child-rearing advice and parental practice over time, and consider their impact on each other. Both have changed significantly since the 1890s, but at very different rates. Chapters 2 and 3 will examine the period 1890-1930, considering the impact of the moral panic, concerns about child abuse and then the development of scientific child-rearing under Sir Truby King. Chapters 4 and 5 will

²² Hunt-loane, pp. 82-84, 89.

discuss the growth and impact of the permissive parenting movement in the 1930s-50s. Chapters 6 and 7 follow the attempts of child-rearing advisors to regain the confidence of parents in the 1960s-70s, and then Chapters 8 and 9 chart the growth and influence of the anti-smacking movement in the 1980s-2000s. The conclusion will discuss whether an evolutionist or contextualist approach better fits the New Zealand context, and examine why ideas on acceptable forms of child discipline have changed.

The nature of child discipline in New Zealand in the 21st century is most definitely different to that of the past. This thesis will attempt to discover what drove these changes, and whether they have been as momentous as Sir Bob Charles, and so many others, seem to think.

Chapter 1. Approaches to the Topic of Child Discipline:

There is no doubt that in New Zealand today, like many other similar nations, discipline of children is a big business. Hundreds of television programmes, websites, books and magazines are devoted to the subject. As well as these popular sources, over the past twenty years much academic attention has also been focused on child discipline and its effects. The vast majority of this body of literature is against the use of physical punishment in any form. Elizabeth Gershoff, in her 2002 meta-analysis of literature on physical punishment concluded that smacking may be effective in ensuring immediate compliance, but was ineffective at achieving moral internalisation, and therefore unlikely to prevent the child repeating the behaviour. It was also linked to delinquency in early adulthood, found to be a precursor to child abuse and mental health problems and to negatively affect the quality of the parent-child relationship.²³ Rather than teaching the child good behaviour, physical punishment was in fact more likely to have long term negative effects.

Early experiences with corporal punishment may model and legitimise many types of violence through an individual's life, particularly violence in romantic relationships.²⁴

These findings were supported by Dr Murray Straus, who also argued that physical punishment in childhood was likely to lead to adult sexual deviancy. Straus has been one of the strongest opponents of physical punishment, arguing that it has been a deeply ingrained part of American culture, reinforced by religious beliefs and values such as punitiveness and individualism, and calling for a Swedish-style ban on its use.²⁵ While Straus and Gershoff represent the conventional wisdom on physical punishment amongst psychologists, there are a few notable exceptions. Drs Robert Larzelere, Diana Baumrind and Philip Cowan have argued that despite widespread condemnation of physical punishment among academics,

²³ Elizabeth Gershoff, 'Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviours and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review', *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, (2002), pp. 541-42.

²⁴ Gershoff, p. 541.

²⁵ Murray A. Straus, *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment in American Families*, New York: Lexington Books, 1994, pp. 122-123.

The evidence presented in Gershoff's meta-analyses does not justify a blanket injunction against mild to moderate disciplinary spanking.²⁶

The level of disparity between the two sides of this debate is such that even such a moderate statement is taken by both academics and lobby groups on both sides to mean support for the usage of physical punishment. Dr Larzelere in particular, has since become a figurehead for those supporting the use of physical punishment of children, even coming to New Zealand at the request of lobby group Family First.²⁷

In a New Zealand context, the issues are much the same. In 2004, Anne Smith, Megan Gollop, Nicola Taylor and Kate Marshall, of the Otago University Children's Issues Centre published *The Discipline and Guidance of Children: Messages from research* and its sister publication, *The Discipline and Guidance of Children: A summary of research*. *Messages* was an academic document intended to summarise the findings of many thousands of papers investigating the effects of physical punishment on children and possible alternative options. *Summary*, on the other hand, was intended to distill the information gained from the research into a format accessible to ordinary parents. Both these publications had strongly anti-smacking viewpoints, with conclusions very similar to that of Gershoff's.

Jane and James Ritchie are synonymous with research on child discipline in New Zealand, and their advocacy for the anti-smacking cause is well known. Their in-depth studies of motherhood and childhood in New Zealand began in the 1960s, the results of which were eventually published as *Child Rearing Patterns in New Zealand*. They questioned mothers with four year old children on their views of their children, their husbands and their child-rearing techniques, including potty training, breast or bottle feeding and discipline. They concluded that most parents were more focused on achieving control over their child's actions and feelings than on helping the child build inner control. A heavy use of physical punishment was

²⁶ Diana Baumrind, Robert Larzelere and Philip Cowan, 'Ordinary Physical Punishment: Is it Harmful? Comment on Gershoff (2002)', *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, (2002), p. 586.

²⁷ See, for example, Gershoff, p. 539 and Robert Larzelere, 'NZ's Anti-Smacking Law Most Extreme in the World', accessed 15 October 2008 at www.familyfirst.org.nz/index.cfm/Action_Alert/Anti_smacking_Bill.htm

an inseparable part of this child-rearing method.²⁸ Subsequent follow up studies have been reported in *Child Rearing Patterns: Further Studies*; *Spare the Rod* and more recent publications including *Violence in New Zealand* and *The Next Generation: Child Rearing in New Zealand*. I have relied heavily on their results in this thesis.

Where Jane and James Ritchie had drawn most of their conclusions on discipline from interviews with parents, Terry Dobbs completed an in depth study of New Zealand children's experiences of physical punishment in 2005. She found that while an increasing number of parents did not use physical punishment (approximately 40 percent, compared with only 10 percent at the time of the Ritchies' 1977 study); it was still a major part of life for many children, even up to the age of 14. She also found that more severe methods of discipline were commonly used, despite surveys of adults which almost universally condemned such methods.²⁹ Dobbs' study was an updated version of that completed by Desmond Rainey in 1956. Rainey studied both parents' and children's ideas on and experiences of discipline in a small town outside Auckland, and concluded that physical punishment was considered by both parents and children to be an accepted, justified and effective method of punishment.³⁰

Mary Gregory studied 78 first year psychology students at Waikato University to learn what their experiences of physical punishment had been as children, and how this affected their attitudes towards discipline as adults. She found that 90 percent of her respondents had been smacked as children, and 75 percent either did or expected to use physical punishment with their own children.³¹ She did not find any significant demographic characteristics affecting her respondents' views on physical punishment and therefore supported the theory that physical punishment is a "social learning process", one that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Marie Russell looked at the other side of the equation, and

²⁸ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 12.

²⁹ Terry Dobbs, *Insights: Children and young people speak out about family discipline*, Christchurch: Save the Children New Zealand, 2005, Dobbs, 'Family Discipline', pp. 128-29 and Carswell, p. 6.

³⁰ Rainey, p. 42

³¹ Gregory, p. i

studied parents who had chosen not to use physical punishment on their children, for a range of reasons. Some chose not to because they didn't agree with it, others because their parents hadn't used it on them and from the other extreme, some had been physically abused as children and were determined not to perpetuate the cycle. She found that their decision was not always supported by those around them, and they frequently felt pressured to use physical punishment.³²

Traditionally, writing about child discipline was the domain of psychologists, but in recent years this has expanded to include social workers, historians and social scientists. Faye Hunt-loane's social work thesis, studying Samoan community leaders for their experiences of and attitudes towards physical punishment in the Samoan community, was mentioned in the Introduction.

Historians too, have begun to focus their attention on family relationships in recent years. Discipline has been included in the analysis, although generally as one part of a larger look at family life, including the use of wet nurses, affection between parents and children and different fashions in child-rearing methods. Michael Donnelly and Murray Straus divided family historians into two broad categories, the evolutionist and the contextualist approaches. Evolutionist historians looked at parental attitudes towards children over time, and used these to estimate how children were likely to be treated. An evolutionist view would trace the growth of the idea of childhood since the middle ages, through the Calvinist ideas of original sin and severe discipline of the 17th century, and Lockian ideas of children as blank slates in need of education in the 18th century. From the 1830s, an evolutionist historian would see a further change, with children believed to need nurturing, and with mothers playing the dominant role in child-rearing. From the late 19th century, it is believed, the growth of psychology and social work has changed the position of children again, and discipline has correspondingly softened along with it. The contextualist historian, on the other hand, sees a cyclical pattern in the interest and appropriateness of physical punishment, rather than a linear progression. Some

³² Marie Russell, 'Discipline of Children: Alternatives to Smacking', MA (Applied) Thesis in Social Science Research, Victoria University of Wellington, 1996.

generations are more interested in the topic than others, influencing the styles and severity of discipline that is considered acceptable.³³ Christina Hardyment's 1983 *Dream Babies: Child care from Locke to Spock* took a contextualist approach to Western child-rearing, and is an excellent insight into the changing fashions in child-rearing advice from the 18th century through to the 1980s. However, as Donnelly, Straus and Mechling have warned, child-rearing advice is not necessarily evidence of child-rearing practices at the time. The writers could have been trying to support current parenting practice, or attempting to change it. Parents tend to gain most of their child rearing education from their own childhood, and would find it difficult to change in response to any external advice.³⁴

J.H. Plumb, Phillipe Ariès and Edward Shorter, on the other hand, provided examples of the classic evolutionist perspective. Ariès argued that in medieval times there was no concept of childhood, and children were simply treated as small adults. He traced the development of the idea of childhood, and alongside it, the need for education and severe punishment for the young, from the 14th to the 17th centuries.³⁵ Plumb's description of a 17th century English family was one where

Harsh discipline was the child's lot, and they were often terrorised deliberately and, not infrequently, sexually abused.³⁶

Like Shorter, his picture of the traditional Western family was an unhappy one. They saw the traditional family as a reasonably unaffectionate unit, with babies sent to wet nurses, enormously high mortality rates, violence against women very common and discipline of children swift and harsh. From this unhappy beginning, Shorter believed that the growth of marriages of affection over the 19th century was the catalyst for more loving relationships between parents and children. In time, along with a drop in the child mortality rates, this had led to a softening of discipline

³³ Michael Donnelly and Murray Straus, (eds), *Corporal Punishment of Children in Theoretical Perspective*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 43-45, 49.

³⁴ Mechling, pp. 46-48 and Donnelly and Straus, p. 47.

³⁵ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A social history of family life*, translated from the French by Robert Baldick, New York: Vintage Books, 1962, pp. 33 and 261.

³⁶ J.H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth Century England', *Past and Present*, 67, (1975), p. 66.

methods and to children being considered the centre of family life.³⁷ The history of the New Zealand family, of course, cannot be traced back so far, but the evolutionist idea is also very strong in our own historiography. Dugald MacDonald's seminal 1978 article 'Children and Young Persons in New Zealand Society' categorised New Zealand childhood in the 19th century as the era of the "chattel child". Chattel children were essentially drudges, expected to work hard and given little in the way of affection or protection. The chattel child eventually gave way to the idea of the child as social capital in the early 20th century, with children's health and education seen as of paramount importance for the future of the country. In the mid 20th century, the child's psychological well-being was considered of highest importance, and then from the 1970s on, MacDonald believed, the child was seen as a citizen in its own right, with all the rights and privileges that entailed, rather than an extension of its parents.³⁸ This was widely accepted as the official history of the New Zealand child for many years, and is still supported by some historians.³⁹

MacDonald's evolutionist interpretation has been challenged in recent years, particularly by James Belich in *Paradise Reforged*. Belich argued that rather than being unloved slaves, childhood in the 19th century was a time of almost untrammelled freedom, and should rather be referred to as the time of the "Wild Child". With large families and a country to colonise, parents had little time to spend with their children. While children were expected to behave well while in the company of adults, and were punished severely if they did not, most of their time was spent away from adult supervision and control. He argued that many of the child-focused reforms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially that of compulsory schooling, were intended to tame New Zealand's wild children, rather than out of concern for their welfare.⁴⁰ Belich's argument was supported by Jeanine Graham, in her Colonial Childhood's Oral History Project. The participants

³⁷ Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, New York: Basic Books, 1975.

³⁸ Dugald J. McDonald, 'Children and Young Persons in New Zealand Society', in *Families in New Zealand Society*, Peggy G. Koopman-Boyden, (ed.), Wellington: Methuen, 1978, pp. 45-51

³⁹ See, for example, Claire Breen, 'From Paternalism to (Partial) Autonomy: The evolution of children's rights in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 40:1, (2006), p. 91.

⁴⁰ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A history of New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 359.

in her study remembered having to do chores to help out, but once these were over they were free to play, away from adult supervision. She found also that the participants remembered and resented the discipline they received at school far more than that meted out by their parents.⁴¹

Children's history, like all forms of social history, is a relatively new field of study. However, our society's interest in the impacts and effectiveness of physical punishment means that much multi-disciplinary attention has been paid to this topic in recent years. The vast majority of psychological research is against the use of physical punishment in any form, as it has been from the 1930s, when psychologists first began to take an interest in child rearing. Their view is supported by traditional historical research which mostly follows the evolutionist format, and argues that harsh physical punishment was a thing of the past, and is no longer part of our society.

⁴¹ Jeanine Graham, *'My Brother and I: Glimpses of Childhood in our Colonial Past, Hocken Lecture, 1991'*, Dunedin: Hocken Library, 1992, pp. 6-9.

Chapter 2. "Gentleness if Possible, Strictness if Necessary": Child-rearing advice in the 1890s-1920s.

Children, for their own sake, must be made by one means or another to do the right thing until it becomes an instinct, and any other view means that false kindness which is, after all, the worst cruelty.⁴²

Parents' "false kindness" to their children was a deep concern of child-rearing advisors in the years 1890-1930. While newspapers reported the havoc caused by delinquent youth⁴³, parenting experts taught people how to keep their children out of trouble by passing on the good British qualities to this new generation, in this new country. Over-stimulating children's intellects; spoiling them by paying them too much attention and a fear of applying proper discipline when necessary were seen as the greatest parenting sins of this early period. The growth of organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children and the introduction of the 1890 Child Protection Act are evidence of a general concern about the problem of cruelty to children in New Zealand at the time. Abuse, however, was believed to happen to poor or alcoholic families only.⁴⁴ For the child-rearing advisors of the time, there was a world of difference between the drunk or poor parent cruelly ill-treating their child out of ignorance and the middle class parent teaching their child the "strict and unquestioned discipline" that was necessary for the strengthening of the British race in a far country.⁴⁵ Although it has been given many different titles throughout the ages, the basic purpose of discipline has always been about teaching children the rules of their society, so they are able to live a productive life. For middle class parents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their duty was clearly spelled out to them. They must, by any means necessary, ensure their children were unspoiled, dutiful and obedient.

⁴² Daily Telegraph, 'Our Children: Are we doing our best for them?', reprinted in *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, London: Cassell and Company, 1910, p.8. DU:HO Anna Stout Collection, MS-0245

⁴³ See, for example, 'Current Comment', *New Zealand Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, 21 April 1900, p. 731 and 'Juvenile Depravity', *Tuapeka Times*, 21 November 1894, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Wellington Branch Annual Report, 1913-14, p. 6. WTU MSX-3292

⁴⁵ Earl of Meath, 'Have We the Grit of our Forefathers?', *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, London: Cassell and Company, 1910, p. 15. DU:HO, Anna Stout Collection, MS-0245 and 'Duty and Discipline', *Evening Post*, July 26, 1913, p. 10.

During the 1890s, concern over 'larrikinism' was such that Prime Minister Dick Seddon drew up the Juvenile Depravity Bill in 1896, in an attempt to suppress the activities of some young people. Dalziel described it as "a decade in which the country was seized by one of its recurring moral panics over the behaviour of young people and their parents."⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this was a problem that could not be confined to the poorer sections of society. As many parents had discovered, any teenager could be seduced into joining the local group of larrikins. In response, editors of the ladies' pages of major newspapers provided advice on the correct management of children, which they clearly felt was desperately needed. Sadly for the vilified parents of young delinquents, they had little advice for dealing with a child who was already causing trouble. Instead, they focused on training young children so as to prevent them rebelling in later years. The only possible solution to juvenile delinquency was severe discipline at home. If a whipping was ineffective, the delinquents were to be sent away to a reformatory. Whether the child's behaviour improved while at the reformatory was a matter of indifference, they were simply out of the way and could not be a bad influence on younger brothers and sisters.⁴⁷

If larrikin teenagers were essentially written off by child-rearing experts, they had much more hope in the ability of parents to bring their younger children up as moral citizens. Some of their advice would even now be seen as positive and helpful, such as the idea of the 'children's hour' promoted by the *New Zealand Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal* in 1900. This article asked mothers to spend an hour a day with their children, devoted solely to playing games, reading stories and listening to them. This was vitally important in building a friendship with the children and remaining a confidante throughout their growing up years, which would in turn help keep the children away from bad influences.⁴⁸ Mothers were also told that children were often punished for fighting because they were bored. They could avoid this problem by keeping them happy and busy, treating them with

⁴⁶ Raewyn Dalziel, *Focus on the Family: The Auckland Home and Family Society 1893-1993*, Auckland: David Ling, 1993, p. 11.

⁴⁷ see, for example, 'Juvenile Depravity', *Wanganui Herald*, June 21, 1896, p. 3 and 'Notes and Notions', *NZWG & LJ*, July 1, 1899, p. 14.

⁴⁸ 'The Children's Hour', *NZ Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, April 28, 1900, p. 811.

courtesy and respect and watching each child closely so that they would know the most appropriate and effective punishment to use on each child.⁴⁹ This acknowledgement of children's individuality was reasonably rare for the time, as was the advice to mothers on praising their children, to help them grow up happy and most importantly, well behaved.

Many a child has been warped and soured for life by the want of the sunshine of praise and approval. 'Teach what ought to be done' said an eloquent preacher, 'and not what ought not to be done; let the good crowd out the evil'. Kindness will melt, and reproof harden – this is an immutable law, and yet it is one of the hardest lessons that a conscientious parent or teacher can learn.⁵⁰

The parenting advice pages of the *Graphic* are interesting in that they discuss a much wider range of discipline methods than other newspapers of the time. Although an occasional whipping was still perfectly acceptable,⁵¹ the use of a 'cry closet', a rather crude form of time out, was recommended for bad-tempered or sulky children and was considered a much more effective option.⁵²

Christina Hardyment has argued that child-rearing advisors in the early 1900s generally had a reasonably liberal view of discipline and punishment.

Punishment? The experts sighed. In an ideal world there would be no need for punishment. It should certainly not be corporal – whippings were totally out of fashion.⁵³

Although the advice given in the *Graphic* seems to support this argument, this was not the case with most New Zealand child-rearing advice of the time. Advice columns in other newspapers fit much more neatly with the modern stereotype of strict Victorian discipline. Emmeline, editor of the Ladies' Page of the *Otago Witness* in 1897, told parents they weren't disciplining their children enough and instead were relying far too heavily on 'unworkable' tactics such as discussions

⁴⁹ 'Badness in Children', *NZWG and LJ*, April 28, 1900, p. 810

⁵⁰ 'Waifs and Strays', *NZWG and LJ*, July 25, 1891, p. 201.

⁵¹ 'Badness in Children', *NZWG and LJ*, April 28, 1900, p. 810.

⁵² 'The Children's Page', *NZWG and LJ*, June 14, 1890, p. 19

⁵³ Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Child care from Locke to Spock*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1983, p. 151.

and appeals to their reason. Emmeline defined good discipline as the use of physical punishment, but only within certain boundaries. Parents were never to hit a child when angry, or to threaten punishment unless the parent actually intended to go through with it. She also warned parents that punishment must be hard enough to hurt, but no more than that. She specifically warned against boxing the ears of children, and prohibited ever hitting them on the face, or thumping them on the back, as these were dangerous, unnecessary practices. As she did not mention the use of implements to hit children with, it is reasonable to assume in the context of the time, that she felt this was entirely acceptable, and all part of making the punishment painful enough to be effective.⁵⁴

Emmeline was not alone in her views. Most, if not all, these early child-rearing advisers believed that physical punishment was an appropriate, convenient and above all, effective method of disciplining children. There were always limits, of course. Isabel Marris wrote of a young girl named Mary, who knew that if she disobeyed her mother, she would receive “a slapping, not on the head, but in the proper place”. She also strictly warned parents against punishing their children when angry, as this could lead to the use of more severe discipline than was necessary. Despite this however, Marris clearly saw no real difference between a smack and “a whipping”, if the child had been disobedient.⁵⁵ Both were entirely acceptable punishment options, and she used the terms interchangeably.

The effectiveness of physical punishment was never doubted. Other options were rarely considered, making the *Graphic's* recommendation of a cry closet extremely unusual. Isolating children from others was generally considered under the category of “mental punishments” and considered far crueller than a strapping.⁵⁶ Even the *Graphic*, which supported the use of isolation, considered it a step further than the occasional use of severe physical punishment.

⁵⁴ ‘Punishment’, *Otago Witness*, April 15, 1897, p. 43.

⁵⁵ Isabel Marris, ‘Wanted: A Fair Start in Life’, *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, London: Cassell and Company, 1910, pp. 2, 6 and 9. DU:HO Anna Stout Collection, MS-0245

⁵⁶ ‘Punishment’, *Otago Witness*, April 15, 1897, p. 43

Sometimes I was sent to bed without any supper, sometimes sent out into the open air, sometimes shaken, very often scolded, or worse, ignored entirely, and once in a while whipped.⁵⁷

A whipping was considered the standard response to bad behaviour and could never fail.⁵⁸ It was for this reason that Alice, another expert quoted in the *Otago Witness*, advised parents they should use physical punishment each time their children were cruel to animals or other people. The child

Should be made to feel in his own body some of the agony he inflicts, or he will grow up callous and cruel.⁵⁹

This advice showed her deeply held belief that children learned kindness through understanding what pain is like, by having it inflicted on them, and this in turn helped them grow into compassionate, caring adults. Alice's advice also reflected the contemporary belief that if a child's disposition was ruined by inadequate discipline, s/he had little chance of reclaiming themselves as an adult, and a life of delinquency and moral failure was almost inevitable.

Fortunately, however, the formula for avoiding this parenting disaster was reasonably simple. Young children may have needed a good hiding from time to time to keep them in line, but mostly childhood was seen as a time of innocence, that needed to be protected. Over-stimulating a child's intellect by forcing them into learning and accomplishments at too young an age and spoiling them through too much attention were the greatest parenting sins, according to these early advisers. As well as making children unmanageable and demanding, too much attention and stimulation would even make them ill.⁶⁰ The *Graphic* again advised parents that their children should be

Simply vegetating, living as much as possible in the open air; eating, sleeping and playing all round the clock and getting as near to the life of a baby savage as a respectable small boy or girl can be allowed to get.⁶¹

⁵⁷ 'Badness in Children', *NZWG and LJ*, April 28, 1900, p. 810.

⁵⁸ 'Our Children: Are we doing our best for them?', *Duty and Discipline*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ 'The Ladies', *Otago Witness*, March 6, 1890, p. 41.

⁶⁰ 'Children's Appetites', *NZWG and LJ*, May 5, 1900.

⁶¹ 'On the Care of our Parents', *NZWG and LJ*, May 25, 1900, p. 858

In the light of Belich's 'wild child' theory, which, as will be seen later, is supported by the evidence in this study, it is interesting that this advice was considered necessary. Perhaps among the many New Zealand children who were allowed to almost run wild, there were a substantial number who did not have this privilege, and were kept inside to learn lessons and behave respectfully.

It was in this context that Sir Frederick Truby King, founder of the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, was formulating his ideas. Beginning in 1907, the Plunket Society soon became New Zealand's premier and most prolific source of child-rearing advice. In its very early years, Sir Truby was far too focused on reducing the infant mortality rate to have much to say about discipline. Good management was part of his "12 Essentials" for child-rearing, but received much less attention than the need for breast feeding, fresh air and regular bowel motions.⁶² He clearly had very strong ideas on the subject, however. In his occasional references to discipline in the early years of Plunket, he warned mothers that their babies would cry just to get attention, and a wise parent would not give in to their demands.

His cry will immediately stop when he is taken up, held or rocked... in other words, he is rapidly becoming a 'spoiled baby'. One cannot begin 'too young' to train a baby. We often hear the remark by some dear old grandma or loving mother: 'Oh! He will grow out of it'.... If you do wait a few months, you are lost! Begin when a baby is *born* to make him understand that you mean what you say; you are the one to be obeyed, it is for your child's good.⁶³

As soon as the death rate began to drop, Sir Truby was able to focus more of his attention on instructing parents on the correct manner of child-rearing. He was undoubtedly New Zealand's strongest advocate of the scientific child-rearing model, and his influence spread around the Western world. He had achieved outstanding success in reducing the infant mortality rate with scientific ideas, and felt that the same principles could achieve equal results when applied to discipline problems. His mantra was "the children are no trouble so long as they are well,"⁶⁴

⁶² Hygeia, 'Our Babies' Articles. University of Otago Medical Library: Historical Collection. DU:HO MS-1645/001. Printed in *Otago Witness*, March 13, 1912.

⁶³ 'Our Babies', April 25, 1908.

⁶⁴ 'Our Babies', March 8, 1912

and he used his 'Our Babies' column in the *Otago Witness* to preach his gospel time and time again. According to Sir Truby, everything from nervousness to "sexual perversions" to bad temper in children could be prevented by a proper diet, good digestion, cool sponging and generally good bodily health. Parents already loved their children, but needed to be warned against over-indulging that love. Any undesirable characteristics were therefore evidence of "the child who has not been properly built and trained as a 'healthy animal.'"⁶⁵ Discipline problems in particular could be entirely avoided if parents simply trained their children in the correct manner from birth, kept them healthy and didn't pay them too much attention.

"Nervous" children, rather than delinquents, were the great parenting problem of the years 1910-1930. According to Sir Truby, no child was born nervous, but could be made so very quickly by ignorant, over-protective parents. Any baby who was played with or cuddled too often, and picked up every time it cried was being spoiled, and on its way to becoming a nervous, troublesome child.

[The parents] may thus ruin the child in the first month of life, making him a delicate, fretful, irritable, nervous, dyspeptic little tyrant, who will yell and scream, day or night, if not soothed or cuddled without delay.⁶⁶

These "ruined" babies soon grew up into domineering, irritable children who demanded their parents' attention constantly and would never do as they were told. They would refuse to eat properly, throw tantrums and be "filled with fears, petty jealousies and hatreds".⁶⁷ They would even suffer physically from the false kindness of over-abundant maternal love.

His shoulders droop, his chest is sunken and his stance with poking chin and protruding abdomen is characteristic.⁶⁸

Even worse, these children would eventually become adults. Sir Truby's picture of a nervous child's future was a bleak one to say the least. Without ever having been taught obedience to parents in matters of toilet training and sleeping, they

⁶⁵ 'Our Babies' February 28, 1912 and July 10, 1928.

⁶⁶ 'Our Babies', March 13, 1912

⁶⁷ 'Our Babies', May 15, 1928

⁶⁸ 'Our Babies', June 25, 1929.

had no chance of learning to conform to society's rules either. A lifetime of moral failings and social disgrace would be the inevitable result.

If parents and nurses would only realise how much easier it is for the child to bend to the social and moral laws in later life when trained from infancy, how much sorrow might be saved.⁶⁹

Like so many of his colleagues, Sir Truby implicitly believed that a failed upbringing would mean a child was doomed to a miserable life and there was nothing that could be done about it. Their belief in the power of the first few years of training was all-encompassing and any child who missed out on that would struggle throughout life. Delinquency could only be avoided, not fixed. To prevent this disaster happening, parents were to pay attention to the "hygiene of the mind" with calm attitudes, right training, not too much handling or stimulation and strict routines from birth.⁷⁰ Then, as the children grew, they were to be allowed "the maximum amount of freedom possible". Anyone who watched over their children too closely, whether out of love or out of strictness, was headed for trouble. They were certain to have nervous, dull, sickly children that no-one would like, least of all the parents. Instead, they were told to send the children outside as often as they could, to restrain themselves from watching their activities too closely and only intervene when absolutely necessary.⁷¹

Such freedom could only be possible for children who would obey their parents immediately and completely. Sir Truby absolutely believed that if children were taught habits of obedience at a young age, which were then reinforced as they grew older, they would continue to obey even when not under any form of adult supervision. Parents were to be loving, patient and sympathetic to their children, but at the same time they must not be too soft on them. Everything was preparing the child for the major moral choices they would need to make as an adult,⁷² so with this in mind, parents were to use both strictness and gentleness in training their children. Discipline was to be infrequent but unequivocal. Without ever

⁶⁹ 'Our Babies', May 22, 1928

⁷⁰ 'Our Babies' June 18, 1929

⁷¹ 'Our Babies', November 6, 1928 and April 30, 1929.

⁷² 'Our Babies' May 22, 1928

actually using the words “whipping” or “beating” or any other related term, it was clear Sir Truby believed physical punishment was an integral part of teaching children obedience. He euphemistically referred to it on several occasions, describing it as making a stand with “irresistible force”, or telling parents that when discipline was necessary, they were to be forceful, quick and to leave the child in no doubt as to their meaning.⁷³ Other forms of discipline were seen as poor cousins at best. Parents could praise their children, but only infrequently, and never directly to them, just within their hearing.⁷⁴ Yelling and “bribing” children into good behaviour were seen as equally useless,⁷⁵ and only used by those ineffective parents who had already created nervous children.

[Nervousness] does not occur in the children of parents who are self-confident and masterful, who habitually expect and receive implicit obedience.... [It only occurs in children] where there are frequent and repeated attempts at control, and a constant failure to achieve it.⁷⁶

Instead, a combination of strictness and freedom would allow children to develop their own personality, while learning independence and self control.⁷⁷

With such a strong emphasis on the dangers of paying too much attention to one's children, it is likely that Sir Truby was reacting against a kind of ‘cult of motherhood’ that was around in the early 20th century. Evidence of this cult can be seen in organisations like New Zealand League of Mothers, which was founded in the 1920s and such books as Dr Mary Melendy's *The Ideal Woman*, published in New Zealand in 1913. Photos such as this one below abound in her book, suggesting that, like the title of her book, Melendy's view of motherhood was extremely idealised.

⁷³ see, for example, ‘Our Babies’, March 4, 1924 and July 2, 1929.

⁷⁴ ‘Our Babies’, February 19, 1924 and July 2, 1929.

⁷⁵ ‘Our Babies’ May 22, 1928.

⁷⁶ ‘Our Babies’, February 26, 1924.

⁷⁷ ‘Our Babies’, February 26, 1924 and May 22, 1928.



THE INFLUENCE OF HOME

Home is the place where all Polite Manners are first acquired. Children who are courteous, agreeable, civil, kind and unselfish at home will find that it becomes a second nature to be the same everywhere.

Alexander Turnbull Library 78

This photo gave the impression that early 20th century motherhood was a time of complete love and devotion to one's children, where playing with them was all important and discipline completely unnecessary as children immediately obeyed their mother out of love and without question. Her advice, however, showed a more realistic understanding of the struggles and mistakes of an ordinary mother.

⁷⁸ 'The Influence of Home', published in Melendy, Mary, *The Ideal Woman*, Auckland: Wm Gribble and Co, 1913, facing page 257. WTU Pacific Collection, P 613.0424 MEL 1913.

Do not tell your child how wicked he is; what a naughty boy he is; that God will never love him, and all the rest of such twaddle. Such conversation... will cause him to feel that it is no use to try to be good – that he is hopelessly wicked. Instead... give him confidence in himself; rather find out his good points and dwell upon them; praise him where and whenever you can; and make him feel that, by perseverance and by God's blessing, he will make a good man.⁷⁹

She also warned strongly against the practice of putting children in dark cellars, or telling them that ghosts or other scary creatures would take them away if they didn't behave, as this simply made children timid and afraid.⁸⁰ Instead, Melendy's answer to discipline problems was possibly a little depressing for those who had already given birth to their children. A child's character was irreversibly determined before it was even born, by the thoughts and actions of the mother while pregnant.

The tendencies for good or evil inwoven into the ... embryo evidently have greater power in shaping the characters and acts of individuals than all the training and discipline of childhood and youth.⁸¹

Therefore, a child who was a thief was likely to be the product of a mother who spent much of her pregnancy jealous of others' possessions and there was not much that could be done to improve the child's behaviour.⁸² This again reflects the common view of the time that there was nothing that could be done for delinquent children and sending them away was the best option for all.

However, for children who were basically good, presumably as a result of a mother who was happy and contented during her pregnancy, Melendy's advice stands in stark contrast to Sir Truby's. Parents were to spend more time with their children, distracting them when they were grumpy, playing with them, talking to them and encouraging their curiosity.⁸³ She felt no apprehension that such treatment would spoil the children; instead she felt it was necessary, both to their happiness and to ensuring their good behaviour. Such very different advice from Sir Truby's, published around the same time as he began to focus more on discipline, suggests that perhaps he felt he had to refute these ideas strongly.

⁷⁹ Melendy, p.217.

⁸⁰ Melendy, p. 215.

⁸¹ Melendy p. 121.

⁸² Melendy, p. 118.

⁸³ Melendy p. 216

Although Melendy and Sir Truby may have disagreed on many areas, on one subject they were united. Teaching children obedience to their parents was considered of ultimate importance to both, even if they espoused different methods of achieving it. For Sir Truby, spending less time with children, teaching obedience from infancy and imposing swift discipline when boundaries were crossed was all important. Melendy, on the other hand, advised a much softer approach.

Do not combat bad temper with bad temper – noise with noise. Be firm, be kind, be gentle, be loving, speak quietly, smile tenderly and embrace him fondly, but insist upon implicit obedience, and you will have, with God's blessing, a happy child.⁸⁴

Melendy never actually explained how a parent was to “insist upon implicit obedience”. It can be assumed, therefore, that she was advocating the use of physical punishment as a back up to the loving, caring approach to parenting. If she was against the use of physical punishment, as advocated by so many of her contemporaries, she would have felt the need to explain how this could be done, without resorting to the strap. Her silence, in this case, can be taken as consent.

Melendy may have focused more on the positive side of motherhood, but like other child rearing advisors of her time, she supported the “gentleness if possible, strictness if necessary” approach to parenting.⁸⁵ Despite Hardyment's argument that early 20th century advisors preferred not to use physical punishment, this was not the case in New Zealand. Even those who took a softer approach, such as the editor of the Ladies' Page in the *Graphic* and Dr Melendy, advocated the use of physical punishment when necessary. For all these early advisors, the importance of teaching children to obey their parents outweighed every other consideration. The idea of discipline has always been to teach children what is necessary for them to get along in their society and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, obedience to authority figures was all important. It was believed that firm discipline would teach children the important 'British' qualities, including courage, reliability and patriotism and allow them to grow into useful citizens of the empire. When

⁸⁴ Melendy, pp. 216-17.

⁸⁵ 'Our Children', in *Duty and Discipline*, p. 3

combined with obedience to authority, these qualities would mean the child was able to live a productive, healthy and happy life. Without these early lessons, however, a child was doomed to a lifetime of delinquency, moral failings and misery. Teaching children to obey their parents at a young age was therefore considered of prime importance. Because of this, the use of physical punishment was perfectly acceptable and even advocated by these early advisors. Other methods were rarely mentioned, and then only as other options to try before resorting to the ultimate weapon. Feeling pain for misbehaviour was considered the fastest and most effective method of teaching obedience to children of all ages. The only proviso was that it was not to be used too often. Child-rearing advisors, writing for a middle class audience, were not seriously troubled by concerns about cruelty to children. They either ignored the question altogether, assuming that it would be impossible for loving parents to be overly severe with their children, or if they did deal with the problem, simply set out guidelines for acceptable forms of punishment and did not bother with the subject any further. While, as will be seen in the following chapter, poor parents could be found guilty of cruelty if they punished their children too frequently, middle class parents were more likely to be chastised for paying too much attention to their children, if they were having to punish too frequently. The problem could easily be fixed by sending the children outside more often and not watching over them too closely. The major concerns may have shifted during this time from delinquent to nervous children, but the effectiveness of physical punishment in the prevention of both was never questioned. Anything else was a "false kindness" and most greatly deplored.

Chapter 3. "All Fathers Have to Beat their Boys at Times": Discipline and punishment in everyday life, 1890s-1920s.

Like many children growing up in the late 1920s ... Yvonne said their childhood was free of restrictions. They had 94 acres of land... to play in. Here they built forts, endless huts and fought wars.... The children spent many summer hours in the Te Henui Stream.... Unlike today's worrisome times, their games and swimming escapades were unsupervised. 'Our father was so strict, we wouldn't have dared drown'.⁸⁶

There is no doubt that Sir Truby King would have approved of Yvonne Brown's description of her childhood. However, to grow up with an extremely strict father and yet somehow also free of restrictions seems strangely contradictory to a modern reader. Childhood in late 19th and early 20th century New Zealand has long been portrayed as a time of hard work; strict rules governing acceptable behaviour and severe punishment for any disobedience. "Children should be seen and not heard" and "spare the rod, spoil the child" are the main messages we have received from this time in history. It seems impossible that such freedom could also be mixed with such strictness. Certainly, as has already been seen, parenting advisors of the time felt that physical punishment was acceptable in many circumstances. However, this does not necessarily mean that parents took their advice, or that this was the experience of a typical New Zealand child at the time. It is always difficult, perhaps even impossible, to discover exactly what a "typical" experience was. There were no surveys taken on discipline at the time, and every individual experience is a little different. At the same time, however, every society is held together by its common understandings. Not everyone will agree with these values, but the majority of people will. These values are then revealed in the form of assumptions made about common knowledge or common sense. This chapter therefore will simply examine various accounts of childhood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to look for assumptions held by the writers, in an attempt to suggest what the commonly held attitude towards disciplining children could have been.

⁸⁶ New Plymouth Scribblers, 'Yvonne Brown', in *Taranaki Between the Wars: 1918-1939*, New Plymouth: Telford Media and Design, 2008, p. 158.

The stereotypical picture of a late 19th century child as a severely disciplined drudge was summarised by Dugald McDonald, as the “chattel child”. He argued that children in the 19th century were frequently abandoned, had “no separate identity beyond that conferred by their parents”, and that “parental rights remained sacrosanct”. Although he focused on the argument that children, particularly in rural areas, were frequently overworked, the implication is also that discipline could be as harsh as the parents felt was necessary, with no fear of outside intervention.⁸⁷ The theory that the 19th century “chattel child” eventually gave way to the 20th century “cherished child” model remained popular for many years.⁸⁸ However, it was not the only view of early childhood in New Zealand. R.E. Stroobant, writing in 1958, suggested that although Victorian children were expected to behave well when in the company of adults, and were severely punished if they did not, they generally received far less direct adult supervision than children of the 1950s, and as a result had much more freedom.⁸⁹ James Belich also disagreed with the idea that 19th century children were cruelly overworked drudges.

The Chattel Child certainly existed in 19th century New Zealand, a society not given to sparing the rod and with a considerable demand for child labour. But I doubt that it was dominant.⁹⁰

Instead, Belich argued that New Zealand parents were caught in a dilemma. They deeply loved their children, but were worried that they could grow up without the traditional British moral values. As a result, they punished their children severely for a small range of misdemeanours, such as bad manners or disobedience. Otherwise, however, children were sent outside to play as often as possible, and had very little adult supervision while doing so. Belich suggested therefore, that the typical New Zealand child’s experience would be far better described by a “Wild Child” model than a “Chattel Child”.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Dugald J. McDonald, 'Children and Young Persons in New Zealand Society', in *Families in New Zealand Society*, Peggy G. Koopman-Boyden, (ed.), Wellington: Methuen, 1978, pp. 45-47.

⁸⁸ Belich, pp. 357-58

⁸⁹ R.E. Stroobant, 'Current Methods of Child Control', in *Conformity and Individuality: The 1958 Lectures*, Wellington: Association for the Study of Childhood, 1958, p. 84.

⁹⁰ Belich, p. 358.

⁹¹ Belich, p. 359.

This theory was certainly supported by the deep concerns held over the problem of juvenile delinquency in New Zealand in the 1880s and 1890s. For girls, the worst form of delinquency was breaking the moral code, becoming a prostitute or simply being promiscuous.⁹² Depravity in boys, however, focused much more on stealing, violence and other crimes. While parenting advisors focused on disciplining young children to avoid problems in the future, community leaders called for compulsory religious education, curfews and most desperately of all, more “home training and vigilant parental supervision”.⁹³ This suggested that while playing games unsupervised may have been considered harmless for younger children, as they became teenagers it was believed to cause serious problems.

While some in the community were calling for more discipline to end the problem of juvenile delinquency, others in the late 19th century were equally concerned about child abuse. There had been plenty of debate over whether child abuse was a problem in New Zealand, but the 1885 Fleming case and several others in the 1890s soon meant it could no longer be ignored.⁹⁴ Dealing with abuse cases was not straightforward, however. As McLean has argued, while the 1890 Child Protection Act was intended to protect children from suffering cruel and abusive treatment, it clearly distinguished between abuse and physical punishment.

The practice of inflicting pain on children as punishment was widely accepted in Pakeha society as an essential child-raising tool for parents and other caregivers.⁹⁵

It was therefore considered to be the courts' job to determine exactly where the line between discipline and abuse actually lay, which was an extremely difficult task. Unfortunately, New Zealand was not the only country facing this issue at the time.

In cases where abuse and neglect coincided, the courts tended to focus on the neglect.... Historian Harry Hendrick has noted that in England during the 1890s prosecutions taken by the National Society for the

⁹² 'What Shall we Do with our Girls?', *Evening Post*, April 11, 1885, p. 2.

⁹³ 'Juvenile Depravity and the Municipal Conference', *Evening Post*, June 24, 1896, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Dalziel, pp. 9-10.

⁹⁵ Sally McLean, 'Child Cruelty or Reasonable Punishment? A case study of the operation of the law and the courts, 1993-1903', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 40:1, (2006), p. 7.

Prevention of Cruelty to Children focused increasingly on neglect cases, partly because cruelty was more difficult to define and reach a consensus on.⁹⁶

Although this study is not about child abuse, it is useful to look at the cases which came up before the courts, as they point to the forms of discipline which were considered unacceptable at the time. Even the parents who were eventually acquitted of cruelty had clearly trespassed against an unwritten societal law to have been taken to court in the first place. In 1890, Jane Lee was charged with “grossly ill-treating and beating” her two children. “The doctor described the wounds as the result of a very severe beating with a stick”, leaving a large scalp wound on the boy’s head, among other injuries.⁹⁷ In 1892, the *Otago Witness* reported on the case of Elizabeth Goodgame, where she admitted making her daughter “sleep on the boards, and having thrashed her with a piece of wood, but denied having adopted unnecessary measures”.⁹⁸ Several years later, the *Evening Post* reported on a case where a child was repeatedly stripped and beaten or whipped with an ox hide whip, then locked in his bedroom and tied to a bedpost.⁹⁹ In 1905, Frederick and Jessie Bignall were found guilty of mistreating Frederick’s three children. One of the children reported that they were “thrashed almost every day, often twice a day, and sometimes oftener. She thrashes me on the bare legs with a whip.”¹⁰⁰ Reporting of abuse cases diminished greatly over the following years, as economic conditions improved, World War I broke out and attention shifted to other concerns,¹⁰¹ but the occasional case still surfaced. In 1926, 18 year old Gladys Spencer asked the Wellington Society for the Protection of Women and Children (SPWC) for help after leaving home because her “mother beat and was unkind to her”. On being visited by the secretary, the mother openly admitted that “she did thrash the girl and would certainly do so again when she came home”. As a result, the SPWC helped Gladys to find another home and into a factory job to support herself.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ McLean, p. 15.

⁹⁷ ‘Charge of Ill-treating Children’, *Otago Witness*, March 6, 1890, p. 13.

⁹⁸ ‘Shocking Case of Cruelty’, *Otago Witness*, August 18, 1892, p. 25.

⁹⁹ ‘Alleged Cruelty to a Child’, *Evening Post*, July 14, 1897, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Shocking Ill-treatment of Children’, *Evening Post*, November 17, 1905, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ Dalziel, p. 19

¹⁰² New Zealand Society for the Protection of Women and Children Wellington Branch files, SPWC Minutes, February 12, 1926, qMS 1568 1926-31.

There are several key points to note from these sad cases. Firstly, Elizabeth Goodgame claimed that she had not taken “unnecessary [discipline] measures”, even though she had beaten her daughter with a piece of wood. She was convicted of cruelty, but the point remains that she felt justified in her actions. This strongly suggests that there was a high level of approval among New Zealand society at the time for the use of implements to inflict physical punishment on children. Sadly for her daughter, Mrs Goodgame either misinterpreted the messages she was receiving and used a thicker piece of wood rather than the accepted cane or rod, or otherwise she deliberately used the calls for stricter discipline to justify her actions, in the hope it would see her acquitted.

Another key point these cases reveal is that almost invariably, the children were repeatedly and frequently struck. As will be seen later, caning or even flogging children for occasional misdemeanours was acceptable and even approved of, but if the punishment happened on a regular basis, it was seen to cross the line between good discipline and cruelty. It was only if serious injuries resulted that a one-off discipline episode could be considered cruelty, such as in the case of Jane Lee.

While such horrendous abuse cases were only considered likely to happen amongst the poor, there must have been some general concern about the difference between good discipline and cruelty. Emmeline from the *Otago Witness* assured parents that punishment simply needed to be “sufficiently severe to make an impression”, but not so severe as to be cruelty. Provided it was followed up with forgiveness and administered as soon as possible after the event, she assured parents they would be bringing their children up well.¹⁰³ The *Graphic* was responding to similar concerns when telling parents that abuse was “cruelty without the advantage of mercy”.¹⁰⁴ Parents who loved their children could therefore punish them severely, without ever stepping over into the realm of cruelty, because they were doing it for the child’s ultimate good.

¹⁰³ ‘Punishment’, *Otago Witness*, April 15, 1897, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Strength of Mind’, *NZWG & LJ*, August 24, 1895, p. 229.

The middle class, therefore, was thought to be largely exempt from these forms of cruelty, and simply had to bring their children up to obey authority and avoid becoming larrikins. Physical punishment was considered to have an enormous role to play in meeting these obligations, and as such it was casually accepted as part of life. The *New Zealand Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal*, for example, frequently mentioned physical punishment on its jokes page.

Caller (at farmhouse): Where's your father, my boy?

Boy: He's thrashing.

Caller: The barn?

Boy: No, Tommy.¹⁰⁵

Son: I simply can't get this lesson.

Father: Don't give up, Thomas. Remember that Lord Robert's great successes were largely due to the fact that he never knew when he'd been licked.

Son: Then he must have worn a board in the seat of his trousers, same as Billy Brown does.¹⁰⁶

Beatings, spankings and thrashings were such a normal part of life that they were one of the Funny Leaf's favourite topics; right alongside such standard joke fodder as courtship, marriage and embarrassing oneself in front of the minister. From a publication whose advice pages took a relatively liberal stance on child-rearing, this would have been impossible if the editor was not expecting readers to consider physical punishment a normal part of childhood life, and that they would easily relate to Billy Brown's attempt at lessening its effects.

Physical punishment was not only a favourite topic of the jokes page. In 1894, the children's page of the *Otago Witness* ran a story entitled 'How Charlie Ran Away from Home'. Charlie was a naughty boy who wouldn't stop swearing and continually disobeyed his mother. He had never been physically punished before, but his behaviour was so bad that his father eventually went out and bought a cane.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Graphic's Funny Leaf', *NZWG and LJ* April 2, 1892, p. 336.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Graphic's Funny Leaf', *NZWG and LJ*, January 19, 1901, p. 144. See also, for example, May 31, 1890, p. 20, 31 August 1895, p. 280, January 9, 1892, p. 48.

We shall not enter into the harrowing details of what befell this naughty boy, but in justice to his father it should be stated that he met with no more than he deserved.¹⁰⁷

Charlie was not the only child to suffer this fate. In another story, this time in the *Graphic's* children's page, a lady asked a small boy why he was crying, and was told that his father had been beating him. The lady's response was "Well, don't cry. All fathers have to beat their little boys at times."¹⁰⁸

Once again, there are several assumptions made here by the editor, which point to the general attitude towards physical punishment at the time. Like the jokes page, it would not have been possible to have such stories about discipline on the children's pages unless the editor expected that the young readers would relate to the stories, and that their parents would approve of them. Secondly, Charlie had never received any physical punishment before the "harrowing" session with his father. The writer is implying that this was the reason he was so badly behaved and the cane was the only possible way to reform him. Also, the writers have assumed that physical punishment generally involved some form of implement and was a painful, upsetting experience for children. It was justified, however, on the basis of its effects. Charlie may have run away from home, but he did eventually learn to behave, and fathers "had to" beat their boys to make them grow up strong and good.

While fathers were usually portrayed meting out painful punishments with canes or rods, mothers were far more frequently referred to as smacking children with their hands, as in this parody of a famous poem.

Oh woman, in your hour of ease
Uncertain, coy and hard to please.
We've all been held across your knees
When your hand felt like a swarm of bees.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ 'How Charlie Ran Away From Home', *Otago Witness*, August 9, 1894, p. 45.

¹⁰⁸ 'He Hit Hard', *NZWG and LJ*, February 18, 1893, p. 157. See also 'The Children's Page', *NZWG and LJ*, July 5, 1890, p. 19 and "Her Little Highness", *NZWG and LJ*, August 10, 1895, p. 178.

¹⁰⁹ 'The Graphic's Funny Pages', August 28, 1897, p. 320.

This gender difference was really the only distinction made between the use of smacking and what would now be considered far more severe forms of physical punishment. The only reason for this difference between the two was that women were portrayed as punishing more on the spur of the moment, so just used their hands, whereas fathers were more likely to have pre-meditated the punishment, so had time to prepare a suitable implement. The use of either form of physical punishment was considered perfectly acceptable, an important part of teaching children to obey, and even, perhaps a rite of passage. These jokes and stories were intended to teach children that physical punishment was simply a normal part of childhood. One day they would understand, and then use it on their own children.

As Ritchie and Ritchie have argued, while late 19th century reformers did much to help children through employment, education and welfare changes, they did nothing to prevent them receiving physical punishment at home.¹¹⁰ This was simply because they did not see it as a problem. The idea that physical punishment was a normal, effective punishment ran right through society. There was some concern around the overuse of corporal punishment in the schools,¹¹¹ but the generally accepted belief was that loving parents would always be able to discipline their children severely enough to make the point, but never go beyond that. Parents, politicians, judges and the news media all agreed. In 1892 the *Wanganui Herald* reported the story of two young delinquents who had been convicted of house breaking. The judge sent them to an industrial school and ordered the older child, a 12 year old boy, to receive a “sound whipping”.¹¹² His sentence was supported by the paper, clearly concerned about the level of juvenile crime in the area. While the *Graphic's* parenting advice pages may have taken a more liberal stance on child-rearing, it was clear that this did not translate through to the rest of the newspaper. In 1899 the *Graphic* quoted a story from a Napier newspaper that a couple of

¹¹⁰ Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Violence in New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Wellington: Daphne Brasell Associates, 1993, p. 40.

¹¹¹ see for example, ‘Corporal Punishment in the Schools’, *Tuapeka Times*, December 27, 1893, p. 5, ‘The Child and The Rod’, *Otago Witness*, November 12, 1896, p. 53 and ‘Recent Flogging at Mapoon Mission Station’, *Evening Post*, October 13, 1909, p. 7.

¹¹² ‘Juvenile Depravity’, *Wanganui Herald*, June 21, 1896, p. 3.

Well dressed yahoos badly in need of a parental strapping climbed the fence to defile the reservoir in unmentionable ways.¹¹³

The defilement of the reservoir aside, it was clear that the major concern of this article was that the culprits were well dressed. These were not poor children, but middle class at least. Child cruelty may have been seen as the problem of the poorer classes, but juvenile depravity was not, and it was the responsibility of all parents to discipline their children severely enough that they would not consider such actions. Another article reported the case of two Patea boys who were fined a small sum for cruelty to a horse. Here the editor lamented that the current law did not allow the two boys to receive “a good birching”, and called for much tougher sentencing in future.

If it were understood that a sentence of two or three months' hard labour with a couple of judiciously placed and very severe floggings would be awarded to any even moderately bad case of active cruelty to animals, the evil would very soon be stamped out.¹¹⁴

It needs to be remembered that the editor was simply expressing a personal opinion, and therefore was not necessarily representative of the wider community. However, it is likely that he was expressing a common view at the time. He did not see any irony in the idea of inflicting pain on children as a punishment for being cruel to animals, which is what would stand out to a modern reader. Cruelty and discipline were two entirely different matters. Instead, he felt this was an acceptable, justifiable solution to the problem, and clearly expected his readers to feel the same way. The boy in the story reported by the *Wanganui Herald* had received a flogging for house-breaking, and the editor was simply calling for the same punishment to be extended to those who were cruel to animals.

This expectation that physical punishment was an effective method of teaching children obedience went almost right through society. Bronwyn Dalley quoted Mrs. McAlaster of Timaru, who asked for her granddaughter to be admitted to an industrial school some time between 1902 and 1916, because she was stubborn

¹¹³ 'Minor Matters', *NZWG and LJ*, July 29, 1899, p. 144.

¹¹⁴ 'Notes and Notions', *NZWG and LJ*, July 1, 1899, p. 14.

and needed "a strong hand to keep her down".¹¹⁵ Mrs. McAlaster was not only advocating harsh discipline, but she was also expecting the government to provide it for her granddaughter, as she wasn't able to do so herself. Finally, the fact that she wasn't afraid to ask the government of the day to provide this "strong hand" suggests that it was considered to be an entirely acceptable request.

Not everyone was happy with the level of discipline meted out, however. The Earl of Meath believed parents were too soft on their children, in an attempt to atone for the over use of harsh discipline in the past.

The almost universal decline in home control was due, among other causes, to excessive severity towards children in former days, followed by hysterical sentimentality and the growth of a spirit of lawlessness among children.¹¹⁶

Although some newspaper editors and others in the Earl of Meath's Duty and Discipline movement felt that parents weren't disciplining their children enough,¹¹⁷ this does not mean that there was a lack of punishment at the time. Every age has those who accuse the young of being ill-disciplined and the parents of being too soft. This is especially true of times when there is such a national focus on children's behaviour.

While the Earl of Meath and his supporters were calling for more discipline to be meted out, and stricter supervision of children, there were still a very few voices speaking against the use of physical punishment. When 'Colonus' wrote to the *Otago Witness* in 1896, s/he referred to corporal punishment as "that ancient barbarism", but still only wanted its use to be restricted, rather than outlawed.

The imbuing of children with good principles, and giving them an idea of the duty of self-restraint are likely to do much more good than the free use of the rod or strap.... Such punishment should only be inflicted to

¹¹⁵ Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child welfare in twentieth-century New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p. 27.

¹¹⁶ 'Duty and Discipline', *Evening Post*, July 26, 1913, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ see, for example, 'Our Children: Are we doing our best for them?', in *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, p. 6.

maintain discipline, when children are very unruly or obstreperous, or in case of some flagrant delinquency.¹¹⁸

For the opponents of a practise to only call for it to be limited rather than banned altogether suggests that it was an ingrained part of life and a societal norm. In addition, it was extremely rare for someone to express this view in a newspaper, and as Colonus used a nom-de-plume, it is reasonable to assume that they felt their opinion would not be a popular one, and therefore did not want to be identified.

Unfortunately, not many children of the time left diaries to detail their experience of discipline and punishment. However, with such a strong level of approval for physical punishment in the society around them, it is very likely that most children would have experienced it at some stage. In 1921, Vicky Malcolm was living in Dunedin with her three children, while her husband was away overseas for a number of months. Her letters included an update on general family life, including the following description of the children's behaviour one night.

But he and D. had nearly a thrashing that night as they fought and howled, and frightened F. so that *she* howled!¹¹⁹

Even though it seems that the thrashing was only threatened, and not actually carried out, Mrs. Malcolm obviously expected that her husband would understand and have supported her, should she have actually administered the punishment.

Even the information given in child-rearing advice books provides a clue to how the author believed ordinary parents would act. In her 1913 book *The Ideal Woman*, Mary Melendy warned parents to "insist on implicit obedience" but did not give any further advice on how to do that.¹²⁰ She was simply assuming that parents reading her book would know she meant physical punishment in that circumstance. As previously mentioned, Sir Truby King took a similar approach. He never spelled out the need to use physical punishment on children, but simply referred to it in

¹¹⁸ 'The Child and The Rod', *Otago Witness*, November 12, 1896, p. 53.

¹¹⁹ Vicky Malcolm to John Malcolm, Letter dated June 25, 1921, p. 5. Malcolm: Papers particularly relating to Professor John Malcolm. DU:HO AG-564-20.

¹²⁰ Melendy, p. 217

euphemistic terms, such as “irresistible force”.¹²¹ Neither of them felt the need to be any more specific, as they assumed parents would automatically know exactly how to insist on immediate obedience.

Although memoirs can be a problematic historical source, dependent as they are on human memory, which tends to portray the past as a mythical golden age, they can still shed some light on to perceptions of childhood that have remained through the years. In her memoirs, Bid Tyler spoke of her childhood between the years 1910 and 1920. She related stories of almost every aspect of childhood; school, games, jobs, houses and holidays, but made next to no mention of discipline. This may have been out of a desire to focus on the good times rather than the bad, but it is significant that the only time she mentioned discipline was a story of the neighbour threatening to lock her unruly sons in the wardrobe.¹²² It would seem that this was a relatively common punishment at the time, given the stern prohibitions against it by Emmeline and Dr Melendy, who felt that even severe physical punishment was much less damaging to the child.

Bid's description of her childhood suggests that her mother was a close adherent of Sir Truby King's ideas. She simply fed them well, dosed them with castor oil once a week and allowed them to play without much adult supervision.¹²³ Bid's childhood memories, like those of the people interviewed for the Colonial Childhoods Oral History Project, seem to support Belich's 'Wild Child' theory much better than that of McDonald's 'Chattel Child'. Bid Tyler herself echoed this idea. “Looking back, our childhood seems to have been one long holiday”.¹²⁴ Jeanine Graham noted that the interviewees in the CCOHP remembered and resented the discipline they received at school far more than that they received at home.¹²⁵ Graham argued that the stereotypical picture of early New Zealand childhood as a time of harsh discipline and hard work was false.¹²⁶ The interviewees instead

¹²¹ 'Our Babies', March 4, 1924.

¹²² EM Tyler Files, 'Bid Remembers with Love and Laughter, Childhood before the 1920s', p. 25. WTU, MS Papers 3973.

¹²³ Tyler, p. 47.

¹²⁴ Tyler, p. 55.

¹²⁵ Graham, p. 13

¹²⁶ Graham, p. 10

remembered their childhood as including some hard work, but once the jobs were done, children were able to disappear from adult supervision to play freely.¹²⁷ Sir Truby King would have been proud that his ideas were so much a part of everyday life.

However, with such a high degree of acceptance of physical punishment in the community at the time, it is likely that some of the interviewees at least may have been presenting a more mythical view of their childhood, or simply may have chosen to focus on school rather than home discipline. This is particularly the case since other memoirs of childhood between 1890 and 1930 include more of an emphasis on discipline. Albert Larsen remembered being given the strap for bad behaviour at home.¹²⁸ Yvonne Brown noted that if she was given the cane at school there was no point in complaining about it to her father when she got home, as he was likely to give her another one.

It wasn't looked on as 'abuse'. This was a time of 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.¹²⁹

Doreen Smart's mother may not have used physical punishment very often, but most certainly felt justified in doing so on occasions. Doreen described her mother finding her after she had left the house without permission.

She flourished a stick of firm bamboo with a black ring around the joint. Usually she was patient and non-violent but this time I felt perhaps things were different.¹³⁰

Her mother had carried the stick down the street with her, which suggests that she had no fear of what anyone else might think, and that she felt entirely justified in her actions. This generally non-violent mother also gave her daughter a "good hard pinch" when finding her at a dance a few years later.¹³¹ Marie Bell, one of the founders of the Parents' Centre, noted that many of her colleagues grew up in

¹²⁷ Graham, pp. 6-9.

¹²⁸ New Plymouth Scribblers, p. 129.

¹²⁹ New Plymouth Scribblers, p. 160.

¹³⁰ Doreen E. Smart files, 'Memoirs', p. 1. WTU, MSX-4630.

¹³¹ Smart memoirs, p. 14.

the 1920s and 1930s, and that they generally came from families who had very progressive ideas about child-rearing for their time. Most of the Parents' Centre founders were either not smacked at all, or only rarely, which Marie noted was extremely unusual for their time, as most of their friends' parents relied heavily on physical punishment.¹³²

It can be seen then, that the stereotype of the late 19th and early 20th century being a time of strict discipline for New Zealand children has at least some degree of accuracy. James Belich's 'Wild Child' theory was correct, in that while children had plenty of freedom away from adult supervision, while around adults they were expected to behave in a certain way, and severely punished if not. While at times during this period there was much concern about cruelty to children, it was firmly believed that cruelty was a problem of the poorer classes only. The middle class, on the other hand, had the responsibility to prevent their children growing into juvenile delinquents, and the best method to do that was to punish them severely. The words beating, thrashing, strapping, flogging and whipping were all used to describe both good discipline methods and cruel abuse of children. In essence, the only difference between good discipline and cruelty was the frequency with which it was administered. Cruel parents, like Frederick and Jessie Bignall, thrashed their children regularly, even sometimes on a daily basis. Wise parents used a "judicious flogging" only rarely. Beyond the gender difference, that men were more likely to use an implement and women their hands to discipline children, no distinction was made between the acceptability of any of these methods. This was a time when parenting practice and parenting advice were reasonably closely aligned. Physical punishment was seen as a perfectly acceptable option for discipline, provided it was not used too frequently. In a time when abuse was defined as "cruelty without the advantage of mercy",¹³³ by definition parents who loved their children could not be guilty of cruelty. In fact, it was quite the opposite. As the lady in the *Graphic's* children's story said, "all fathers have to beat their

¹³² Marie Bell, 'The Pioneers of Parents' Centre: Movers and Shakers for Change in the Philosophies and Practices of Childbirth and Parent Education in New Zealand', PhD Thesis in Education, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004, pp. 104-05.

¹³³ 'Strength of Mind', *NZWG & LJ*, August 24, 1895, p. 229.

boys at times".¹³⁴ It was never portrayed as a pleasant experience, but one that all loving parents would inflict on their children for their own eventual good. Other methods of discipline were mentioned only rarely, as they were generally considered unnecessary. Physical punishment was considered to be the cure for everything from disobedience to defiling the Napier reservoir to cruelty to animals. According to Yvonne Brown, it could even prevent children from daring to drown in the river.

¹³⁴ 'He Hit Hard', *NZWG and LJ*, February 18, 1893, p. 157.

Chapter 4: No Such Thing as a Naughty Child: The Rise of Permissive Parenting in the 1930s-50s.

You must forget that there is such a thing as a naughty child; see it only as a child terribly in need of guidance, and be ready to give that guidance.¹³⁵

The very nature of parenting advice underwent an enormous change in the 1930s-50s. Rather than blaming children's bad behaviour on a lack of parental discipline or too much attention, in the mid-20th century a new school of thought emerged. Misbehaviour was believed to be a sign that children were unhappy, and punishment therefore an ineffective method of responding. Instead of children needing more discipline and less attention, the new advice focused on teaching parents to meet children's emotional needs, thus avoiding the need for discipline and punishment altogether. This advice was deliberately and directly contradictory to what Plunket had been teaching for so long. Sir Truby, as a doctor, had focused on keeping children physically healthy, believing this would also make them behave well. This new approach, on the other hand, was developed by a new breed of professionals; the psychologists. They believed that mental and emotional health was important as physical and that bad behaviour was merely a symptom of a dysfunction in these areas. This was a fundamental shift in ideas, not only on what caused bad behaviour, but also on how to treat it. Accordingly, they called for parents to understand their children, play with them and enjoy the time spent with them. Children were no longer to be seen as naughty, delinquent or nervous, but simply misguided. Parents who understood this and acted accordingly would not have to worry about discipline problems, as their children would naturally behave well. Gradually, this radical new approach came to be called "permissive parenting". Although a foreign idea, developed mainly in America, New Zealand parenting advice could not escape being influenced by it, and its impacts can still be seen to the present day.

At the beginning of the 1930s however, there was little evidence to suggest such a radical change was not far away. By this stage the Plunket Society now received

¹³⁵ M Knight, 'Should Parents be Educated?', *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, September 2, 1937, p. 32.

around 500,000 visits a year from New Zealand mothers, the child mortality rate had dropped enormously and Sir Truby's ideas received international recognition, influencing child-rearing practices in America and England.¹³⁶ The 'Our Babies' column carried the same brand of advice it always had, warning parents in 1931 and 1933 that "the less babies are deliberately played with, the better".¹³⁷ In a survey of the health of pre-school children in ten South Island centres during 1934-35, the highest commendation the Plunket society could give a mother was that she was "efficient". Efficient mothers kept an adequate and hygienic home, didn't pay their babies too much attention, expected obedience and disciplined rarely. This was considered all that was necessary for a child's mental development.¹³⁸ Frequent use of the strap was unacceptable, such as the mother who was described as being "one of the extremes of mismanagement" for whipping and slapping her pre-school daughter daily,¹³⁹ but it was still assumed that good parents would use physical punishment on rare occasions.¹⁴⁰ In the early 1930s, this advice was also backed up by other popular sources, such as the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*.

Do not be forever correcting a child. It is wisest to ignore many little faults, but when it is necessary, punish him thoroughly, so that he will remember it.¹⁴¹

The *Weekly's* agony aunt, Dorothy Dix also followed the advice of an earlier period. In 1938 'Her Mother' asked for help with a 15 year old daughter who would sneak out of the house and lie about where she'd been. Dorothy's somewhat sad advice was that it was too late to save this girl, and the mother should give up trying. All she could do was to be a better parent to her younger children. She must "begin by teaching them obedience and respect for authority at once", to avoid a repeat of such problems in the future.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Parry, p. 80

¹³⁷ 'Our Babies', July 21, 1931 and July 11, 1933

¹³⁸ B. Win Irwin, 'Preliminary Report of an Investigation of Pre-School Children in New Zealand 1934-35', pp. 15 and Appendix, p. 1. Included in Plunket society headquarters records, DU:HO, AG-007-001-008/012.

¹³⁹ 'Our Babies', September 30, 1930

¹⁴⁰ 'Our Babies', July 21, 1936.

¹⁴¹ 'Bad Tempered Children: Some Reasons and Remedies', *NZWW*, December 15, 1932, p. 55.

¹⁴² 'Dorothy Dix's Letterbox', *NZWW*, March 31, 1938.

However change had been in the air for some time, and even Dorothy Dix and the Plunket Society could not ignore it forever. In 1936, 'Our Babies' carried an article which provided a completely different take on parenting advice to everything they had given before. Parents were told that it wasn't fair to expect a two year old to obey them all the time, as they were too little to understand most of the instructions they were given. Instead, they should praise their children frequently, have as few rules as possible and above all, avoid making their children afraid of them.

It is dangerous to cow a child into obedience. The cowed child cannot acquire independence which is so necessary to happiness in adult life: he cannot think for himself.¹⁴³

A decade earlier, teaching children obedience by whatever means necessary was considered the foundation of a happy adult life. It was simply assumed that ends justified the means, and only poor, alcoholic parents would ever go too far in disciplining their children. By this time, however, the dangers of this position were beginning to be understood. Therefore, instead of punishing their children, which "in any case, is rarely wise", parents were to find out what had caused them to disobey, and to encourage obedience through more positive methods.

It is not really hard to teach a child to obey the first time you speak if you always speak quietly, never angrily; if you let the child find, by experience, that everything is pleasant when he takes notice quickly, but not so pleasant if he does not obey. When the child is good and obedient, it is right for the mother to show that she is pleased to allow some little treat.¹⁴⁴

This article was reprinted from an English journal named *Mother and Child*, and summarised the new approach to discipline that grew out of the 1930s. Influenced mainly by the growth of child psychology, parents were encouraged to see things from their child's perspective and told that children who were treated kindly were more likely to be happy and healthy, and to grow into well-adjusted adults. Plunket's strict routines were beginning to be questioned. In a book published by the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, T.A. Hunter paid tribute to Plunket

¹⁴³ 'Our Babies', November 17, 1936.

¹⁴⁴ 'Our Babies', November 17, 1936.

for making enormous improvements in child health care, but suggested that medical professionals were only just beginning to understand the true needs, or the “mental hygiene” of the child.¹⁴⁵ The importance of building confidence in children, as well as routines, began to surface.¹⁴⁶ Although generally they did not come right out and say so, it is clear that these 1930s authors strongly disapproved of the use of physical punishment. Mary Buell-Sayles used an approach typical of this period in her book *The Problem Child at Home*. As a psychologist working at a child guidance clinic, her book was full of case studies of children with a range of behavioural problems, and suggestions on how their parents could manage them better. Invariably, the parents who were presented as over-strict used whipping as their primary form of punishment. Rather than openly decrying this practice however, Buell-Sayles simply pointed to the parents' own up-bringing. They were generally severely disciplined themselves while young, and were described as repeating the same mistakes with their own children.¹⁴⁷ It is significant that Buell-Sayles deals with a range of behaviour problems, from stealing to masturbation, and yet provided very little in the way of disciplinary advice. The point of her book was to get parents to think about the reasons behind the misbehaviour, and to understand their children rather than try to dominate them. She assumed that behaviour problems were caused by a lack of understanding between parents and children, and could easily be solved if the parents were willing to see things from their child's perspective.

Catherine Mackenzie, in her 1939 book *Parent and Child* was a little more open about her views on physical punishment, but even then she did not actually tell parents not to use it. Instead, she warned parents that “lickings” either led to sullen, angry, badly behaved children on one hand, or frightened and repressed children on the other.¹⁴⁸ Both Mackenzie and Buell-Sayles' reluctance to openly speak against physical punishment suggests there was widespread acceptance of the practice at the time.

¹⁴⁵ T.A. Hunter, 'Foreword', in Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, *Let us Live with our Children!*, Wellington: Wellington Free Kindergarten Association, 1939, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ A.E. Campbell, 'The Parent-Child Relationship', in *Let us Live with our Children!*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁷ Mary Buell-Sayles, *The Problem Child at Home*, New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1932. See for example, cases on pages 58-60, 100, 97.

¹⁴⁸ Catherine Mackenzie, *Parent and Child*, New York: William Stone, 1939, p. 210.

Instead of focusing on discipline, Mackenzie's ideal mother was one who had fun with her children, was happy to admit when she was wrong, enjoyed their company, gave them pocket money and didn't believe much in punishment.¹⁴⁹ This picture could not be further from the caring but distant authoritarian parent so prized by Sir Truby King only ten years earlier. The *NZWW* also showed evidence of this new trend, running an article entitled 'How Good a Parent are you?' in 1937. Subtitled 'The Sort of Grown-up Behaviour that Drives our Kids to Rebellion: Are You Guilty?', the entire article was a quiz intended to help parents see things from their child's point of view. Parents who told their children off in front of others scored badly, as did those who licked their hankies and then wiped a smudge off their child's face. Most interestingly however, the author asked, "When you punish him, do you expect him to believe that you dislike doing it?"¹⁵⁰ In this author's view, not only would parents use physical punishment on their children, but they found a certain amount of enjoyment in doing so, even as simply a relief to their angry feelings. Again, this was an extremely different justification for the use of physical punishment than that of twenty years earlier. Rather than an essential part of ensuring a child was honest and obedient, by this stage it was simply seen as a form of stress relief for parents, and had little effect on the child's behaviour.

The 1930s had seen an enormous shift in fashionable methods of child-rearing, among parenting educators at least. By the end of the decade, discipline was out of fashion. Instead, having fun with children; understanding the reasons behind their behaviour rather than punishing them and attempting to see life from a child's point of view were considered extremely important in raising happy, healthy, well-behaved children. Although these ideas were generated overseas, particularly in America and England, New Zealand advisors could not help being influenced by them. So much so, that with the 'Our Babies' article in November 1936, even the Plunket Society was beginning to promote concepts that Sir Truby King would have considered anathema.

¹⁴⁹ Mackenzie, p. 210.

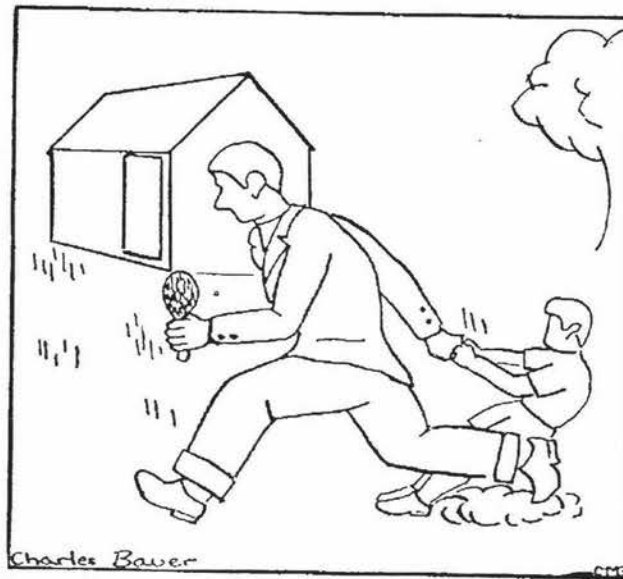
¹⁵⁰ 'How Good a Parent Are You?', *NZWW*, September 16, 1937, p. 25.

Such change could not continue unchecked for too long. The 1940s saw something of a movement back to an understanding of the need for discipline, but from a very different standpoint to that of twenty years earlier. Previously, it had been assumed that an obedient child would have a productive life, which would therefore be a happy one. The new field of psychology questioned that assumption, and discipline in the 1940s became about combining an understanding of the child's emotional needs along with teaching them to obey the rules of their society. Forced obedience was out of fashion, and children's opinions and feelings were to be taken into account when discipline was enforced. Surprisingly, New Zealand parenting advisors were strangely quiet during this decade, having little to say on the question of behaviour management. Possibly as a result of the impact of war, even the *NZWW* seemed focused on other issues. There was plenty of overseas literature on the subject, however. Agatha Bowley, a lecturer in child care at the University of London, suggested that parents could discuss expected behaviour in advance, and even set up a "children's council", where children were involved in rule setting and determining what appropriate punishments might be. Her suggested punishments included withdrawal of privileges and sending a child to bed for a short time, and therefore would not seem terribly out of place in a modern child-rearing manual.¹⁵¹ The use of physical punishment was certainly not encouraged by parenting educators in the 1940s, but it was still considered appropriate under certain circumstances. Bowley allowed it for boys under the age of 13 only,¹⁵² while another contemporary, W.W. Bauer, argued that while he believed it was a good thing that smacking was out of fashion, it could be used on children who were too young to be reasoned with, but only very infrequently, when they had already ignored an instruction several times.¹⁵³ Bauer also noted that using physical punishment could make parents feel guilty, particularly when they had done so out of frustration and perhaps hit harder than they had intended. The following cartoon was intended to make the parent laugh, but also to realise that physical punishment was not always justified.

¹⁵¹ Agatha Bowley, *Psychological Aspects of Child Care*, Liverpool: University Press, 1949, pp. 26-27. Pamphlet included in Emotional Health files, 1944-63, Begg papers, Royal New Zealand Plunket Society Records. DU:HO AG-007-004/130.

¹⁵² Bowley, p. 26

¹⁵³ W.W. Bauer, *Stop Annoying your Children*, Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill, 1947, pp. 180-82 and 184.



"Remember, Daddy, you'll regret this tomorrow!"

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Significantly, the father in this cartoon was carrying a hairbrush, rather than a stick. The very nature of the discipline these educators expected parents to use had changed dramatically. Whereas Emmeline and other late 19th-early 20th century educators had assumed parents would use a strap, stick or even a whip on their children, Bowley discussed smacking, and Bauer referred to parents "whipping with a hairbrush".¹⁵⁵ Any discipline more severe than this was condemned.

Of course no-one should beat a child. There is absolutely no excuse for physical punishment which can do actual injury. 'Boxing the ears' or blows about the head are particularly dangerous. Neither should children be spanked when they are old enough to be reasoned with.¹⁵⁶

Twenty years earlier, parenting advisors saw no difference between a smack on the hand and a whipping with a stick, but these 1940s writers showed they believed discipline had varying levels of severity, some of which were acceptable, and others of which were definitely not. As will be discussed later, this has remained a popular idea right through to the present day.

¹⁵⁴ Bauer, p.166.

¹⁵⁵ Bauer, p.167.

¹⁵⁶ Bauer, pp. 183-84.

Despite this, any influence these authors had on the wider community was minor. But it was during the 1940s that Dr Benjamin Spock, the 20th century's most famous and ultimately most controversial child-rearing advisor, began his long career. His first book, *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care*, was published in 1946 and soon captured the public's attention, becoming a best seller for many years.¹⁵⁷ As a result, Dr Spock's name has long been synonymous with the concept of permissive parenting. Although by no means the first to advocate these ideas, he was the one who took them to the masses. Ironically enough, however, Spock was actually less permissive than many of his much-less famous predecessors. Child-rearing advisors in the 1930s tended to assume that where parents understood their children, discipline would be unnecessary. Spock clearly did not agree with this approach, and, writing three years before Bowley, was one of the earliest to seriously consider alternative discipline techniques to physical punishment.

Spock's suggestions included ignoring unwanted behaviour to make it go away, especially in the case of swearing, and using distraction with younger children to avoid tantrums where possible. When a child did throw a tantrum, he advised parents not to punish them, but to leave them alone, and come back later on with a suggestion of something fun to do. Older children were to be allowed to suffer the consequences of their actions, such as having to pay for breakages, but isolation in a bedroom was considered cruel and unnecessary.¹⁵⁸ Avoiding trouble as much as possible was his mantra, telling parents to be cheerful and expect their children to want to obey them, not giving young children too many choices and making games out of routine chores.¹⁵⁹

Contrary to the myth that has grown up around his methods, as will be discussed in the following chapter, Spock was not actually as against physical punishment as he

¹⁵⁷ Hardyment, p. 227.

¹⁵⁸ Benjamin Spock, *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care*, New York: Pocket Books, 1946, pp. 201, 247, 260-62 and 266-67. Included in Plunket Society Headquarters records, Publications Relating to Child Health and Care files, DU:HO AG-007-008/027.

¹⁵⁹ Spock, 1st ed. pp. 260-62.

is presumed to be. Although he certainly believed there were other methods that parents could use, he felt that in some instances, a smack too had its place.

I'm not advocating spanking, but I think it less poisonous than lengthy disapproval, because it clears the air, for both parent and child. You sometimes hear it recommended that you never spank a child in anger, but wait until you have cooled off. That seems unnatural. It takes a pretty grim parent to whip a child when the anger is gone.¹⁶⁰

Again, this shows a fundamental shift in ideas on what physical punishment was meant to achieve. Spock believed that a quick smack from a frustrated parent would do no lasting harm to the child and was much better than either of its perceived alternatives; prolonged silence which stemmed from anger; or even worse, a whipping delivered later on under the guise of teaching the child a lesson. In earlier years, those who believed in the effectiveness of physical punishment warned parents never to hit in anger because it meant the child would lose the message the parent was trying to convey, and the parent could be more severe than necessary. As Spock and his contemporaries did not believe that physical punishment was an effective discipline method, the old advice to "never hit a child in anger" was considered both cruel and confusing for the child. Like the writer in the *NZWW* nine years earlier, Spock believed that physical punishment was used to relieve the feelings of the parent, rather than to improve the child's behaviour. Leaving it until later therefore would be unnecessarily traumatic for the child and ineffective in making the parent feel better.

Spock also questioned the effectiveness of physical punishment in a way that would have been unthinkable twenty years earlier.

I've seen boys and girls who were slapped regularly for years [for snatching toys] and still grabbed.¹⁶¹

He believed that love and respect for other people was a much more effective tool in stopping bad behaviour, and parents needed to use this far more than physical punishment. Although he did not go as far as his predecessors Buell-Sayles and

¹⁶⁰ Spock, 1st ed. p. 267

¹⁶¹ Spock, 1st ed, p. 264.

MacKenzie, Spock also suggested that parents should try to understand the effect of physical punishment on children and adjust their approach accordingly. If the punishment simply made the child angry and defiant, it was likely to be doing more harm than good, and if it seemed to break the child's heart, it was too much for them, and therefore unfair.¹⁶² The idea that a loving parent could possibly discipline a child too harshly, or that it could fail to curb undesirable behaviour, would not have occurred to Emmeline at the *Otago Witness* or her contemporaries. Physical punishment in the mid-20th century was a very different phenomenon.

Spock and his contemporaries had promoted other forms of discipline before physical punishment; and tried to portray smacking as a stress reliever for parents, rather than an effective discipline method. This approach, however, was taken even further during the 1950s, when permissive parenting reached its zenith. Christina Hardyment described this as the decade of raising "children who were never to be limited or frustrated at all."¹⁶³ Psychologists such as Dorothy Baruch called for children to be allowed to experience their angry feelings, rather than simply being punished for them. She believed that if children were allowed to act out their feelings through play, even to the extent of breaking a toy or smashing a lump of clay, this would help them process the anger and become happy again. This in itself would prevent the children becoming angry, delinquent teenagers.¹⁶⁴ She felt that all the traditional forms of discipline, including isolating a child from others, rewarding them for good behaviour and above all, physical punishment, simply reacted to the behaviour without dealing with its root cause. This meant they were ultimately unhealthy for the child's emotional state and therefore ineffective.¹⁶⁵

While Baruch's advice certainly bore out Hardyment's argument, her stance was one of the more extreme. Most other educators felt that some discipline was necessary on rare occasions and generally should take the form of a punishment in

¹⁶² Spock, 1st ed. pp. 265-66.

¹⁶³ Hardyment, p. 279.

¹⁶⁴ Dorothy Baruch, *New Ways in Discipline: You and your child today*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949, pp. 133-34.

¹⁶⁵ Baruch, pp. 63-69.

kind. A child who had broken something should have to pay for it and a child who was disruptive with his/her playmates should be removed from them for a time.¹⁶⁶ Generally speaking, however, parenting advisors of the 1950s agreed that if a child was loved and understood by their parents, discipline problems would be minimal, if not non-existent. In earlier years, bad behaviour had been blamed on parents who did not discipline their children enough, or who paid them too much attention. Under permissive parenting, it was a sign that parents were not meeting the emotional needs of the child, and punishment would be ineffective until the need was met. For those who understood this principle, parents would simply have to tell their children what they expected, and the child, out of its natural affection for them, would happily obey. Parents could then praise the child for its good behaviour, thus reinforcing the positive cycle.¹⁶⁷

As previously mentioned, New Zealand parenting advisors were relatively quiet during the 1940s. However, this was to change in the 1950s, as juvenile delinquency in the form of Teddy Boys, boddies and widgies, hit the headlines again. This time, however, the response by parenting advisors to the ensuing moral panic was extremely different to that of the 1890s. Rather than calling for tougher discipline, New Zealand parenting advisors tended to blame juvenile delinquency on parents who were too strict, and “punished [their children] without sympathy or understanding.”¹⁶⁸ This in turn prevented children from developing self-control, and meant they were likely to rebel as soon as possible.¹⁶⁹ Parenting experts from the Plunket Society to child psychologists alike promoted a more moderate version of permissive parenting. They reminded parents that their duty was not to make their child obey them immediately, but to keep the long term goal

¹⁶⁶ 'The Emotional Health of the Pre-School Child' (no date, no author), p. 6. Report included in Emotional Health files, 1944-63, Begg papers, Royal New Zealand Plunket Society records. DU:HO AG-007-004/130.

¹⁶⁷ R. Claude Abel, 'Hints for Homemakers', p. 23. Pamphlet included in Emotional Health files 1944-63, Begg papers, Royal New Zealand Plunket Society records. DU:HO AG-007-004/130 and 'Aspects of parent education in a programme for the promotion of mental health in the light of some common failures in parenthood', (no date, no author), p. 5. Report found in Emotional Health files, Begg papers, Royal New Zealand Plunket Society records. DU:HO AG-007-004/130.

¹⁶⁸ W.J. Scott, 'The Meaning of Conformity', in *Conformity and Individuality: The 1958 Lectures*, Wellington: Association for the Study of Childhood, 1958, p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ David Ausubel, 'The Peer Group and Adolescent Conformity in the New Zealand Cultural Setting', in *Conformity and Individuality: The 1958 Lectures*, Wellington: Association for the Study of Childhood, 1958, pp. 68-70.

in mind. Discipline was all about teaching a young child, governed by their emotions and unable to understand consequences, how to grow in to a responsible, mature, compassionate adult.

A child has two parents, and his destiny is largely determined by the way they manage him during the early years of life.¹⁷⁰

We want our children to grow up independent in thought and action, able to get on with other people and open, warm-hearted and sincere in their dealings with them, courageous and ready to persevere in difficulty and honest with themselves and with others.¹⁷¹

Rather than instant obedience, "mild, steady control" was the goal of these New Zealand parenting advisors in the 1950s.¹⁷² So-called positive discipline methods such as distraction, modelling good behaviour, praise and encouragement were considered much more effective than more traditional options such as smacking and isolating the child from others.¹⁷³ In the 1953 edition of *Modern Mothercraft*, the Plunket Society's parenting manual, parents were frequently told to take a relaxed approach to parenthood, not have too many rules and to understand that children have to learn obedience, as with anything else.¹⁷⁴ Other than explaining the rules and expected behaviour to children, there was no mention of any form of discipline in this manual. The entire question of physical punishment was entirely ignored.

Other educators of the time were not afraid to state their opinions, however. Dorothy Johnson, a psychologist, argued that children craved attention from their parents, and soon learned to get it by misbehaving, if they didn't get it by being good.

He may even prefer punishment to no attention at all; that is one of the many reasons why smacking or any other attack on the child has a bad

¹⁷⁰ Plunket Society, *The Care of Babies and Small Children: A guide for young people*, Dunedin: Coutts Somerville Wilkie, n.d, p. 32. Included in Plunket Society Headquarters records, Publications Relating to Child Health and Care files, DU:HO AG-007-008/027.

¹⁷¹ Helen Deem, and Nora Fitzgerald, *Modern Mothercraft: A guide to parents*, (rev. ed.) Dunedin: Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, 1953, pp. 139-40.

¹⁷² Deem and Fitzgerald, p. 140.

¹⁷³ Dorothy Johnson, *The Child and his Family*, Wellington: Department of Agriculture, 1951, pp. 11-13.

¹⁷⁴ Deem and Fitzgerald, pp. 156-57 and 160-61.

effect on the development of his personality. This desire for attention can be of the greatest use to the parents in teaching the child good habits.¹⁷⁵

As well as giving children attention for the wrong reasons, Johnson argued that smacking taught children to be violent themselves.¹⁷⁶ Both these issues were seen as enormously detrimental to the parents' ultimate goal, raising a happy, healthy adult. The Parents' Centre, an educational group which began in the 1950s as an alternative to Plunket, also argued strongly against the use of physical punishment, believing that it damaged the relationship between parents and children, and stunted children's emotional growth.¹⁷⁷

The rise of permissive parenting meant that smacking, among parenting educators at least, was well and truly out of fashion during the 1930s-1950s. Even those who did support physical punishment did so with reservation, placing strict limits around its use and seeing it as more of a stress reliever for a frustrated parent, than as providing any form of useful moral correction to the child. In its place was a call for parents to enjoy their children, to praise them and spend quality time with them. Since the 1920s, the purpose of discipline had changed greatly. In the earlier time period, it was assumed that teaching children obedience would automatically set them up for a happy, useful life. But with the impact of psychology on child-rearing theories, much more emphasis began to be placed on the importance of emotional health. Parents were told to allow their children to express their thoughts and feelings while praising, encouraging and enjoying time spent with them.¹⁷⁸ Not only would this ensure children were happier, it would also negate the need for discipline. Children would simply need to be told what was expected of them, and their natural affection for their parents would make them happy to obey. Dorothy Baruch summarised the permissive parenting approach best. "We won't have to do drastic things to make a child good".¹⁷⁹ The influence of this new thinking was such that Dr Neil Begg, who became the Plunket Society's medical advisor in 1957, even kept a file of articles entitled 'Emotional Health'. Such an idea would

¹⁷⁵ Johnson, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Johnson, p.12.

¹⁷⁷ Bell, p. 149.

¹⁷⁸ Abel, p. 29 and 'Mothercraft - 1949', Plunket Society Headquarters Records, Medical Advisor Files, Mothercraft course for home science students. DU:HO AG 007-004/027.

¹⁷⁹ Baruch, p. 80.

never have crossed Sir Truby King's mind. The change in thinking had been so complete that even when the country was again gripped with a moral panic over the behaviour of the youth in the 1950s, parenting advisors called on parents to exercise less control over their teenagers, to understand them more and try to avoid rebellion by having fewer rules in the first place. The naughty child of the 1890s and the nervous child of the 1920s had disappeared. In its place was simply the child "terribly in need of guidance".

Chapter 5: "Too Much Mother and Not Enough Father": Reactions against permissive parenting in the 1930s-1950s.

Discipline and appropriate applications of the strap should commence in the home... of those children who will not respond to, and indeed usually take advantage of, kindly encouragement. Those parents and others who practice and advocate this self-expression cult are responsible for a great number of insolent and impudent brats.¹⁸⁰

While permissive parenting ideas became very popular amongst child-rearing advisors between the 1930s and 1950s, the same cannot be said for the parents they were trying to teach. While some parents may have wholeheartedly rejected the teachings of Plunket and turned to the new ideas of flexibility rather than routine and understanding instead of discipline, this was most certainly not the case for the majority of parents. Fears of juvenile delinquency throughout this time were equally as strong as that of the 1890s, but without the mitigating concern over cruelty to children. This concern reached its peak in the 'moral panic' of the 1950s. In fact, the problem of child abuse was largely forgotten as the nation focused on the criminal and sexual misdemeanours of young people. By the 1950s, teddy boys, bodgies and widgies came to symbolise everything that was wrong with New Zealand's youth, from their haircuts to their moral failings to their habit of hanging around outside milk bars. Many people, like JAV from Timaru, blamed these problems on a lack of parental supervision and discipline. Once again, this was not solely a New Zealand phenomenon. W.W. Bauer wrote in his book that American parents in the 1940s were increasingly concerned about the growing problem of juvenile delinquency.¹⁸¹ These events were played out against a background of the Depression, World War II and then the Cold War. This series of enormous upheavals in the world at large emphasised the virtues of stoicism under trial, sacrifice for the greater good and uniformity of society. It was widely believed such values could only be passed on through strict discipline. With this in mind, it is not surprising that a parenting advice movement calling for parents to understand their children more and discipline them less was deeply unpopular.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from JAV to the editor of the *Timaru Herald*, 28.07.1954, printed in Doris M. Mirams, *Corporal Punishment at Home and School: with special reference to powers of punishment by prefects*, Timaru: Beynon Printing, 1955, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸¹ Bauer, p. 18.

As previously noted, up until the early 1930s, parenting practice and parenting advice in New Zealand were reasonably closely aligned. Children were sent outside to play as often as possible, dosed up with castor oil and disciplined severely when caught breaking the rules. Sir Truby King's ideas on mothercraft "typified the age" of the 1920s and 30s for the average parent,¹⁸² even though other child-rearing advisors were starting to move away from these doctrines. The Plunket Society was the premier (and in many cases the only available) source of child-rearing advice in New Zealand. The vast majority of pre-schoolers were under the care of the Plunket Society, which "had become a household name, and what the society stood for was understood throughout the land."¹⁸³ Even though not all mothers would have followed Plunket's methods to the letter, with such a widespread influence, backed up by the enormous drop in the child-mortality rate since Plunket's inception, their advice must have had an impact on the way young New Zealanders were raised. Again, as Hardyment argued, Sir Truby's ideas of regular, routine feeding and not too much attention "remained the bedrock practice for many mothers ... even after the *cognoscenti* had turned to Spock and freedom."¹⁸⁴ As was seen earlier, many of those who were children at the time remember their childhood in terms that Sir Truby would very much have approved of.

This fairly "hands off" approach to parenting was not without its problems, however and these began to show in the 1930s. In particular, the old issue of juvenile delinquency was back in the headlines. Unsupervised children were seen to be causing trouble constantly, and this problem was blamed on everything from working mothers to the divorce rate to parents who simply couldn't be bothered teaching their children the right way to live.¹⁸⁵ Lord Bledisloe, in his speech to the New Zealand League of Mothers in 1931, referred to the contemporary concern over irresponsible parents, not bothering to teach their children the correct moral

¹⁸² Hardyment, p. 176.

¹⁸³ Parry, p. 80.

¹⁸⁴ Hardyment, p. 179.

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, New Zealand Society for the Protection of Women and Children files: Wellington Branch Annual Reports, 1942, p. 4. WTU MSX 3294 and 'Minutes of Meeting', 7 November 1955, SPWC Wellington Branch Minute Books, 1954-58. WTU qMS1573.

and religious values themselves, but expecting the state to do so instead.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps these parents were taking King's advice a little too literally.

By the 1940s, even the SPWC had moved away from its traditional concerns over child cruelty, and was focusing far more of its attention on preventing juvenile delinquency. The odd cruelty case was still mentioned in its annual report, but generally only after it had received widespread publicity, such as the death of 5 year old Ruby Nelson. Ruby had died of heart failure "due to beri-beri, after she had been viciously ill-treated" by her father, who only received three months in prison.¹⁸⁷ Generally speaking, however, from the 1930s to the 1950s, there was a steady drop in the SPWC's reporting of its child cruelty prevention work. In the 1929-30 Annual Report, the society had described its role in suspected abuse cases as follows.

Many cases of children being neglected or ill-used are reported to the Society. Every case is carefully investigated. If necessary, the law is invoked or the Child Welfare communicated with and the best interests of the child secured.¹⁸⁸

By the 1950s, however, an extremely different attitude was portrayed. By then, the Society was actively trying to separate itself from cruelty issues.

Few cases of physical cruelty are reported to the Society, but when brought to our notice are referred to the Child Welfare Division.¹⁸⁹

This was an extremely different attitude from earlier years, when the SPWC Annual Reports had described in detail the actions taken to help children suffering from cruelty. Bearing in mind that the annual report was sent to all the society's benefactors in the hope of securing further financial support, this strongly suggests that preventing cruelty to children was no longer a fashionable cause, and

¹⁸⁶ Charles Viscount Bledisloe Bathurst, *New Zealand League of Mothers: Address by his Excellency Lord Bledisloe, 7 July 1931*, pp. 4-5. WTU Pacific Collection, PAM 1931 BAT 5029.

¹⁸⁷ SPWC Annual Reports, 1946, p. 4. WTU MSX 3294.

¹⁸⁸ SPWC Annual Reports, 1929-30, p. 5. WTU MSX 3293.

¹⁸⁹ SPWC Annual Report, 1959, p. 6. WTU, SPWC Wellington Branch Annual Reports 1932-66, MSX 3294.

prevention of juvenile delinquency was far more likely to receive a positive financial response.

Strangely enough, all this was going on at the time when Dr Spock's book, promoting a flexible, relaxed approach to child-rearing, was a runaway best seller. As Hardyment has noted, his book was so popular that all other parenting advisors of the time had to assume that anyone reading their work would also have read Spock.¹⁹⁰ His work was the 1940's equivalent of the 'Supernanny' phenomenon we see today, popularising child-rearing advice and reaching his audience with an entirely different message. Even those who had not actually read his book knew of his ideas, and frequently formed strong opinions about them. Part of the reason for this enormous initial popularity may be explained by the way his advice was presented. Plunket's advice, like Sir Truby himself, was on the dictatorial side. Their advice was best, and mothers were to follow the routines set down or risk the consequences. The highest praise Plunket could give a mother, therefore, was that she was "efficient".¹⁹¹ Spock, on the other hand, took a more relaxed approach, even reminding parents that

The most important thing I have to say is that you should not take too literally what is said in this book.... Remember that you know a lot about your child and that I don't know anything about him.¹⁹²

In this way Spock returned power to parents and it is very likely that this approach would have appealed to many. The second part of the reason for Spock's popularity was its timing. *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* was published in 1946, just after the end of World War II. Marie Bell noted that many women in her parenting classes had found the return of their husbands from war difficult. Mothers had raised their children alone, often for several years and when the husbands returned this frequently caused much friction over the way the children were disciplined. Any problems were blamed on the mothers' lack of discipline, while the fathers used much harsher physical punishment than the mothers were

¹⁹⁰ Hardyment, p. 224.

¹⁹¹ Irwin, p. 15.

¹⁹² Spock, rev. ed, p. 1.

comfortable with.¹⁹³ In a time of increasing concern about the behaviour of youth and frequent conflict over how to bring children up, it is not surprising that many turned to expert advice.

Spock's advice, including that it was "better [to be] too easy going than too stiff" certainly struck a chord with some.¹⁹⁴ Dalley noted that Child Welfare Branch officers frequently complained about parents in the 1940s allowing their children too much self-expression, being too slack and letting children take over the household.¹⁹⁵ More positive evidence of Spock's ideas taking hold in the community can be seen in the creation of organisations such as the Parents' Centre. This was run by a group of parents who didn't agree with many of Plunket's theories on child-rearing and wanted to provide an alternative. Their flexible approach to parenting included on-demand feeding, ante-natal classes to prepare women for childbirth and discipline without smacking.¹⁹⁶ Even Dr Spock himself reminded parents in a later edition of his book that when he wrote the first edition between 1943 and 1946, parents were generally strict and inflexible in their child-rearing methods, and he was encouraging them to loosen up. However,

Since then a great change in attitude has occurred, and nowadays there seems to be more chance of conscientious parents getting into trouble with permissiveness than with strictness.¹⁹⁷

The sheer number of books he sold was also testimony to the appeal of his ideas. However, this popularity was not universal. In fact, a great many more in the community vehemently disagreed with his theories. Spock, in a way, was a victim of his own popularity. His ideas were debated throughout the community, even by those who had not actually read his books and inevitably, a kind of myth grew around his teachings, which has remained to the present day. Many of the more extreme ideas of permissive parenting were attributed to Spock, as the figurehead of the movement, whether he supported them or not. For ordinary parents, the

¹⁹³ Bell, p. 64.

¹⁹⁴ Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, (rev. ed.), New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1966, p. 309.

¹⁹⁵ Dalley, p. 113.

¹⁹⁶ see Bell for more information on the formation and goals of the Parents' Centre in New Zealand.

¹⁹⁷ Spock, rev. ed., pp. 1-2.

advice to focus on understanding their children rather than punishing them was (in most cases) misinterpreted to mean they should not discipline at all. As Doris Mirams argued in 1954,

It is a common fallacy to assume that because a person is against corporal punishment, he is against discipline, and favours unbridled freedom and licence.¹⁹⁸

When writing to the *Timaru Herald* in 1954, JAV was expressing the opinion of many when s/he referred to permissive parenting as “this self-expression cult” that was responsible for causing so many “insolent and impudent brats”.¹⁹⁹ As an example, Spock advised parents that while they needed to make sure their children were polite and well-behaved, it was also important to teach children that it was normal to feel angry at times.²⁰⁰ Dorothy Baruch took this idea further, suggesting that parents should allow their children to express their anger, either through words or play, and then mirror their responses, to show they understood. Parents were to allow the child to say anything they wanted, even expressing hatred, without getting angry or punishing them.²⁰¹ The fact that parents of the time felt extremely angry at this advice is not surprising, given the situation. These were people who would have received physical punishment themselves as children and were now in turn increasingly worried about whether their own child would turn into a delinquent teenager. For so long, physical punishment had been promoted as the cure for all childhood evils. To have it discredited and considered likely to psychologically damage the child would have inevitably been extremely unpopular. Even though Spock was much more moderate in his stance than Baruch, as the figurehead of the permissive child-rearing movement, many of these ideas have been either attributed to, or blamed on him, ever since.

The irony of this is that for many children, the permissive parenting movement actually had the opposite effect to that which was intended. Unfortunately for those who were children at the time, the vehement reaction against permissive parenting

¹⁹⁸ Mirams, p. 8

¹⁹⁹ Mirams, pp. 11-12.

²⁰⁰ Spock, rev. ed, p. 327.

²⁰¹ Baruch, pp. 42-43.

probably meant they were disciplined much more strictly than they would otherwise have been. As Stroobant argued in 1958, strict parental supervision and punishment were considered the only solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency. The idea that children needed understanding more than discipline infuriated parents.

It might be said that attempts to control children's lives and behaviour may have increased in the past century even while attitudes towards discipline and the control of the young have remained typically authoritarian and rigid, out of keeping with the recent social values of modern democracy or the psychology of child development.²⁰²

J. Desmond Rainey's thesis showed the depth of anger against permissive parenting theories in 1950s New Zealand. Presumably in an attempt to refute the new theories of child-rearing, Rainey undertook a study of disciplinary practices in a small town outside Auckland in 1956. Although this was only a small sample of sixty parents and 27 children and therefore cannot be considered to represent every New Zealand child's experience, the answers given to Rainey are extremely revealing in terms of attitudes of the time.

Firstly, Rainey noted that the parents he interviewed were more than happy to discuss their discipline methods with him, which suggests that they felt they were justified in their methods and had no need to defend or explain them, because they believed that most other people would agree with them.²⁰³ Rainey had defined physical punishment as being "anything from a light slap to a severe thrashing,"²⁰⁴ and yet all the respondents felt that mothers had the right to punish their children this way. Most felt that it was acceptable for fathers and teachers to use physical punishment on their children, and even half agreed that grandparents could also.²⁰⁵ Among these parents at least, Rainey found a high degree of support for physical punishment and very little for any other methods.

²⁰² Stroobant, p. 87.

²⁰³ Rainey, p. 9.

²⁰⁴ Rainey, p. 12.

²⁰⁵ Rainey, p. 31.

Of these parents, 24 out of 60 specifically mentioned using an implement, including the strap, a ruler, a cane or a stick when punishing their children. Others referred to giving their child “a hiding” or “a clip”, so it was hard to know exactly what form their punishment took.²⁰⁶ The terms “whipping” or “beating”, which were frequently used by the generation before, seemed to be out of fashion among Rainey’s respondents. However, while the terminology may have changed, the actual nature of the discipline meted out seemed to be much the same. As further evidence of this, Rainey noted that he was concerned that some parents might be happy for others to give their child a “light slap”, but not a “severe thrashing” and therefore have trouble with answering his questions on who they felt had the authority to physically punish their child. However, as it turned out, this was not a problem. The parents “did not get bogged down by specific issues” and were happy to generalise.²⁰⁷ Essentially, the severity of the discipline meted out made no difference. If they allowed another person to smack their child, they were also happy for that person to cane them.

Like the previous generation, both children and parents reported that the fathers did most of the disciplining and were generally the ones to mete out any caning that was considered necessary. Fathers were considered as “undoubtedly the most severe and ‘effective’ disciplinarian in the home”.²⁰⁸ Rainey, like many of the parents he interviewed, strongly supported the idea that children needed to be slightly afraid of their parents, particularly their father, to make sure they would be well-behaved. He even suggested that children were more likely to obey their fathers because “mothers cannot fall back upon as great a show of strength as fathers can!”²⁰⁹

Quite obviously, the vast majority of parents interviewed by Rainey did not agree with the teachings of Spock and his contemporaries. Only three parents mentioned using so-called ‘positive discipline’ methods, such as modelling or reasoning with children, and even these parents also used physical discipline on

²⁰⁶ Rainey, pp. 159-63.

²⁰⁷ Rainey, pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁸ Rainey, pp. 34 and 39.

²⁰⁹ Rainey, p. 39.

occasions.²¹⁰ Other parents also reported using alternative methods of discipline as well as physical punishment, such as sending children to bed without dinner or depriving them of privileges, but generally speaking physical punishment was the preferred option.²¹¹ Whether they had read the books or not, the parents were aware of at least some of the current child-rearing theories, and were vehemently opposed to them.

When he fails to give instant obedience I count three and that's that. I explain what he's getting it for, then strap severely. I believe in 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.²¹²

Children often talk back to their parents! I don't believe in this 'free expression'.²¹³

We think of X as a difficult kid. Are interested to see how his generation grows up. War meant that his generation were deprived of male (parental and school) authority. I feel that this (and the example of teenage delinquents etc) is a reason for throttling down on this generation. His grandparents think we're very hard; even say we bully them.²¹⁴

While not all the parents were as strictly disciplinarian as these three, physical punishment was a part of life for most of the children interviewed. The vast majority reported it was the "usual" form of discipline they received, suggesting that parents relied on it to a reasonably heavy degree.²¹⁵

Rainey himself was well aware of the current literature on child discipline and quite clearly disagreed with much of it. He intended his thesis to disprove the current theories and support the practice of parents at the time. In response to claims that physical punishment damaged the relationship between parents and children, he argued that his results proved otherwise.

This does not prove that the punishment does not affect affection for the punisher, but it shows that *if it does have a detrimental effect this effect is normally completely outweighed by other factors*. These results show

²¹⁰ Rainey, p. 18.

²¹¹ Rainey, pp. 86-87.

²¹² Rainey, p. 56

²¹³ Rainey, pp. 56-57.

²¹⁴ Rainey, p. 156.

²¹⁵ Rainey, p. 47.

that we do well to take a pinch of salt with some of the claims made by rabid anti-punishers.²¹⁶

Rainey's use of the term "we" is significant here. It suggests that he was expecting anyone reading his thesis to be on the side of the parents, rather than the experts. Certainly there were some people who would not agree, but their's was an extremely marginalised view, and Rainey took care to reaffirm that all sensible people would support the occasional use of corporal punishment.

It all seems to indicate that the writings on corporal punishment give undue weight to the various dangers and take a stand which is somewhat divorced from the common sense point of view. On the other hand, they seem to neglect to even consider the possibility that a certain minimum amount of punishment may be valuable in establishing a 'conscience' in children.²¹⁷

His assumption that the vast majority of the population would be on his side showed that it was part of what would have been considered "common knowledge" at the time. Once again, this provides evidence of the high level of approval for physical punishment in New Zealand society at the time, despite what the experts had to say.

The "rabid anti-punishers" had not only failed to change the opinions of any of the parents in Rainey's study, they were also deeply unpopular in many other parts of society as well. As Marie Bell noted, during the 1940s and 50s, "there was a nervousness in the community, ... that the abandonment of tough discipline could result in children becoming out of control".²¹⁸ When the corporal punishment debate broke out in the *Timaru Herald* in 1954, those who were against it quite clearly felt they had the burden of proof placed on them. Some, like G.E. Roberts, quoted the evidence of psychologists,²¹⁹ while others referred to their own experience with troubled children²²⁰ or even recent instances when discipline had gone too far.²²¹ Supporters of its use, on the other hand, assumed that the

²¹⁶ Rainey, p. 42.

²¹⁷ Rainey, p. 77

²¹⁸ Bell, p. 65.

²¹⁹ Mirams, p. 10

²²⁰ Mirams, p. 8

²²¹ Mirams, pp. 9-10.

majority would agree with them. Their arguments were built on the idea that physical punishment, either at home or school, was “necessary” and “just common sense”,²²² and felt no need to try to convince the population at large. It is also clear that no matter whether they supported the use of physical punishment or not, all the correspondents to the *Timaru Herald* assumed that parents would use some form of implement when disciplining their children. Once again, while the words “whipping” and “beating” were no longer being used, they had been replaced by “thrashing”, “tail-warming” and “strapping”.²²³ Like those in the generation before them, these correspondents did not see any difference between a smack and what would now be considered a much harsher beating. In the late 19th and early 20th century, it was perfectly acceptable to refer to “beating” or “whipping” ones children, even though these were the same terms used to describe the actions of parents in child cruelty cases. By the 1950s, these terms were no longer used, perhaps because of their negative connotations, and “thrashing” or “strapping” were more common. However, in the 1890s the terms “whipping” and “beating” were generally understood to mean physical discipline with a stick, cane or strap, and these were precisely the forms of discipline considered appropriate in the 1950s.

Even though in the 1930s the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* had published the occasional article promoting the new permissive parenting style, generally it supported the use of physical punishment in both articles and the advice pages. In 1942, 17 year old ‘Anne’ of Birkenhead wrote in to agony aunt Lou Lockhart, to complain that her mother wouldn’t have anything to do with her boyfriend, because he’d been sent to a boy’s home for a “trifling” mistake. Lou’s response was short and to the point.

Your mother is certainly wasting her time with reproachful looks. She should cut a nice long stinging switch and flick it around those reckless limbs of yours.²²⁴

²²² Mirams, pp. 7, 11, 12, 14.

²²³ Mirams, pp. 1, 11 and 12.

²²⁴ ‘Ask Lou Lockhart’, *NZWW*, April 2, 1942, p. 29.

Six years later, an article entitled 'The Little Ones are Wise' told the story of a young girl named Jenny, who learned not to throw stones at the tram the hard way.

The motorman was a kindly soul and very wise, possibly he had little ones of his own. He grabbed Jenny and without haste, laid her over his knees and gave her a sound spanking and sent her home.²²⁵

Not only did the writer of this article entirely support the motorman smacking a child who was completely unknown to him, she also reported that Jenny's mother supported him as well, sending Jenny to bed for the afternoon when she learned about the incident. Jenny, the article continued, learned from this experience, and did not throw stones at the tram again. Rather than trying to convince parents that they should use physical punishment, the author of this article assumed they would already be doing so, and wanted to support them in this, by portraying smacking as an effective, quick method of teaching children obedience and consequences.

It was not only ordinary people who used physical punishment. According to the *Weekly*, smacking also had royal approval. In 1954 the Duke of Edinburgh was praised for playing with his children as often as possible, and genuinely enjoying their company. However, "he nevertheless does not follow the modern fetish of carrying nursery psychology to extremes", and gave young Prince Charles a "good-tempered spanking" for repeatedly throwing his slippers down the stairs.²²⁶ The fact that the smack was "good-tempered" is significant. Like the motorman who smacked Jenny "without haste", the Duke wasn't angry, he was making the point to his son that his behaviour needed to change, and was using the most effective method available. The royal family was frequently held up as an example to follow in all aspects of life, including the discipline of children.

If smacking was good enough to bring up Prince Charles, it was most certainly good enough for ordinary children. As R.E. Stroobant concluded in 1958, even after the popularity of Spock and the establishment of several Parents' Centres, not much had changed for the average child.

²²⁵ 'The Little Ones are Wise', *NZWW*, October 14, 1948, p. 9.

²²⁶ 'The Duke Rates Highly as a Father', *NZWW*, January 28, 1954, p. 18.

Force and coercion continue to thrive and remain the standard ingredients of good discipline, justified on grounds that include references to the imperfections of human nature... and the folly of sparing the rod and spoiling the child.²²⁷

Physical punishment may not have been described in exactly the same terms as it had been in earlier years, but the outcome for children was exactly the same. Caning, strapping and smacking were a part of life and considered to be extremely important in teaching a child to obey their parents. Obedience to authority was believed to be the single most important thing for parents to teach their children, to ensure they became successful, productive adults. Fathers in particular were expected to make their children slightly afraid of them, to ensure they kept on the straight and narrow throughout life. As Dorothy Dix, one-time agony aunt in the *Weekly* told 'Mrs OC' in 1935, "the great trouble in this country is that our children have too much mother and not enough father".²²⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that the permissive parenting ideas promoted by Spock, Baruch and their contemporaries were so deeply unpopular. Dr Spock may have sold millions of copies of his book around the world, but the myth that soon surrounded his teachings was carried even further. Parents in a small town outside Auckland, most of whom had not even read his book, believed they knew exactly what he stood for and were determined to bring their children up in exactly the opposite way. The common understanding of permissive parenting was that its advocates did not believe in discipline at all. Instead, they thought that understanding and kindness would make a child happy and this in turn would avoid any discipline problems. Even though this was the extreme view, and most permissive parenting advocates focused on the importance of understanding and love, while acknowledging the need for discipline on occasions, this message did not filter through to the average parent. Dr Spock, as the popular figurehead for permissive parenting, received much of the blame for these ideas. All the efforts of child-rearing experts to convince parents that understanding and love were all that was needed to raise a happy, healthy child had failed. Some parents had certainly taken up these ideas, but were generally blamed by the rest of the population for

²²⁷ Stroobant, p. 89.

²²⁸ 'Dorothy Dix's Letterbox', *NZWW*, January 17, 1935, p. 27.

raising spoiled children who would inevitably become the next generation of delinquent teenagers. The vast majority of parents, instead of becoming softer in their child-rearing practices, actually became even tougher on their children, in their determination to ensure they didn't join the ranks of those "insolent and impudent brats" who were causing all the trouble.

Chapter 6. "A Degree of Failure":

Smacking and the promotion of alternative discipline methods, 1960s-70s.

Remember that punishment gets quick results. *But*, the results *don't last*.
We generally use punishment *only* when we *must* have quick results....
Remember there are OTHER WAYS to get rid of undesirable behaviours.²²⁹

Before 1960, child rearing advisors had not needed to discuss alternative methods of discipline very often. Until the 1930s, the effectiveness of smacking had rarely been questioned. Since the 1930s-50s, the growth of permissive parenting meant that the focus had shifted away from punishment and instead to expressing emotions effectively. It was believed that parents who understood and loved their children would have little or no need for punishment and therefore the focus was on teaching parents to look at things from their child's perspective. However, as has been seen, there was an enormous backlash against permissiveness from ordinary parents. Permissive parenting's bad publicity, coupled with the moral panic of the 1950s, led parenting educators in New Zealand and other western nations in the 1960s and 70s on an exploration of other discipline options. The use of time out, withdrawal of privileges and 'extinction' had all been mentioned by earlier educators but were generally considered either poor cousins to physical punishment or emotionally damaging to the child. Even their supporters during the 1930s-50s felt they should largely be unnecessary if a child was loved and emotionally healthy. It was during the 1960s and 70s that these ideas came to the fore. They played a major role in an attempt to bring parenting advice closer in line with the attitudes and practices of ordinary parents. Even with the growth of discussion about alternative discipline methods, attitudes towards smacking also softened noticeably during this time. During this period, discipline, even physical punishment, was back in fashion.

A major factor in discipline's return to favour in the 1960s and 70s was a rethink of the purposes of discipline. The evidence of the earlier decades had shown that neither enforced obedience at one extreme, nor a lack of limits at the other, would

²²⁹ Geoffrey Cliffe, 'Changing Children's Behaviour', Auckland: [no publisher], 1976, p. 17.

guarantee a child a happy life. Parents, therefore, were to keep the long term goal in mind when disciplining their children, and make sure they taught them self-discipline, care and concern for the feelings of others, responsibility and self-respect.

Discipline is training a naturally self-centred baby to gain self-control and adapt to the society he lives in, at the same time developing his own personality. It is imparting your sense of values and your sense of standards to live by through your guidance and example. To discipline is to teach.²³⁰

There was a more immediate payoff for both parents and children as well. Contrary to the views of psychologists such as Baruch, during the 1960s child rearing experts began to argue that boundaries and discipline were actually essential to creating a happy life for children, and without them, children would feel extremely vulnerable and scared.²³¹ Rather than self-expression and understanding, "love him and limit him" was the new parenting mantra of the 1960s.²³²

An essential part of this loving and limiting strategy was the categorisation of discipline into 'positive' and 'negative' methods. Positive discipline included praise, small rewards and parental approval for good behaviour, whereas negative discipline included smacking, withdrawal of privileges or affection and focused on stopping bad behaviour.²³³ Once again these ideas were not new, but for the first time were treated as genuine alternative discipline options by parenting educators. Perhaps with pictures of children being locked in a wardrobe, or separated from others for a long stretch of time, parenting advisors in earlier years had strongly disapproved of isolation, considering it far more emotionally damaging than a severe caning. This however was no longer the case. Isolating the child from

²³⁰ Helen Greig, Plunket Nurse trainee, quoted in 'Child Development and Discipline', *Plunket News*, February 1975, pp. 18-19. See also, for example, Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns in New Zealand*, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1970, p. 114, Department of Education, 'Child Training: Obedience', Wellington: Department of Education, 1962. Pamphlet found in the Pacific Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library P136.7 NZ CHI 1960-62 and 'Solo Parent Forum', *NZWW*, March 14, 1977, p.27.

²³¹ Michael Edwards, 'Discipline', Papakura Series of Understanding the Child, Papakura: Department of Education, 1969, p. 4.

²³² 'Child Training - Obedience' pamphlet.

²³³ Edwards, pp. 2-3.

others became considered an effective method of teaching a child the consequences of anti-social behaviour, by withdrawing them from parental approval and affection for a short period of time. Instead of simply trying to understand children, and expecting that to take care of all discipline problems, parents were told how much their children wanted their approval, and to use this to encourage good behaviour, and discourage bad.²³⁴

For the first time, this encouragement of good behaviour was actually considered an important part of child discipline. The use of praise and rewards had been mentioned by earlier educators, but these methods were generally seen as an adjunct, not actually part of the discipline process itself. In the 1960s and 70s, discipline became as much about teaching children what to do, as it was about teaching what not to do. In his book *The Important Years*, which was based on a popular television series of the same name, Dr Neil Begg summed up this approach. Parents were to give “encouragement and reward, to provide a better learning environment than punishment and criticism.”²³⁵ The actual form this encouragement took varied depending on the writer, but generally speaking the use of praise and intangible rewards such as physical affection and attention were considered the most appropriate.²³⁶ The long held concern that too much praise and attention would spoil children was no longer valid. Instead, as Edwards argued, “no child can receive too much positive discipline”.²³⁷ Some writers, such as Cliffe, felt that more tangible rewards were also appropriate,²³⁸ but most others saw the use of money, lollies or reward charts in any form as a type of bribery that was easily manipulated by children, and therefore largely ineffective.²³⁹

²³⁴ John F. Kenward, 'Discipline', *Pediatrics*, 26:6 (1960), p.1035. Journal article included in Emotional Health files, 1944-63, Begg papers, Royal New Zealand Plunket Society records. DU:HO AG-007-004/130.

²³⁵ Neil Begg, *The Important Years*, Dunedin: Plunket Society, 1974, p.18. Included in Plunket Society Headquarters records, Publications Relating to Child Health and Care files, DU:HO AG-007-008/027.

²³⁶ Cliffe, p. 22, Begg, *The Important Years*, p. 28, Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson, *How to Parent*, Wellington: AH and AW Reed, 1973, pp. 189-93. WTU Pacific Collection, P649.1 DOD 1973 and 'Spare the Rod and Spoil the ... Relief!', *NZWW*, September 4, 1967, pp.33-35.

²³⁷ Edwards, p. 3.

²³⁸ Cliffe, p. 6

²³⁹ see, for example, 'Child Training – Obedience pamphlet' and Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 103.

As well as encouraging good behaviour with plenty of affection and attention, parents were also told to use their children's desire for approval to extinguish unwanted behaviour such as tantrums or whining, by simply ignoring it whenever possible. Cliffe encouraged parents to stick with this strategy, even though it would take a long time to work.²⁴⁰ His advice is indicative of the change in focus of discipline during these years. Whereas in the early 20th century, discipline was about achieving obedience quickly, by this stage parents were encouraged to stay focused on the long term goal. A smack may have stopped a child from whining in the short term, but would soon need to be repeated, whereas a child who realised whining was ineffective would not bother at all.²⁴¹

On occasions when discipline was required and ignoring the behaviour was not an option, writers in the 1960s and 70s suggested a variety of options. Reasoning with children, explaining what they had done wrong and why they shouldn't do it again, removing an object that was being misused from the child, removing privileges such as television viewing for a set period of time or isolating the child from others were the most popular recommendations. Reasoning was believed to give them a chance to understand what was expected of them and therefore increase their chances of good behaviour in future. Other punishments, such as isolation from their playmates and withdrawal of privileges, could be used at any time, but were most effective when related to the behaviour being punished. Separating children who were fighting was more likely to make them regret the offence than simply smacking them. Prolonged punishments were discouraged as they were believed to lose their effectiveness and simply made the child resentful rather than sorry. Parents were encouraged to make the punishments appropriate to each situation and each child, rather than having a set approach.²⁴² These punishments were believed to be sufficiently severe enough to make the child regret their actions, but without causing them undue emotional stress. Although educators had moved away from the permissive era, the impacts of their beliefs

²⁴⁰ Cliffe, p. 10.

²⁴¹ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 102, James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970, p. 63 and Cliffe, p. 10.

²⁴² Kenward, pp. 1035 and 1037, Leo Trese, *Parent and Child*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1962, p. 84, Edwards, pp. 5-6 and Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 111-12.

could still be seen, in that parents were warned not to isolate children for too long, or to lock them into their rooms.²⁴³ While punishments were considered necessary on occasions, the writers were aware of possible impacts on the child's mental state, and wanted to make sure the child learned the lesson, without sustaining any psychological damage.

If parents had tried all these other options and still failed to make the child obey, most educators in the 1960s and 70s supported the use of physical punishment, mainly because they believed it could be effective in improving the child's behaviour. This was a major shift from the teachings of the permissive era, where physical punishment was either entirely banned or allowable only as a relief to the parent's feelings. In the early 20th century, other discipline options were something parents could try if they wished, but the most effective, appropriate and failsafe method was always physical punishment. By the 1960s, however, smacking was to be used only as a last resort. Parents were advised to exhaust all other options first, and only use physical punishment if absolutely necessary. In his 'Discipline' pamphlet, Edwards summarised the opinions of many of his contemporaries.

Physical punishment implies a degree of failure in the imposition of discipline.²⁴⁴

Despite being in some form an admission of defeat, Edwards and many of his contemporaries still supported the use of smacking, under certain restrictions. Determining exactly what these restrictions were can be difficult. Kenward supported the use of physical punishment, using the words "spanking" and "whipping" to describe it in his 1960 article. What he actually meant by the term "whipping" is problematic. It could be argued that he used this word to refer to a beating with a rod or cane, as would have been considered appropriate in the late 19th century, but from the context of his article, this seems unlikely. He used the words "spanking" and "whipping" interchangeably, which suggests he saw no particular difference between the two forms of discipline, and specifically warns

²⁴³ 'Child Training – Obedience' pamphlet.

²⁴⁴ Edwards, p. 5.

parents against attempting to control their children through fear of pain.²⁴⁵ As has already been discussed, acceptable methods of discipline had softened dramatically over the previous twenty years, which makes it unlikely that Kenward would consider a smack with an open hand the same as being repeatedly struck with a rod.

Edwards, on the other hand, included the following picture when discussing physical punishment.



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It could be argued, therefore, that he considered the use of a cane or a stick as an acceptable option, once the parent had determined that physical punishment was necessary. However, this assumption does not fit with the rest of his advice.

Physical punishment should, however, be kept to the absolute minimum, and rarely, if ever, used when the child has developed a reasonable use of language.²⁴⁷

To use a stick on a child that is only just learning to talk seems somewhat cruel. When compared with the rest of Edwards' advice, which is focused around making parents take a long term view of discipline and think of alternatives to physical punishment, he is unlikely to have meant parents to do so. Instead, it is more likely that he used the picture of a child being punished with a cane to strike a chord with parents, perhaps bringing back memories of their own childhood days, in the hope that it would ensure they were sympathetic in their treatment of their children.

²⁴⁵ Kenward, p. 1037.

²⁴⁶ Edwards, p. 3.

²⁴⁷ Edwards, p. 5.

Some educators of the time were much more specific in their advice, stating that a smack with an open hand was the only form of physical punishment that was appropriate.

That punishment may consist of a good hard smack, and sometimes that is the best thing to use since it is the most immediate.²⁴⁸

A spank with the hand at the right time and in the right place may be quickly followed by a pleasant reconciliation. Against a background of consistent love and affection it will do no lasting harm, and may, in fact, be the only way to show the child his parents are in earnest.²⁴⁹

Even the proverbial wooden spoon was not mentioned by either writer. As they did not even discuss the use of implements to discipline children with, it can be assumed that they both felt it was unacceptable and far too severe. Begg even specifically mentions the use of a hand “in the right place”, to reinforce the message that children should not be hit over the head. Dodson’s advice was much more explicit. A repeated beating or any form of physical punishment with an object was described as “cruel and sadistic” and a slap in the face was humiliating for a child.²⁵⁰ Dodson may have been responding to the growing concerns about child abuse in the 1960s and 70s. Even still, he was one of very few writers of the time who felt the need to spell out what was acceptable discipline, and what was not.

There was also debate about when physical punishment was appropriate. In fact, a degree of confusion about the use of physical punishment clearly existed within the writings of some authors, leading them to contradict themselves. This confusion was caused by an understanding of the dangers of physical punishment, held alongside an inherent belief in its effectiveness. This left educators with the unenviable task of attempting to describe when, how and why physical punishment was acceptable, while also warning parents what could happen if they got it wrong. Cliffe taught parents that smacking should only be used as a last resort; after all other options had failed, because if used too often, children could become afraid of

²⁴⁸ Cliffe, p.4

²⁴⁹ Neil C. Begg, *The New Zealand Child and his Family*, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1970, p. 196.

²⁵⁰ Dodson, p. 204.

their parents and withdraw from them emotionally. On the other hand, however, he also believed that smacking provided an immediate consequence for bad behaviour, and reinforced to the child that their behaviour needed to change.²⁵¹ It would be difficult to exhaust all other discipline options and yet still provide an immediate consequence for bad behaviour. Dodson probably confused his readers with two very different views on when physical punishment was appropriate. Firstly, he warned that it should only be used in extreme cases, and for a child's safety, such as to stop a child who repeatedly ran onto the road. This was because smacking taught a child to hate and fear their parents.²⁵² Later in his book, however, he suggested that it was perfectly acceptable to smack a child who was making the parent really angry.

Parents are human, so I say 'spank away' if you need to.²⁵³

Despite warning parents to only ever use physical punishment on very young children, Edwards also felt that parents need not feel guilty for occasional lapses of good discipline.

A parent may become extremely exasperated with his offspring and administer physical punishment in the heat of the moment. If this is a very rare incident it is unlikely to have any great adverse effect upon the child.²⁵⁴

Begg's advice was more consistent. He taught that "it should very rarely be necessary to resort to physical spanking", but that a smack was appropriate in the case of extremely bad behaviour; at a time when the parent needed to gain the child's attention immediately.²⁵⁵

The Department of Education's 'Child Training – Obedience' pamphlet reminded parents that physical punishment should be used only rarely, if at all, because if used too frequently, it could cause "bitter resentment in a child too small to defend

²⁵¹ Cliffe, pp. 4, 8-11.

²⁵² Dodson, pp. 188-89.

²⁵³ Dodson, pp. 204-05.

²⁵⁴ Edwards, p. 7

²⁵⁵ Begg, p.196.

himself". This bitter resentment would then show up in a number of ways. Children might bully others, or be cruel to animals, or be inordinately shy and afraid of others.²⁵⁶ In his book *Parent and Child*, Leo Trese argued that smacking should only be used rarely, and only with very young children. He felt it was appropriate to smack a young child reaching for a hot kettle or running on to the road, but never in any other situation. For older children in particular, physical punishment was humiliating and caused enormous resentment between parents and children. Trese was unusual among his contemporaries, in that he outwardly stated his lack of faith in the effectiveness of physical punishment.

Of all types of punishment, it is the one least calculated to effect any inner change in the child.²⁵⁷

Trese was fairly alone in this belief at the time. As has been seen, many of Trese's contemporaries felt that physical punishment was an effective form of discipline, and therein laid its dangers and opportunities. Begg, Cliffe and Dodson, among others, all felt it would change children's behaviour in some way, and the challenge was to ensure that it was only used in ways that would help children, and not harm them.

For some parenting educators of the 1960s and 70s, the potential for harm caused by physical punishment far outweighed any perceived benefits. This was fuelled by the growing awareness of the problem of child abuse, both physical and sexual, at this time. The difficulty of drawing a dividing line between acceptable pain in punishment and abuse became obvious. Psychiatrists, pediatricians and even the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* began to discuss the problem openly once again.²⁵⁸ Although the government supported the right to use physical punishment on children, and had reinforced this right in Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act, in response to recent child abuse cases, it also began to give out parenting advice in the 1960s. In earlier years this was considered only the business of parents, as long as the child was not being mistreated. However, as children's behaviour

²⁵⁶ 'Child Training – Obedience'.

²⁵⁷ Trese, pp. 85-86

²⁵⁸ 'No More Battered Babies – If ...' *NZWW*, September 21, 1971, pp.29-30 and L.K. Gluckman, 'Cruelty to Children', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 67, (1968), p. 155.

came once again into the spotlight and difficulties in distinguishing between abuse and discipline re-emerged; the Department of Education felt the need to define acceptable discipline. The 'Child Training' pamphlet and Edwards' 'Discipline' booklet were part of this response, advocating alternative methods of discipline, and seeing physical punishment as a last resort only.

While the government stopped short of telling parents not to use physical punishment altogether, other parenting advisors responded differently to the growing awareness of child abuse. Dodson explained clearly what forms of physical punishment were acceptable, whereas some others, particularly Jane and James Ritchie, called for an end to the use of physical punishment entirely. All parenting educators, even those who supported the occasional use of physical punishment, warned parents of the dangers of its overuse. They felt that it was possible for a loving parent to escalate discipline into abuse in the heat of the moment and that it had the potential to create angry, aggressive children on one hand, or on the other, children who were cowed into obedience.²⁵⁹ This 'rediscovery' of child abuse had a major effect on the advisors of the 1960s and 70s. The very definition of abuse had to be re-written. In previous years, it had been understood that sober, loving parents could perhaps be too severe in their discipline, but still they could never cross the line into abuse. Even in the 1890s, when cruelty to children was a well-recognised issue, it was believed to be a problem of poor and alcoholic parents only. Parenting educators of the permissive era certainly didn't support the use of physical punishment, but simply because they felt it was ineffective, unless to relieve the feelings of the parent. There was no suggestion that discipline could easily escalate into abuse for the ordinary, loving parent. But styles of discipline had also changed over time. The standard early 20th century approach of a beating with a cane or other implement was now considered too harsh by parenting educators. Although, as will be seen in the following chapter, this was still common practice among many parents, child-

²⁵⁹ see, for example, Robyn Hewland, 'A Psychiatrist's Approach to the Problem of Violence', address to the New Zealand Institute of Public Administration, Christchurch, 1976. Included in Royal New Zealand Plunket Society Headquarters records, D.C. Geddis papers, Dr Robyn Hewland files. MS-2920/0427, and 'Spare the Rod and Spoil the ... Relief!', *NZWW*, September 4, 1967, pp. 33-35.

rearing advisors saw it as an extremely dangerous practice, and certainly potentially abusive, if not already crossing the line.

The Ritchies and others like them picked up on these themes, but warned the negative effects of physical punishment were not just seen in children who were severely and frequently punished, but in any child who was smacked. As well as its impact on children and the possibility of escalating into abuse, the Ritchies argued that physical punishment itself was an ineffective form of discipline. Children who were smacked only learned to listen to the “loud shrill voice of parental correction”, when the real goal of parenting was to teach the child self-control.²⁶⁰ The Ritchies’ views were very much against the accepted wisdom of the time, even amongst parenting educators. Most felt, however grudgingly, that physical punishment had its place in child rearing, as long as it was placed under tight reign. As will be seen in a later chapter, the Ritchies’ advice was even more out of step with accepted parenting practice of the time (a fact borne out by their own studies) and suffered greatly from the negative public perception left over from the permissive parenting era. As such, their calls for an end to physical punishment went unheard for many years.

Hardyment argued that the 1960s and 70s was a time when parenting educators moved away from ‘permissive’ parenting and returned to older notions of routine and discipline.²⁶¹ In reality, however, there had been a major shift in the ideology of discipline, informed by both the permissive era’s focus on child psychology, and the parental demand for advice that was more in tune with common practice. In earlier years, a parent’s job was simply to teach their children obedience, as that, it was assumed, would automatically ready them for a useful, enjoyable life. In the 1960s and 70s, the end goals had become much more complicated. Obedience would no longer guarantee happiness. Instead parents needed to think about the kind of adults they wanted their children to become and to train them accordingly. The entire purpose of physical punishment changed as a result. In previous years, it had been considered an effective method of teaching obedience and was

²⁶⁰ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 103-04, 114.

²⁶¹ Hardyment, pp. 284-85.

therefore a viable discipline option. Other methods were rarely discussed, as they were simply adjuncts to the main process; options that could be tried along the way. In the post-permissive era, however, physical punishment's limitations were discovered. As Cliffe acknowledged, it was a measure that was focused on achieving a short-term goal only and could not provide parents with the long-term help they needed. The so-called 'rediscovery of child abuse' that took place at this time fuelled concerns about the use of smacking, leading some to define exactly what was appropriate and others to reject its use altogether. The search for alternative methods of discipline led to the promotion of withdrawal of privileges and isolation from others, as long as they were tailored to each individual situation and child. Instead of being a first option, smacking was relegated to the final step; to be used on a child only when their safety was at risk or they had been repeatedly naughty. It is clear from their writings that many of the child-rearing experts of the 1960s and 70s had reservations about the use of physical punishment, not so much in theory, but in practice. They felt parents needed strict guidance on when to use it, and how much force was acceptable. Despite this, however, they defended its use as a final resort, as something that would gain the attention of the child when nothing else would. Smacking may have been an admission of failure, but nonetheless, it was considered a necessary evil.

Chapter 7. "Punishment, Threat of Punishment and Occasional Praise": Discipline and Punishment in the 1960s-70s.

Hitting children is considered to be a basic parental right and it is, therefore, not surprising that whenever we have publicly attacked Section 59 of the Crimes Act which supports this right, the reaction has ranged from incredulity to vehement hostility.²⁶²

The permissive parenting movement of the 1930s-50s had been a signal failure. Rather than teaching parents to consider their child's emotional needs, it instead had the opposite effect, offending parents and causing them to use even stricter discipline than before. In response to this and as an attempt to regain lost ground with parents, child-rearing advisors in the 1960s and 70s returned to a modified version of traditional advice. Rather than focusing solely on the child's emotional needs, they emphasised the importance of discipline, but in a milder form than had been used previously. Unfortunately, however, they were equally unsuccessful at changing parental practice. Despite their pleas for physical punishment to be used only as a last resort and their emphasis on the need for positive discipline techniques; New Zealand parents in the 1960s and 70s still relied heavily on physical punishment, distrusted praise and rewards as discipline methods and were still keen to teach children obedience before any other quality. As Jane and James Ritchie found during their series of studies on child-rearing practices in New Zealand, parents either were shocked or deeply offended at the suggestion that they should cease using physical punishment as a form of discipline. It was defended as an effective method of teaching children correct behaviour, and one that worked far more quickly than any other option suggested by parenting advisors. After the extremely unpopular permissive parenting movement of the 1950s, advisors were working to gain back the attention and confidence of the general public, but there remained a deep sense of suspicion and resistance against their ideas.

The generally understood definition of permissive parenting by the early 1960s was summarised by an article in the *Plunket News*. Parents were to allow their children

²⁶² Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981, p. 31.

to express their feelings in any way they wished, and not impose any form of restraint or punishment.

Despite their considerable impact on society ... and the people around them ... toddlers must be allowed to perform their irritating and destructive rites unchecked. Now it became possible to find an opposition – most parents – and the issue was joined again.²⁶³

As the article noted “most parents” strongly opposed this teaching. Whether a true representation of permissive parenting or not, this was the way it had been interpreted by the general public, and as such, was deeply resented. Many people, like ‘Grandmother’, who wrote to the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* in 1968, felt the need to defend the use of physical punishment from their own experiences. The writer’s young granddaughter had been smacked on the hand three times before she learned not to touch forbidden items. ‘Grandmother’ then reported that the girl had learned her lesson well and

Doesn’t suffer from traumas, nightmares, or any other gruesome mental disorders – on the contrary she is intelligent and healthy, and most important of all, has already learned the first basic lesson in self control.²⁶⁴

According to ‘Grandmother’, smacking had been an effective and appropriate punishment that had not done any long-term harm to the child. Her stance was supported by ‘Kids’ of Havelock North, who wrote that when her children were small she trained them not to touch other people’s things by praising them when they were good, and giving them a “good swift smack” if they weren’t.

This happened very seldom for I made it a good one, and thoroughly dislike the numerous little slaps one sees parents applying nowadays to children’s hands.²⁶⁵

Like ‘Grandmother’, ‘Kids’ argued that smacking taught children obedience to authority and was therefore an effective punishment, as long as it was severe enough to really hurt. Often, those who write letters to the editor represent an extreme viewpoint, but the opinions of these two writers were shared by many in

²⁶³ ‘Don’t Be Confused by Theories’, *Plunket News*, February 1960, p. 26.

²⁶⁴ ‘Readers Declare’, *NZWW*, May 6, 1968, p.78.

²⁶⁵ ‘Readers Declare’, *NZWW*, May 27, 1968, pp. 70-71.

the wider community, as Jane and James Ritchie discovered in their series of studies which began in 1963.

The practices of everyday parents in New Zealand came under a new kind of spotlight in the 1960s. Jane and James Ritchie interviewed 152 mothers of four year old children, including Maori and Pakeha and both in rural and urban areas. They questioned them on everything from daily routines, to their enjoyment of motherhood, to discipline. The Ritchies' studies showed the extent that physical punishment was ingrained in New Zealand society in the 1960s. Only one percent of mothers interviewed (two in total) had never smacked their children. For all the rest, only one third of mothers reported smacking their children "rarely", which was defined as less than once a month. Forty percent smacked between one and four times a month and the remaining quarter of mothers smacked at least once a week, with the majority of those smacking their children at least once every day.²⁶⁶ Jane Ritchie repeated the study, albeit with a smaller group, in 1977. In the 14 years that had passed since they first began their interviews, she found that the number of parents who didn't smack their children had increased to ten percent. However, forty percent of parents admitted smacking their children at least once per week, as opposed to 25 percent in the earlier study.²⁶⁷ This high reliance on physical punishment was once again justified by the mothers with the same reasons as those used by an earlier generation. It was reported to "clear the air" between parents and children, relieving tension and allowing both to start again. While not every mother agreed, two thirds of parents thought it was an effective discipline method, and even those who did not still relied heavily upon it.²⁶⁸

Like Rainey, in his study a decade earlier, the Ritchies initially worried that mothers wouldn't want to talk about their discipline practices, but this soon proved not to be the case. They noted that the mothers saw smacking children as simply a part of

²⁶⁶ Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns in New Zealand*, Wellington: AH and AW Reed, 1970, pp. 112-13.

²⁶⁷ Jane Ritchie, 'Child Rearing Patterns: Further Studies', *Psychology Research Series*, 11, University of Waikato, 1979, p. 9.

²⁶⁸ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 112-13.

life, an entirely justifiable and necessary part of child-rearing, and saw no reason to be embarrassed or ashamed of it.

They spoke about it freely, felt justified in using it (in most cases) and regarded it as being as necessary for child-rearing as the mid-morning cup of tea is for sanity – mother's ever present help in time of trouble and not to be missed.²⁶⁹

It was not just the Ritchies who noted the widespread acceptance of physical punishment in New Zealand society in the 1960s and 70s. 'Windmill' wrote into the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1968 to complain about mothers in doctors' waiting rooms who smacked their children to make them behave, instead of bringing them something to do.²⁷⁰ Although Windmill found the practice annoying and frustrating, the mothers involved clearly did not think any of the other patients would mind and therefore had no problem with smacking their children in public. WH of Southland would quite likely have supported their actions.

I have never read an article about bringing up children which suggested some occasional punishment, provided it was deserved, would land them in a mental hospital.²⁷¹

Even with the growing number of child-rearing advice books available in the 1960s and the on-going popularity of Spock, this had not trickled down to the level of ordinary New Zealand parents. At this time even Plunket shied away from providing discipline advice. The *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* included the occasional article on child-rearing, but this was often supporting the status quo or providing contradictory advice. In 1967 an article entitled 'Spare the Rod and Spoil the ... Relief!' reported that a parenting expert felt that smacking was ineffective and actually turned children into cowards or bullies. This advice followed far more of a permissive format than was common in the 1960s and was immediately countered by the *Weekly*, printing two letters on the same page, supporting the use of smacking. One argued that children needed to learn early in life that obedience meant hugs and affection, and disobedience meant physical pain, and that after

²⁶⁹ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 112.

²⁷⁰ 'Readers Declare', *NZWW*, May 27, 1968, pp. 70-71.

²⁷¹ 'Readers Declare', *NZWW*, September 18, 1967, p.80.

this just the “tone of voice alone will suffice to guide the child”, even through adolescence. The second letter was even stronger in its tone, written by a mother who had never smacked her children before, but now they were nearly ten years old, she realised they needed a “good whipping” because of their cheekiness, defiance and general disobedience.²⁷² Although it is safe to assume that many mothers in the Ritchies’ studies would have read the *Weekly*, they clearly did not see it as a source of child-rearing advice. Very few of the mothers reported receiving advice on disciplining children, and as a result had to rely on their own childhood memories, and the example of those around them. This meant that in effect, most parents smacked because their parents had smacked them.²⁷³ This may have been because the Ritchies deliberately attempted to interview parents from a range of socio-economic levels. Hardyment noted that the “cognoscenti” were followers of Spock’s ideas during the 1950s.²⁷⁴ Although large tracts of the middle class were vehemently opposed to permissive parenting, this suggests that of all the groups in society, the more highly educated were most likely to read and accept the teachings of child-rearing advisors, while those at a lower income level were not so likely to. It is highly probable that this division would have carried on throughout the 1960s.

Although child-rearing advisors were beginning to teach parents about other methods of discipline, these had not changed the interactions of most ordinary mothers and their children. Smacking was considered the quickest, most effective and most appropriate punishment in the majority of cases. Some mothers did use isolation, but simply to give themselves a break rather than considering it an effective punishment in its own right. Many, on the other hand, would have agreed with JPG of Hamilton, who wrote to the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* expressing her horror at a psychiatrist telling a mother to leave her two year old child locked in the laundry until he finished his tantrum.

²⁷² ‘Spare the Rod and Spoil the ... Relief!’, *NZWW*, September 4, 1967, pp.33-35.

²⁷³ Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *The Next Generation: Child Rearing in New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 7.

²⁷⁴ Hardyment, p. 179.

Surely there are more intelligent ways of coping with a child in these modern days, instead of smacking, more smacking and horror of horrors – the padded cell treatment actually being recommended by so-called experts?²⁷⁵

Although JPG's letter showed that she was not a fan of smacking either, along with the mothers in the Ritchies' studies, she considered it a better option than isolation. Like many child-rearing advisors in earlier years, parents often believed that isolation was a cruel mental punishment, whereas smacking was not. Withdrawal of privileges was frequently threatened, but rarely followed through, so neither parents nor children felt that this was a particularly effective deterrent.²⁷⁶

While there was little belief in the effectiveness of isolation and withdrawal of privileges, so-called 'positive' discipline methods were deeply mistrusted.

'Control by smacking' is ... for many mothers virtually the only control consistently employed. They have thrown away some of the most potent reward techniques; praise is thought by many to be inappropriate; tangible rewards are castigated as 'bribery'; holding up other children as positive or negative models thought to be an anti-social technique; very few families use a credit-point reward system; most think isolation of the child cruel (or find it impossible to achieve); many regard reasoning as a waste of time. What is left for them to choose? Only punishment, threat of punishment and occasional praise.²⁷⁷

This mistrust of praise and rewards as a form of discipline was so strong at the time that child rearing advisors assumed parents would be against the idea from the start. Leo Trese presented a 'worst-case scenario' of a child who ended up in a home for disturbed children because her mother refused to praise her at all. Clearly anticipating the response of many of his readers, Trese explained that this mother believed praise would spoil her daughter, and she shouldn't need to be rewarded for good behaviour. Instead, he warned parents that they could not expect their children to develop any self-confidence without praise, and without self-confidence, it would be difficult for them to grow into happy, well-adjusted adults.²⁷⁸ In addition to praising children for good behaviour, Trese also advised parents to reward them for any extraordinary goodness. Once again, he obviously

²⁷⁵ 'Readers Declare', *NZWW*, June 13, 1977, pp. 53.

²⁷⁶ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 110-111.

²⁷⁷ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 157.

²⁷⁸ Trese, pp.76-78.

knew what the reaction of many of his readers would be, as he immediately afterwards explained the difference between a bribe and a reward, and emphasised the power of rewards to teach and maintain good habits.²⁷⁹ Just as the parents in the Ritchies' studies felt that tangible rewards were a form of bribery and to be avoided at all costs, he was expecting his readers to feel the same way, and trying to convince them otherwise.

In this, parents of the 1960s and 70s seemed to agree strongly with their counterparts of the 1950s, as studied by Rainey. However, the Ritchies' studies showed a major change in the way discipline was administered. Rainey found that the fathers were the most frequent and severe disciplinarians in his study. The "wait until your father gets home" mentality was very much in evidence. In the Ritchies' studies, however, they found that fathers were much less likely to smack their children than mothers were. Twenty percent of fathers didn't smack their children at all, 14 percent used it occasionally and only three percent frequently punished their children.²⁸⁰ Compared with statistics for mothers, where almost a quarter of mothers smacked their children every day, this is an enormous gap. Fathers in the 1960s seemed to be much more removed from their children, not even figuring as the official disciplinarian. An *NZWW* article on June Haver, an ex nun now married to a television star, also supported the idea that women were now in charge of the discipline process.

Discipline has never been heavy-handed in our household. I've swatted a few times, but there was never any of that if-you-don't-behave-your-father-will-punish-you-when-he-comes-home sort of thing.²⁸¹

The 'feminisation of discipline' shown in the Ritchies' studies could possibly be explained in two ways. Firstly, while Rainey interviewed both parents, the Ritchies focused on interviewing mothers, so it may be that they downplayed their husbands' role in discipline and focused instead on their own. An alternative explanation is that the mothers were almost exclusively at home with their children

²⁷⁹ Trese, p. 80.

²⁸⁰ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, p. 113.

²⁸¹ 'Ex Nun June Haver Writes About Her 17 Years of Happy Marriage to TV Star Fred MacMurray', *NZWW*, July 24, 1972, p.27.

all day, and therefore more likely to be required to discipline them. Even though this was very similar to the parents in the 1950s study, there was not the same idea of the father as the ultimate source of authority. This may be because the Ritchies made no distinction between smacking and other forms of physical punishment, such as caning, which was traditionally the role of the father. It is entirely possible that many fathers followed the traditional model of disciplining severely but only occasionally, but without the distinction between degrees of severity in physical punishment, the father's contribution inevitably seemed much smaller. However, this phenomenon was not simply confined to the families studied by Jane and James Ritchie. June Haver was also happy to portray herself as the chief disciplinarian in her house.

There was another aspect to the shift away from male-dominated discipline. While June Haver and the mothers in the Ritchies' studies were perfectly happy to admit to smacking their children, the harsher forms of punishment were becoming less acceptable, at least in a public forum. When the Ritchies studied a group of Form Two pupils and their parents at a Hamilton school in 1979, they found that the parents referred to themselves as smacking their children. The children, however, reported frequently being hit with implements, including sticks, straps, shoes, belts, wooden spoons, newspapers and even, disturbingly, a garden hose.²⁸² While smacking was considered perfectly acceptable, parents were most certainly reluctant to admit to using more severe forms of physical punishment. A major reason behind this was the so-called 'rediscovery of child abuse' at this time. Child cruelty, even though it was a widely acknowledged problem in earlier years, had largely been forgotten about by the 1950s. Even agencies like the SPWC were focusing on other issues, and disassociating themselves from child abuse issues. Even in 1966, the SPWC's annual report showed that it was still not ready to return to work with abused children, possibly fearing a negative reaction from its supporters. Instead, it reported that it had helped with "all kinds of family problems, matrimonial disputes, tensions between parents and adolescent children, age beneficiaries in difficulties ... unmarried mothers and disbursement still of some

²⁸² Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 29-30.

maintenance.”²⁸³ It was around this time, however, that the problem of child abuse began to re-emerge in the national consciousness. After many years of silence on the issue, the media began to publish a growing number of stories of “child beatings” by the mid-1960s, and the SPWC eventually began to acknowledge it as a genuine problem once again.²⁸⁴ Initially the term “beating” was not defined, particularly in terms of what separated discipline from abuse, but as time went on and the number of cases grew rather than diminished, further action had to be taken. The level of both concern and ignorance around these issues at the time was shown by the Department of Health’s ‘The Battered Child’ pamphlet, which was published in 1975 and written to help doctors, nurses and social workers to recognise the symptoms and warning signs of child abuse, assuming that they would not already know. Far from the old attitude that severe discipline was occasionally necessary and perfectly acceptable as long as it was not used too often; this pamphlet reflected a new definition of abuse.

Children who have been ill-treated once run the risk of subsequent ill-treatment with more severe and even fatal consequences.²⁸⁵

By now even one episode of beating a child was considered abusive and any discipline that left bruises or marks was also highly suspect. As the Ritchies found, parents were still using implements to discipline their children, but felt less justified in doing so. Twenty years earlier physical punishment was assumed to mean the use of an implement, such as a cane or rod, to make it painful enough to be effective. By the 1970s, however, the propensity of an implement to cause an injury or even leave marks on a child meant that its use was being called into question more. This inevitably impacted on the kinds of discipline parents would publicly admit to using, even if it did not necessarily change their actions.

The advice given to parents by child-rearing experts may not have been successful in changing their actions, but by the 1970s it was obvious to see that their

²⁸³ SPWC Wellington Branch Annual Reports, 1966, p. 3. WTU, MSX 3294.

²⁸⁴ ‘Minutes of Meeting, 27 November 1976’, SPWC Wellington Branch Minute book, 1972-80. WTU qMS1574, ‘Protection of Juveniles’, NZWW October 3, 1966, pp. 51-52 and ‘Readers Declare’, NZWW, March 7, 1977, p.54.

²⁸⁵ ‘The Battered Child’, Health Information Series, New Zealand Department of Health no. 293, May 9, 1975.

teachings were beginning to have an impact on a few parents. The Ritchies found that nearly double the number of parents were using praise to encourage their children to behave well, and the number of mothers who reported never praising their children had dropped from 14 percent in 1963-64 to three percent in 1977.²⁸⁶ Whereas ten years earlier writers to the *NZWW* were defending the use of smacking, a new tone began to emerge. Mothers were encouraged to go to parenting education classes, to

Make parents aware of how very important is total love and warmth, caring and compassion, tolerance and truth to a young child.²⁸⁷

Others, such as RMW of Orewa, warned their peers that constantly nagging and shouting at children would mean trouble in later life.

No wonder they get complexes and grow up delinquents!²⁸⁸

These writers may have been responding to the calls of child-rearing advisors, but for the vast majority, the new thinking had not had a positive impact on their family lives. As previously noted, the Ritchies were amazed at how the mothers in their 1963-64 studies were happy to discuss their use of smacking and saw no problem with it. However, by the time of their follow up 1977 study, they found that over 70 percent of the mothers admitted they often smacked their children out of their own anger, tiredness or frustration, and that they felt guilty about it.²⁸⁹ Added to this, the Ritchies found that the perceived effectiveness of smacking as a punishment had also dropped sharply.²⁹⁰ As noted earlier, however, neither guilt nor a declining belief in its effectiveness had prevented parents using physical punishment, so much so that its frequency had actually increased by the end of the 1970s. Attempts to use the 1979 International Year of the Child to lobby the government into changing the law on smacking failed dismally, with the government once again declining to interfere in a private family matter. The popular response to this suggestion was summarised by cartoonist Eric Heath.

²⁸⁶ Jane Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns: Further Studies*, p. 32.

²⁸⁷ Letter from Susan Buchanan, Mt Roskill, 'Readers Declare', *NZWW*, April 4, 1977, p. 49.

²⁸⁸ 'Letters', *NZWW*, September 19, 1977, p.64

²⁸⁹ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, p. 28.

²⁹⁰ Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns: Further Studies*, p. 35.



"WADJA MEAN U CHINE 'EM? - THIS IS THE
YEAR OF THE CHILD!"

Alexander Turnbull Library ²⁹¹

Heath's picture of a world full of delinquent children and parents who were powerless to stop them was shared by many. This fear was enough to maintain a high level of support for, and use of, physical punishment. Once again, those parenting advisors who did not support the use of physical punishment had failed to convince the public at large that it was possible to discipline a child without smacking them. As Jane and James Ritchie discovered, any suggestion that physical punishment should be banned was met with derision.

²⁹¹ Heath, Eric Walmsley, 'Wadja mean discipline 'em? - This is the Year of the Child!' *Dominion*, September 12, 1979. From the New Zealand Cartoon Archive Collection, Drawings, Paintings and Prints. B-144-165, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington New Zealand.

Whatever the reason behind it, children in the 1960s and 70s frequently received physical punishment, and it was an acceptable practice both at home and in public. After completing their first two series of studies, the Ritchies would most certainly have agreed with the editor of the *New Zealand Monthly Review*.

Most parents have conditioned their children to corporal punishment before they ever go to school, and for some children it is the only form of punishment or restraint they have ever known.²⁹²

All in all, the Ritchies' studies did not show New Zealand motherhood in the 1960s and 70s in a particularly favourable light. In general the majority of mothers did not seem to enjoy raising their children and were frequently frustrated, lonely and unhappy.²⁹³ It is not surprising that child rearing advisors in the years since have placed so much emphasis on the importance of enjoying time spent with children, even though it was hardly mentioned at this period. While parents in the 1960s frequently and loudly justified their right to smack their children as an effective method of punishment, this did not always translate through to parents in the 1970s. More and more admitted they felt guilty about using physical punishment, but continued to use it anyway. As the problem of child abuse became publicly acknowledged once again, this most certainly impacted the kinds of discipline that were socially acceptable. Terms such as "beating" and "thrashing", which would have been perfectly acceptable in the 1950s, became associated with abusive parents. Despite this, however, the kinds of discipline used did not actually change for most children. They were still hit with implements, but their parents were less likely to publicly admit that they did so. Heavier forms of discipline may have been out of fashion, but the right to smack was still strongly defended, as Jane and James Ritchie found out. Because of their association with the unpopular permissive parenting movement, other forms of discipline were deeply mistrusted, leaving "punishment, threats of punishment and occasional praise" the only option for parents.

²⁹² Educational Comment, 'Corporal Punishment – Right or Wrong?' *New Zealand Monthly Review*, 1:5 (1960), p. 10.

²⁹³ Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, 'One Ordinary Mother', in *Marriage and the Family in New Zealand*, Stewart Houston, (ed.), Wellington: Sweet and Maxwell, 1970, p. 109.

Chapter 8. Raising Children Whose Company We Enjoy: Parenting Advice in the 1980s-2000s

If wife beating has ceased to be acceptable, it is safe to say that child-beating is bound to follow. It is only a question of when. The fact that we do not extend to children the immunity from bodily violence that we extend to all adults, including criminals, does not mean that it must always be so.²⁹⁴

The editor of the *New Zealand Monthly Review* made this prediction in 1960. Twenty years later, it still looked overly optimistic. Despite the recent concerns over child abuse, child rearing advisors generally supported the use of smacking and the New Zealand government had once again reaffirmed its support for the use of physical punishment of children. Jane and James Ritchie had presented a submission to the Select Committee on Violent Offending in 1978, calling for the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, and arguing that physical punishment in the home was a major cause of adult violent offending. The submission was rejected, not only on the grounds that the committee was unconvinced of the link between physical punishment and aggression, but also because it declined to interfere in matters which were considered to be private family business, and did not feel that legislation was the correct method to change parental attitudes.²⁹⁵ The Ritchies' view of physical punishment was considered radical, strange and extremely unpopular. It would not remain this way for long, however. From the 1980s, more and more child-rearing advisors focused on the alternative discipline methods promoted by their earlier counterparts and rejected the use of smacking altogether, even as a final resort. These advisors were more successful in their campaign against physical punishment than their predecessors in the 1950s, however, as their influence spread to other community groups. Important parenting organisations such as Save the Children, Barnados and the Plunket Society²⁹⁶ began to take an anti-smacking stance, as did the media. Once again, physical punishment had become enormously unfashionable. Under such pressure, government policy could not remain the same. After the Children's Commissioner

²⁹⁴ Educational Comment, 'Corporal Punishment – Right or Wrong?' *New Zealand Monthly Review*, 1:5 (1960), p. 9.

²⁹⁵ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, pp. 132-33.

²⁹⁶ See Wood, Hassall and Hook for a full list of the community organisations which supported the repeal of Section 59.

joined the campaign against physical punishment in 1993, the government eventually repealed the law justifying its use in May 2007. 47 years later, from an official perspective at least, the *New Zealand Monthly Review* had been proven correct. It had only been a matter of time.

This enormous change in the official attitude towards physical punishment in New Zealand actually took place in a relatively short space of time. The government went from supporting physical punishment to being against it in less than 15 years. Although the law was not changed until 2007, the government had been facing increasing pressure, both from external sources and its own departments, from the early 1990s. A major factor in this was a change in the international tide of official opinion about physical punishment, driven mainly by the European nations. In an attempt to improve its child abuse statistics, Sweden became the first country in the world to remove the right of parents to physically punish their children in 1966. In 1979, the International Year of the Child, the Swedish government banned its use altogether. At a time when the New Zealand government declined to interfere with parents' disciplinary choices, Sweden backed up the law change with a process of parental education on other forms of discipline. Even though the majority of Swedish adults had been opposed to the initial law change in 1966; when another poll was taken seven years later, only a quarter of adults still disagreed with it.²⁹⁷ Following on from Sweden's success, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Austria all outlawed the physical punishment of children in the 1980s. During the 1990s, several more European nations banned the use of physical punishment, and New Zealand became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of this convention, the government agreed that all children should be protected from "all forms of physical or mental violence".²⁹⁸ Once this convention was signed, the government was forced to determine where the dividing line lay between acceptable physical punishment and abuse of children. As will be seen in the next chapter, this question had no easy answer.

²⁹⁷ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, p. 131.

²⁹⁸ Anne Smith, Megan Gollop, Nicola Taylor and Kate Marshall, *The Discipline and Guidance of Children: A Summary of Research*, Otago: Children's Issues Centre, 2004, p. 9.

While the government's stance on physical punishment was under pressure from overseas sources, it was also under increasing pressure to change from internal sources as well. By the end of the 1980s, Jane and James Ritchie's view on physical punishment was no longer considered extreme or unusual among parenting advisors. In fact, an anti-smacking stance was fast becoming the default position. By the early 1990s it was rare to find a parenting advisor who would support the use of physical punishment in any situation.

It is clear that parenting advisors of the 1980s – 2000s saw their role very differently to that of their counterparts in the 1960s and 70s. The earlier advisors had tried to make their advice more in line with the accepted parenting practice of the day, in an attempt to restore the damaged relationship between advisors and parents after the permissive parenting era. As a result, they supported the use of physical punishment under certain restrictions, even though many clearly held reservations about parents' ability to use it within the correct boundaries. Since the 1980s, however, advisors no longer acknowledged this pressure. This was mainly due to the fact that research carried out in the 1960s-80s suggested that many parents were guilt-ridden, stressed out individuals who did not particularly enjoy their role. Jane and James Ritchie described this situation in their 1970 article 'One Ordinary Mother'.

If we must sum up Sheila's child training we would choose a single word, negativism. Denial of childhood sexuality, dependence on punitive training methods, lack of maternal joy or affectionate warmth, emotional blandness, inhibited and discontinuous independence training, monitoring, instant obedience, conflict over the children's self-assertion and especially aggression, denial of achievement, all these are features of this generally negative approach.²⁹⁹

Such a concerning picture of contemporary motherhood seemed guaranteed to produce plenty of opportunities for parents to discipline their children, and a high likelihood that they would resort to physical punishment far more often than Dr Begg or his colleagues would have thought appropriate. As a result, parents were

²⁹⁹ Ritchie and Ritchie, 'One Ordinary Mother', p. 109. See also Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *Growing Up in New Zealand*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1978, p. 144

in need of advice in a way that they had not been in the more certain years of the 1950s. As this message began to filter through to child-rearing advisors in the 1980s, the tone of their advice changed. Rather than having to convince parents of their need for help; parenting advisors have been confident that their advice is both needed and, generally speaking, wanted by parents.

As part of this process, there has been another rethink of the purposes and goals of child-rearing. Neither instant obedience, nor complete understanding, nor long-term focused discipline had produced the happy, healthy relationships between adults and children that had long been promised. As a result, since the 1980s parenting advisors have taken a more holistic approach, combining both a long and short-term focus in discipline. Parents were not only to think about the kind of adult they would like their child to become, but also to work on making sure they were able to enjoy their child's company now. Teaching obedience and discipline have been seen as extremely important, but it was equally crucial for families to have fun together.

Liking is about fun, about play, about the best stuff.... Playfulness is the grease of family life – it's the stuff that keeps the wheels turning. Without it, things inevitably grind to a painful halt. Whenever I sit with families and see an absence of playfulness, I start to worry.³⁰⁰

The central belief was that discipline problems often came about through parents either not paying enough attention to their children, or only responding to bad behaviour. Therefore, if parents and children had a generally happy relationship and enjoyed their time together, this would avoid many discipline problems from the start.

This new thinking was first hinted at in 1978, when the Plunket Society defined the four needs of children as love and security, new experience, praise and recognition and responsibility.³⁰¹ Not only was this an enormous departure from Sir Truby King's '12 Essentials', it showed a growing importance being placed on the idea

³⁰⁰ Nigel Latta, *Before Your Kids Drive You Crazy, Read This!*, Auckland: HarperCollins, 2006, p. 17.

³⁰¹ 'Present Plans and Future Prospects of the Plunket Society', *Plunket Newsletter*, August 1978, p. 2.

that affection and praise were more important for children than punishment. The idea was also supported by the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*.

Some people feel that too much affection will 'spoil' a child. Nothing could be further from the truth. Children of all ages have a deep need to be loved and cherished.³⁰²

Many of these ideas seemed similar to those of the permissive parenting movement of the 1940s and 50s, but with one major difference. Where the permissive parenting advocates focused on the need to understand children, believing this would automatically negate any discipline problems; advisors in the years since 1980 have focused on the need for discipline as well as love, and the rights of parents as well as children. Parents have been encouraged to put their own needs first occasionally,³⁰³ and reminded of the sheer impossibility of enjoying time spent with an undisciplined child. Diane Levy argued the case most strongly.

What upsets parents the most is when they find themselves no longer enjoying their children's company. When children are difficult to manage, when they are rude and disrespectful, when they cannot tolerate the least frustration without a loud and unpleasant meltdown, it is jolly hard to keep liking them. I am not saying for a single moment that we stop loving them, but liking them is another matter. I think we owe it to our children to raise them as pleasant, productive individuals whose company we – and everyone else who comes into contact with them – can enjoy.³⁰⁴

The idea that discipline makes a child's life more enjoyable in the short-term, as well as setting them up for a happy adulthood, has been the foundation of advice given by the majority of child-rearing advisors in recent years. This is evident even in the titles of child-rearing advice books, such as Nigel Latta's *Before Your Kids Drive You Crazy, Read This!* Diane Levy's latest book *Time Out for Tots, Teens and Everyone in Between* is subtitled "how to get your children to do as they're told". Kate Birch described her popular 1993 book *Positive Parenting* as a "self contained guide to pleasurable parenting."³⁰⁵ Discipline and boundaries have been

³⁰² 'Effective Parenting: Rearing Happy, Productive, Understood and Respected Children', *NZWW*, May 12, 1986, p. 15.

³⁰³ see, for example, 'Do You Spoil Your Children?', *NZWW*, March 24, 1986, pp. 69-70.

³⁰⁴ Diane Levy, *Time Out for Tots, Teens and Everyone in Between*, Auckland: Random House, 2007, pp. 10-11.

³⁰⁵ Kate Birch, *Positive Parenting. From Toddlers to Teenagers: A resource book for New Zealand families*, (rev. ed.), Auckland: Reed Publishers, 1993, p. 9.

promised to make children feel safe and secure, and therefore less likely to misbehave.³⁰⁶ Teaching parents how to achieve the tricky balance between discipline and fun has been the focus of the many books, magazine articles and even television programmes that made up the exploding industry of parenting advice.

Although each author has their own particular brand of advice, several themes emerge. Parents have been strongly advised to bring children into the discipline process; including setting up age appropriate contracts with their children, discussing expected behaviour in advance and agreeing on consequences for breaking the rules.³⁰⁷ Again, this refers back to the permissive parenting idea that children actually want to behave well, and simply need guidance on what to do. Dorothy Baruch would have felt this was all that was needed. Modern parenting advisors, however, have assumed that punishments would occasionally be necessary as well.

Secondly, there was a much greater emphasis on the importance of allowing children to suffer the consequences of their misbehaviour. "Natural" consequences, such as allowing a child who refused to eat their lunch to go hungry until the next meal, were considered the most effective and appropriate punishments.³⁰⁸ Where the use of natural consequences was not possible, a variety of punishments were suggested, most of which centred around withdrawing privileges and time out, in its many different forms.

Time out, or isolation as it used to be called, was certainly not a new concept. The *New Zealand Weekly Graphic and Ladies' Journal* suggested it as a form of discipline as early as 1890.³⁰⁹ Generally speaking, however, time out had been considered by earlier parenting advisors as a cruel, mental punishment that was far more harmful than a painful session in the woodshed. During the 1960s some

³⁰⁶ see, for example, Latta, p. 18.

³⁰⁷ David Stewart, *Catch them When they're Good: A parent's guide to survival*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1983, pp. 16-21, and Birch, p. 80.

³⁰⁸ Birch, p. 41.

³⁰⁹ 'The Children's Page', *NZWG and LJ*, June 14, 1890, p. 19.

parenting advisors had suggested it as an option to try before resorting to smacking,³¹⁰ but parents frequently disagreed with it or found it unworkable. In recent years, however, it has been promoted as a genuine alternative to physical discipline, and a much more effective method if used correctly. Whereas advisors in the 1960s and 70s simply suggested it as an option, in recent years an entire industry has built up around the subject of time out.

'Supernanny' Jo Frost became synonymous with the concept of time out through her extremely popular television show. Her discipline advice centred around the use of a "naughty step", where misbehaving young children would be sent for one minute per year of age. After the time was up, they would have to apologise for their actions, have a cuddle with the parent, then they could return to their previous activity. This was believed to give the child a tangible consequence for bad behaviour, by removing them from the company of others, giving them a chance to calm down and think about their actions and finally the opportunity to apologise and put the incident behind them.³¹¹ Supernanny's approach showed her belief in the importance of emotionally supporting children while also teaching them boundaries and allowing them to suffer appropriate consequences when necessary. This combination of psychology and consequences is the basis of most modern child-rearing advice, even if the specifics vary for each author.

While modern parenting advisors believed some form of discipline was essential to raising a happy child, physical punishment was most definitely not an option they supported. Their opposition to smacking, however, has taken a very different tack to that of their predecessors. Parenting advisors in the 1950s tried to diminish its use by presenting it as an ineffective discipline method. In the 1960s and 70s the Ritchies focused on the long and short-term dangers of smacking. In recent years however, advisors have simply ignored the question of smacking altogether. Instead, they have focused on other forms of discipline, teaching parents how to make them work and not even considering the use of physical punishment as a

³¹⁰ Kenward p. 1037 and Trese p. 84.

³¹¹ Supernanny Team, 'Using the Naughty Step', Accessed 25 August 2008 at <http://www.supernanny.co.uk/Advice/-/Parenting-Skills/-/Discipline-and-Reward/The-Naughty-Step.aspx>

final resort. As will be seen in the next chapter, this was not because it had become any less popular among parents. Rather, it was because parenting advisors had finally succeeded in gaining the support of influential community groups. With these groups all giving the same message against physical punishment, parenting advisors have been able to assume that parents felt guilty about smacking and simply needed guidance on alternative discipline methods.

Nigel Latta, for example, did not mention the use of physical discipline until right at the end of his book, when he gave a case study of a family who were out of control. One of their many problems was that “both Harry and Sally acknowledge they smack the kids.” To Latta, the fact that the parents smacked their children was simply another piece of evidence that they did not know how to control them, alongside other problems such as children who were causing trouble at school and being disrespectful to their parents. He made no further reference to their use of physical discipline in his action plan, but simply taught them how to use time out instead.³¹² Diane Levy’s book on *Time Out* also avoided any mention of the use of smacking, as did *Positive Parenting*. These parenting advisors were simply using some of their own advice; ignoring an unacceptable behaviour in the hope that it would eventually die out.

Since the 1950s, parenting advisors had been calling for parents to praise their children more and even on occasions to reward them for good behaviour. However, their reach was limited to those who would actually buy their books. A key feature of the years since the 1980s has been the popularisation of child-rearing advice. Popular magazines such as the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* and television programmes such as ‘Supernanny’ have been at the forefront of this movement. There have been many parenting advice programmes on television in recent years, including ‘Little Angels’, ‘Nanny 911’ and New Zealand’s own ‘Demons to Darlings’ with Diane Levy, but none have received the international popularity of Supernanny Jo Frost. Like her contemporaries, she also stressed the

³¹² Latta, p.206.

importance of spending quality time with children and enjoying their company, as this would negate the need for most discipline measures.

The problem is... that many parents get into the habit of only paying attention to their children when they are noisy and naughty, and ignoring them when they are nice and quiet..... And if you spend time with your children having fun, rather than just trying to bend them to your will, you'll find you get less bad behaviour from the start.³¹³

Supernanny has been a 21st century phenomenon, but the popularisation of child-rearing advice began several years earlier, particularly in New Zealand by the *NZWW*. While in earlier years the *Weekly* occasionally carried articles that supported the prevailing fashion in child-rearing advice, broadly speaking, it reflected public opinion on issues such as child discipline, and smacking in particular. Its advice columns had focused far more on affairs of the heart than on child-rearing, and articles on this topic had been included on an irregular basis. However, in the 1980s, the *NZWW* began to focus more on parenting problems than it ever had before, frequently running articles on parenting issues and instituting regular columns such as the 'Family Forum'. This parenting column has remained in various forms ever since, and has been a major influence on the *Weekly*'s stance on parenting. The result of this has been that the *Weekly* began to attempt to influence public opinion on discipline, rather than reflect it. This was not simply confined to the advice pages, but spilled over into the magazine itself. Most notably, celebrities have been used to promote different parenting values, particularly the importance of having fun with children. An article on Temuera Morrison and his son James emphasised the fun they had together.

Having him around is so good, he's my best mate.³¹⁴

Lucy Lawless was also commended for her concern for Daisy, her ten year old daughter. Because Lawless didn't want her to become a "bratty show-biz kid", she

³¹³ Supernanny Team, 'Why is my Child Worse at Home?', Accessed 25 August 2008 at <http://www.supernanny.co.uk/Advice/-/Parenting-Skills/-/Discipline-and-Reward/Why-Kids-are-Horrors-at-Home.aspx>

³¹⁴ Temuera Morrison, quoted in 'Like Father, Like Son', *NZWW*, May 31, 1999, p. 10

made sure they spent plenty of time together, were honest and open and gave Daisy lots of attention.³¹⁵

The changing role of the media in the debate over child discipline can best be seen by the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly's* "Prince Philip factor". In 1954 the *Weekly* commended the Duke of Edinburgh for smacking six-year old Prince Charles, who was repeatedly throwing his slippers downstairs.³¹⁶ By 1981, however, Prince Philip was portrayed instead as a non-authoritarian parent, preferring instead to resolve discipline problems with a discussion rather than anything else, and helping his children to make the right choices for themselves. Marie Antoinette was also held up as an excellent example, for encouraging her children to confide in her when they were naughty, and "avoid[ing] force or coercion" when dealing with them.³¹⁷ While Prince Philip was a model parent, nine years later, the *Weekly* was less impressed with Prince Charles' parenting skills, criticising him for being a

Typical Victorian father – proud of his sons but unable to relax when they are around. One doubts he has ever joined his sons in any fun playing with their model cars or model train sets.³¹⁸

This set of examples says far more about the *Weekly's* views on child rearing than that of the parenting skills of the royal family. In the 1950s, the *Weekly* happily reflected the common view that good parents smacked their children occasionally, and it would do no-one any harm. However by the 1980s, it had shifted views, and was attempting to teach parents the importance of discussion and negotiation with their children. This was followed up by the 1990 article reminding parents of the importance of playing with their children, and having fun with them. The royal family became of less importance to the *Weekly* during the 1990s, and instead were replaced with more local celebrities. Robyn Malcolm has been a favourite recent example of a good parent. Malcolm admitted to having bad days occasionally, but never actually hit either of her children because she didn't see it

³¹⁵ 'Lucy's Mother Love', May 10, 1999, pp. 10-11.

³¹⁶ 'The Duke Rates Highly as a Father', *NZWW*, January 28, 1954, p. 18.

³¹⁷ 'Family Forum', *NZWW*, July 27, 1981, pp. 38-39.

³¹⁸ 'Charles the Father: Is he falling down on the job?', *NZWW*, May 14, 1990, pp. 10-11.

as an effective discipline method.³¹⁹ Her realistic approach, recognising both the joys and trials of parenthood, but without using physical punishment, summarised the ideal parent of the early 21st century, and showcases the *Weekly's* transformation from reflector of public opinion to influence over it.

The *NZWW* was not the only organisation to be influenced by the new thinking on parenting in the 1980s-2000s. The Plunket Society's stance changed markedly in these years as well. Previously, the Plunket Society had supported the use of smacking under certain conditions, but during the 1980s, concerns about child abuse had led to a change in policy. This was mainly due to the influence of the new medical directors, Dr David Geddis and Dr Ian Hassall, who were both heavily involved in abuse prevention campaigns. By 1981 the *Plunket Newsletter* defined abuse as "physically hurt[ing]" a child, and argued that

Surveys show that most New Zealand parents use physical punishment as a form of discipline... This varies from a smack to a hard blow – even against a baby.³²⁰

The difficulty of separating physical punishment from abuse was becoming clear to the Plunket Society. By 1982 it was warning parents that although a smack itself was not abusive, the use of any kind of physical punishment was a "potentially abusive episode", and that good parents could easily lose their temper and become abusive without intending to.³²¹ Over time the Plunket society began to promote the use of other forms of discipline, especially through its regular column in the *NZWW*, 'A Plunket Nurse's Notebook'. Unsurprisingly, the Plunket Society was one of many parenting organisations that supported the repeal of Section 59 in 2007.³²²

During the period 1980s-2000s, the vast majority of parenting experts and organisations changed their opinion on physical punishment. Following on from this, there was an explosion of more popular sources of information on parenting,

³¹⁹ 'Robyn on the Smacking Issue', *NZWW*, May 21, 2007, pp. 24-26.

³²⁰ 'A Cry for Help', *Plunket Newsletter*, February 1981, p. 2.

³²¹ 'Seven Deadly Sins of Childhood', *Plunket Newsletter*, November 1982, p. 2.

³²² Wood, Hassall and Hook, p. 261.

such as columns in the *NZWW* and television programmes such as 'Supernanny'. This huge interest was also matched in the academic arena, as Straus had predicted.

As the idea of never hitting a child starts to become as uncontroversial as the idea of never hitting a spouse, there is likely to be a flowering of research on corporal punishment, just as there has been on wife-beating.³²³

In 2005, Terry Dobbs interviewed children for their thoughts on punishment and discipline.³²⁴ This was the first time since the 1950s that research of this kind had been undertaken in New Zealand. As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, there have been many studies of attitudes towards physical punishment among different groups, including university students and Pacific Island peoples.³²⁵ In this, New Zealand researchers were simply following the trend of those overseas. While the occasional researcher supported the use of physical punishment under strict conditions, they were very much in the minority. Instead, the use of physical punishment was found to make children violent, reject the message their parents were trying to convey, impair their intellectual development, damage relationships with their parents and cause any number of mental, physical and even sexual problems.³²⁶ The simple fact of the presence of so many studies on this one topic, most of which were from the 1990s onwards, is evidence of the enormous change in opinion on physical punishment amongst the academic community. Previously, the subject had rarely been considered, but now researchers were actively looking for long and short term results of physical punishment. Not only were they looking for the effects of smacking, but researchers were also making a concerted effort to ensure this information was presented in a way that was easily accessible to the lay parent. The Children's Issues Centre's *The Discipline and Guidance of Children: A summary of research*, and Terry Dobbs' *Insights: Children and young people speak out about family discipline* are both intended to present academic

³²³ Straus, p. 178.

³²⁴ See Dobbs, 'Children's Insights into Family Discipline'.

³²⁵ See, for example Hunt-Ioane, 'Physical Discipline in Samoan Families', or Gregory, 'Experiences of and Attitudes to Physical Punishment in New Zealand'.

³²⁶ see for example, Dobbs, 'Children's Insights into Family Discipline', p. 174, Straus, pp. 122-23, Anne Smith, Megan Gollop, Nicola Taylor, and Kate Marshall, *The Discipline and Guidance of Children: A Summary of Research*, Otago: Children's Issues Centre, 2004, pp. 14-17.

research in an easily accessible format, to change public opinion on, and usage of physical punishment.

Occasional physical punishment occurs in many families, and may not have long-term negative effects as long as it is used in a climate of warmth and love, where the predominant mode of relating to children is positive. Nevertheless, physical punishment should be avoided if possible because of the uncertainty of where the dividing line is between mild and severe.³²⁷

With so much weight of academic and expert opinion against the use of physical punishment, it is not at all surprising that the government's stance changed also. This topic has already been well-covered by other writers, so it is intended to only give a brief background here, and refer readers to Wood, Hassall and Hook's *Unreasonable Force* for a detailed analysis of New Zealand's path to the repeal of Section 59. The Office of the Commissioner for Children was set up in 1989, and by 1993 had officially adopted an anti-physical punishment position. Once an official government department had taken this stance it was simply a matter of time before Section 59 was repealed. The office produced parental education programmes such as 'Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents' in an attempt to teach alternative discipline options.³²⁸ It also supported other researchers, such as Terry Dobbs, as they studied the impacts of and opinions on physical punishment. Although, as will be seen in the following chapter, the weight of public opinion was still strongly supporting the use of physical punishment, it was inevitable that eventually the government would respond to the pressure from both local and overseas groups such as UNCROC and repeal Section 59, which happened in 2007.

The period 1980s to 2000s began with the government seeing no link between smacking and abuse, most parenting experts supporting the use of occasional smacking, and very little in the way of popular parenting advice sources. This very soon changed however. By the early 1990s, it was rare to find a parenting advisor who would support the use of physical discipline in any form. Academic researchers from a variety of disciplines discovered both short and long-term

³²⁷ Smith, Gollop, Taylor and Marshall, *A Summary of Research*, p. 18.

³²⁸ 'Introduction to SKIP', Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2005.

negative effects of smacking and eventually the government's position changed also, to the extent of repealing Section 59 against the weight of public opinion in May 2007. Such an enormous change of opinion on smacking in such a short space of time may seem very similar to that of the permissive parenting era of the 1950s. However, there are several important differences. Parenting advisors of the 1950s were against physical punishment on the grounds that it was ineffective, but allowed it for parents who simply needed to relieve frustration. They also felt parents would not have many discipline problems if their children were listened to and understood, so did not provide much advice on alternative discipline methods. As a result, parents misinterpreted this to mean they advocated no discipline at all. More recently, however, parenting advisors have provided a dual message, promoting the importance of discipline alongside the need for parents to enjoy their children, and have spent much time explaining how to make alternative methods work. They were also able to assume that parents would at least theoretically know that there were better methods of discipline, and would want to learn how to use them if possible. The final and most important difference between the 1950s and recent times has been the proliferation of the anti-smacking message. During the 1950s, most parenting advisors were against the use of physical punishment, but they did not have the support of other influential organisations, such as the government or even the Plunket Society. Therefore, with public opinion being so strongly in support of smacking, it was extremely unlikely that they would make any long term impact. In recent years, however, an anti-physical punishment stance has become the default position of almost all parenting organisations, the media and most importantly, government, leading to the repeal of Section 59 in May 2007. As the editor of the *New Zealand Monthly Review* had predicted so many years earlier, it had only been a matter of time.

Chapter 9. Supporting the Right to Smack?

Discipline of children in the 1980s – 2000s.

[Smacking is] a quick-fix power remedy to a much bigger problem.³²⁹

[Smacking is part of] centuries of safe, sensible and successful parental nurture.³³⁰

These two quotes encapsulate the debate over physical punishment in recent years. On one hand, supporters argue that its use has been part of our culture for generations, and has played an enormous role in teaching each new generation to conform to the rules and customs of the society around them. It was only in recent years, they would say, that a misguided focus on the rights of children and ungrounded fears of abuse have threatened a long-standing, acceptable and effective practice. Opponents of physical punishment, on the other hand, argue that it is an outmoded, cruel and undignified practice, which only works through fear and coercion, and therefore is frequently ineffective at controlling behaviour. As has been seen, the use of physical punishment has been a long-standing tradition in New Zealand society. Parents, teachers, judges, governments and often, even parenting advisors have defended the right to use it within the limits considered acceptable at the time. Subscribers to the permissive parenting ideas in the 1950s had tried to reduce the amount of physical punishment used by parents, but these efforts ended in failure. Arguably, they may have actually contributed to an increase in the use of physical punishment, as parents reacted strongly against the advice they were given. Until the 1980s there were very few people, even among parenting advisors, who spoke against the use of physical punishment. Those who did were treated with disbelief, and even, according to the Ritchies, outright hostility. As the number of parenting experts who disagreed with physical punishment grew throughout the 1980s and 90s, their main task was, like that of their counterparts in the 1950s, to try once again to change public opinion on smacking.

³²⁹ 'Evelyn', participant in study by Marie Russell, 'Discipline of Children: Alternatives to Smacking', MA (Applied) Thesis in Social Science Research, Victoria University of Wellington, 1996, p. 75

³³⁰ Michael Drake, *By Fear and Fallacy: The repression of reason and public good by the anti-smacking lobby in New Zealand*, Auckland: Wycliffe Christian Schools, 2006, p. 5.

On the surface, these experts were singularly unsuccessful. Study after study over the last 20 years has shown an overwhelming degree of support for the use of physical punishment among ordinary New Zealanders. In the Christchurch Health and Development Study, 77 percent of participants reported that their parents had used physical punishment on them occasionally, when they were growing up in the 1980s.³³¹ When compared with the findings of Jane and James Ritchie's third study of discipline practices amongst mothers of four year old children in 1987, these figures seem like they may have been slightly underestimated, perhaps through the passage of time. The Ritchies found that 50 percent of mothers still smacked their children at least once a week, and 14 percent were being smacked every day.³³² The numbers in more recent years have been equally high. In 2001 the Ministry of Justice commissioned Sue Carswell to complete a telephone study of 1000 people (including 100 Maori and 100 Pacific Island people) on their attitudes towards physical discipline of children. She found that in total 80 percent of respondents believed that smacking with an open hand should be allowed by law.³³³ These findings were very similar to that of Gabrielle Maxwell, who found that in 1993, 87 percent of people also supported the use of smacking.³³⁴ In 2005 Terry Dobbs studied the other side of the equation, to learn what such high approval ratings for physical punishment among adults actually meant for their children. She found that 77 percent of 12-14 year olds reported being smacked when younger, and 29 percent still received physical discipline at times. For younger children, the figures were slightly lower, with 42 percent of 9-11 year olds and 58 percent of 5-7 year olds reporting that their parents used physical punishment on a regular basis.³³⁵ With these results the enormous opposition to the repeal of Section 59 is not surprising.

³³¹ D.M. Fergusson, 'The Christchurch Health and Development Study: An overview and some key findings', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 10, (1998), p. 17.

³³² Jane Ritchie and James Ritchie, *The Next Generation: Child Rearing in New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 88.

³³³ Sue Carswell, *Survey on Public Attitudes Towards the Physical Discipline of Children*, Wellington: Ministry of Justice, 2001, p. 23.

³³⁴ Gabrielle M. Maxwell, *Physical Punishment in the Home in New Zealand*, Occasional Paper No. 2, Wellington: Office of the Commissioner for Children, 1993, p.9.

³³⁵ Dobbs, 'Children's Insights into Family Discipline', p. 95.

However, despite the fact that most parents supported the right to smack, and the majority of children in Dobbs' study reported that their parents exercised that right, the nature and usage of discipline had most certainly changed. One of the more persistent attitudes in New Zealand society is that children "these days" are not disciplined as strictly as they were in earlier years, and by definition, their behaviour is much worse. The Earl of Meath was so worried about parents being too soft on their children in 1910 that he wrote an article calling parents to toughen up for the sake of the British Empire.³³⁶ A writer to the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* in 1968 may not necessarily have had the same concern for the empire as Lord Meath, but was deeply troubled by the "numerous little slaps one sees parents applying nowadays" to discipline their children instead of the old fashioned "good swift smack" that hurt enough to make them stop immediately.³³⁷ This idea has come through in many of the more recent studies on attitudes towards physical punishment as well. Participants in Faye Hunt-loane's study of Samoan community leaders all reported that they used much less physical punishment than their parents did, and relied more instead on inductive-style parenting methods such as communication, modelling and setting clear boundaries in advance.³³⁸ In Mary Gregory's 2006 study of Waikato University students to determine how experiences of physical punishment as children affected adult attitudes towards it, she found that although "all of the participants defended, justified or minimised their parents' use of physical punishment"³³⁹ they still believed they used less than their parents did.

However the frequency and severity of physical punishment appeared to decrease from that the participants experienced during childhood to their reported use as parents or future parents. This suggests that the frequent and severe forms of physical punishment are becoming less acceptable in New Zealand.³⁴⁰

This inconsistency in their attitudes is worth a closer examination. It would seem reasonable that if a person felt their parents were entirely justified and correct in

³³⁶ Meath, p. 10.

³³⁷ 'Readers Declare', *NZWW*, May 27, 1968, pp. 70-71.

³³⁸ Hunt-loane, pp. 82-84.

³³⁹ Gregory, p. 73.

³⁴⁰ Gregory, p. 78.

their methods of discipline, they would automatically raise their children in exactly the same manner. However, this was not the case. Instead, although they supported their parents' discipline methods, at the same time they reported that they either were or expected to be less harsh on their own children. This could be simply a matter of perspective, that punishment always seems harder and more frequent when one is receiving it, and the participants' children may have told a different story. However, the evidence from recent studies does suggest that children are physically disciplined less often now than in the past. Whether or not this is a good thing is largely a matter of opinion! Jane and James Ritchie found in their 1978 study of mothers with four year old children that only ten percent did not use physical punishment,³⁴¹ but it would seem from Dobbs' findings that this number had grown to around forty percent by the early 2000s, at least in the 5-7 year old age bracket. For older children, the numbers were even fewer, with around 42 percent of 9-11 year olds regularly receiving physical punishment, and 29 percent of 12-14 year olds. While nearly all the children had been smacked at some point, many parents were obviously trying to use other methods. The children whose parents did not use physical punishment instead reported that their parents used a combination of time out, extra jobs, withdrawal of privileges and yelling as their major forms of punishment.³⁴²

In March 2005, the *New Zealand Herald* reported the results of a Gravitass survey which showed that only 51 percent of parents with children under five used physical punishment when disciplining, and of that, 49 percent said they hadn't used it within the last three months.³⁴³ This showed an enormous drop in the amount of physical discipline reported by parents since the Ritchies' first study in 1963. Once considered an essential part of parenting, and something nearly a quarter of mothers freely admitted they did every day,³⁴⁴ smacking had become a last resort, something that parents reported they would only use as the ultimate weapon.

³⁴¹ Ritchie, *Further Patterns*, p. 9.

³⁴² Dobbs, p. 94.

³⁴³ Simon Collins, 'Smackers in retreat, says survey', *New Zealand Herald*, 30 March 2005. Accessed 3 April 2008 at www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10117744

³⁴⁴ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Child Rearing Patterns*, pp. 112-13.

However accurate surveys may be at gauging peoples' attitudes, they do not necessarily show how those attitudes translate into action. The results of Carswell's and the Gravitas surveys need to be read alongside the findings of Dobbs' studies, which were taking place around the same time and provided a very different perspective on physical discipline in New Zealand families. Ninety one percent of children surveyed reported that their parents had used physical punishment at times, which is a much higher percentage than would be suggested by the Gravitas survey, or even Carswell's or Maxwell's findings. Far from being a very rare event, Dobbs argued that from many children's perspective at least, physical punishment was considered to be a first option, rather than a last resort.³⁴⁵

This same inconsistency of findings was also shown when discussing the more severe forms of physical punishment. During the 1950s, it was assumed by all parties that physical punishment would involve an implement of some sort. The cane, stick or strap were a part of life, both at home and school for the majority of children. However, with the growing concern about child abuse in the 1960s and 70s, the more severe forms of discipline became less fashionable, and parents more reluctant to talk about them. In 1993, Maxwell found that 11 percent of participants believed it was appropriate to hit a child with an implement of any sort.³⁴⁶ Eight years later, even the ubiquitous and traditional wooden spoon was largely out of favour, with Carswell's study showing that only 15 percent of respondents felt it was acceptable to hit a naughty child with a wooden spoon or a belt. Over 99 percent of respondents disagreed with the use of heavier implements such as a piece of wood or a jug cord.³⁴⁷ The findings of Gregory's study were fairly similar. While 73 percent supported the use of smacking with an open hand, only 17 percent agreed with using a wooden spoon or jandal, and only four percent felt it was appropriate to use a belt, jug cord or strap.³⁴⁸ Carswell also questioned respondents on their personal definitions of "reasonable force". For 75 percent of people, this was defined as a "smack which left no mark". Only six

³⁴⁵ Dobbs, pp. 153-54.

³⁴⁶ Maxwell, pp. 14-15.

³⁴⁷ Carswell, pp. 10-12.

³⁴⁸ Gregory, p. 58.

percent felt that it was acceptable to leave a mark which lasted a few days, and less than one percent agreed that it was allowable to cause any kind of bruising.³⁴⁹ When compared with the forms of discipline that were acceptable in earlier years, it is plain to see that attitudes have softened greatly. The more severe forms of physical punishment which were acceptable in earlier years could not have avoided leaving marks and even bruising children. These actions were once considered all part of raising a healthy, productive child, but would now be considered extremely abusive.

During the 1890s, the difference between good discipline and cruelty was often a matter of frequency. Good parents would severely punish their children, but only on very rare occasions. This punishment would be painful, but not cause any lasting damage. Cruel parents, on the other hand, would mete out severe punishment on a fairly regular basis. The line between punishment and abuse has always been difficult to define, as was shown by the 1885 Fleming case, where the parents were acquitted despite widespread public outrage at their actions. In recent years, this problem has resurfaced once again, as courts struggled to determine where the line now fell. In recent years, some parents have been judged to have used "reasonable force" when hitting their child with a bamboo stick, a belt, a piece of wood and a hosepipe, while others have been found guilty of abuse for similar incidents.

These differing interpretations of section 59 by judges and juries illustrates that whilst the test supposes to be an objective one, that of "reasonable" force, consideration of the defence is almost inexorably intertwined with the decision-maker's individual moral position on the issue of corporal punishment of children.³⁵⁰

Although these represent some of the more extreme cases, in that the parents have been taken to court for their actions, and even though the severe forms of physical punishment were almost universally condemned by adults, Dobbs' studies

³⁴⁹ Carswell pp. 17-18.

³⁵⁰ Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, 'Case Summaries: Parental Corporal Punishment of children in New Zealand', Submission to UN Committee on Rights of the Child, 28 August 2003. Accessed 30 October 2008 at [http://www.acya.org.nz/site_resources/library/Documents/Reports to UN/S59 report UNCROC 2 8Aug2003.rtf](http://www.acya.org.nz/site_resources/library/Documents/Reports%20to%20UN/S59%20report%20UNCROC%208Aug2003.rtf)

showed that they were still a part of life for many children. In the 12-14 year old age bracket, 20 percent of children were being hit with implements, along with 22 percent of 9-11 year olds and 27 percent of 5-7 year olds. These implements ranged from the wooden spoon to a cane, a long-handled shoe horn, a belt and even a tennis racquet.³⁵¹ When compared with the number of children who received physical punishment in each age group, this showed that a high percentage of parents who smacked their children also used implements of some kind as well. Dobbs also found that 40 percent of 5-7 year olds, 36 percent of 9-11 year olds and 26 percent of 12-14 year olds were hit on the head, face or back,³⁵² practices that were also widely condemned by the respondents to Carswell's survey.³⁵³ While hitting children around the head has long been considered dangerous³⁵⁴ many of these other forms of discipline would have been perfectly acceptable in earlier years. Parents in more recent studies showed a marked reluctance to admit to using harsher forms of discipline, and even openly condemned them. Despite this however, the evidence from Dobbs' studies of children suggest that these practices are still relatively common.

The key to understanding this seemingly contradictory set of results is found in Gregory's statement that in New Zealand the "frequent and severe forms of physical punishment are becoming less acceptable in New Zealand".³⁵⁵ Physical punishment of children is generally acceptable in theory, but no longer in actual practice.

Regardless of its wide acceptance by parents, smacking is already socially unacceptable in public. Twenty years ago other shoppers would have applauded if you smacked your errant child in a mall (and fifty years ago they might have done it for you!); nowadays you risk tut-tutting or even intervention by bystanders.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ Dobbs, p. 128.

³⁵² Dobbs, pp. 128-29.

³⁵³ Carswell, p. 12.

³⁵⁴ Marris, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ Gregory, p. 78.

³⁵⁶ 'If I Don't Smack, What are my Options?', *Parents Inc Magazine*, Winter, Issue 29, 2007. Accessed 13 October 2008 from <https://www.parentsinc.org.nz/issue-29-if-i-don-t-smack-what-are-my-options/newzealandoptions/>

Where the mothers in Jane and James Ritchie's 1963 study were happy to admit using physical punishment on a daily basis, even by the end of the 1970s this had changed. Parents in their 1977 study of intermediate-aged children were reluctant to admit using implements to discipline their children for fear of being considered abusive.³⁵⁷ This was even more so for parents in the 2000s. Nearly half the parents in the Gravitas survey reported that they hadn't used physical punishment in the last three months. None of the parents in Gregory's survey reported that they smacked their children "very often", but over 60 percent reported they used it "occasionally".³⁵⁸ It is no longer acceptable to use physical punishment publicly, frequently or severely, and the pressure to conform to this standard very strong. However, discipline of children is an inevitably emotional matter. Anything that involves intense feelings of anger and frustration makes it difficult to control behaviour. Whereas parents may like to keep to a set of guidelines around the usage of physical punishment, or to even avoid it all together, in the heat of the moment this may not always be possible, and they may find themselves using discipline more frequently or severely than they would like. The fact that the majority of children in Dobbs' study noticed that their parents felt guilty after smacking them supports this idea.³⁵⁹ Unless these children were extraordinarily perceptive, their parents must have somehow gone out of their way to show their remorse at using physical punishment, either by openly apologising or by giving them a treat of some kind.

Many New Zealanders may have complained bitterly, signed petitions and held protests against the repeal of Section 59, but the fact remains that smacking is now socially unacceptable in public at least. Dobbs' study showed that even the parents who did use physical punishment also used it in conjunction with other methods.³⁶⁰ Time out and withdrawal of privileges were much more common than at the time of Jane and James Ritchie's first study. Although the majority of parents in Gregory's study reported that they had not learned anything from government parenting initiatives such as SKIP, and only about half had learned

³⁵⁷ Ritchie and Ritchie, *Spare the Rod*, pp. 29-30.

³⁵⁸ Gregory, p. 50.

³⁵⁹ Dobbs, p. 132.

³⁶⁰ Dobbs, p. 94.

“something” from television programmes, books or magazines,³⁶¹ it is likely that they had been influenced more than they realised. Unconscious influences can be equally as powerful (if not more so) as those we recognise. All the parents in her study reported that they used inductive methods of parenting and either didn’t smack their children, or only did so “occasionally/sometimes”.³⁶² The messages from parenting advisors had impacted the way these parents wanted to be seen, even if they didn’t acknowledge it.

If this message had been coming from one single direction, as it did from parenting advisors during the permissive era, it would have been much easier to ignore. But since the 1980s this has no longer been the case. Not only did the government promote alternative discipline methods; Supernanny’s ‘naughty step’ technique and absolute antipathy to smacking has been beamed into thousands of homes on a weekly basis. Whereas before Supernanny, parents would have to look for parenting advice in books or magazines and then try to visualise how it should be done, real life examples were now played out in front of them in half hour slots, once a week. Even the *NZWW*, so long a bastion of support for physical punishment, had a change of values as well. Far from Prince Philip’s “good-tempered spanking” of Prince Charles in the 1950s, Joan Bolger was one of a new breed of celebrity parents, commended for their relaxed approach to child-rearing.

I’m no disciplinarian. I’m fairly easy-going.³⁶³

This has all been part of a slow but definite change in ideas about physical punishment in New Zealand. During the Ritchies’ first study in 1963, even those mothers who used physical punishment on a daily basis were happy to say so, and clearly did not fear any censure for their actions. This was most definitely not the case for Gregory’s participants, or even for J.D. of Christchurch, who complained in the *NZWW* in 1986 that New Zealand had declined since parents and teachers were “no longer able to discipline their children.”³⁶⁴ Although corporal punishment

³⁶¹ Gregory, p. 51.

³⁶² Gregory, p. 50.

³⁶³ Joan Bolger: My life is my family, *NZWW*, May 12, 1986, p. 9.

³⁶⁴ ‘Letters’, *NZWW*, June 9, 1986, p. 54.

in schools was not officially outlawed until 1990, parents and teachers were already feeling the pressure not to use it.

In 2007, even the strongest opponents of the repeal of Section 59, including the Maxim Institute and Family First groups supported only “light smacking” or “mild corrective force”, rather than any of the more traditional forms of discipline.

Typically, any use of an instrument in disciplining a child will exceed Section 59 and will be very difficult to justify. This means that if a parent uses an instrument to discipline their child, they are less likely to be protected by Section 59.³⁶⁵

Even these groups acknowledged that physical punishment with an implement was no longer acceptable, and focused their efforts on justifying occasional light smacking. For parents in the Gravitas survey and Gregory’s study, it was acceptable to admit using “mild” physical punishment occasionally, but certainly no more often than that. Parents in the early 21st century were supporting the use of physical punishment under the same limitations given by Dr Begg and other parenting advisors in the 1960s and 70s, even though the evidence from Dobbs’ study showed that the reality did not always live up to the theory. The permissive parenting movement in the 1950s was easily discounted by the majority of parents because it was a fringe idea, and most certainly did not gain traction with the wider community. By contrast, over the last twenty years parenting advisors may not have succeeded in entirely changing parents’ views on the need for physical discipline, but they have gained the attention and support of extremely influential community groups. The message that there are other and better ways to discipline children now comes from not only parenting advice books, but television programmes, magazines, children’s charities such as Barnados, the Plunket Society and the government, to name a few. Neither the parents studied by Carswell and Gregory nor those signing the petition and protesting against the

³⁶⁵ Maxim Institute, ‘Crimes (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child Discipline Amendment Bill’, Submission to Parliament, 1 February 2006, p. 7. Accessed 13 October 2008, at www.maxim.org.nz/files/pdf/submission_crimesamendmentbill.pdf See also p. 2, and ‘Reality Hits Parents’, Family First advertisement, accessed 13 October 2008 at www.familyfirst.org.nz/files/LATEST%20-20%Reality%20Hits_SST.pdf

repeal of Section 59 could avoid being influenced by their message to some degree.

The 'discipline without smacking' message has been ubiquitous in recent years. Supernanny and its many spin-offs all promote the same message to thousands of households once a week. Child rearing advice has become an industry, driven by a proliferation of television programmes, books, websites, chat rooms and magazines. This enormous growth would not have been possible unless it was fuelled by strong demand from the community. With so many easily accessible sources and influential community groups, from the Plunket Society to the Anglican Bishop's Council all saying the same thing, they cannot help but influence attitudes in some way. This allowed the repeal of Section 59 to pass into law on 2 May 2007, despite overwhelming opposition. Even those parents and community groups who most opposed the repeal of Section 59 could not avoid being influenced by the anti-smacking message of the last twenty years. Formerly an expected and accepted part of discipline, the use of implements is now considered abusive by the majority of New Zealanders. As Dobbs' results have shown, this does not necessarily mean that implements are no longer used, but that it is slowly becoming less common. Even though the majority of respondents to Gregory's survey supported the use of smacking, it was still at the bottom of their list of reported methods when disciplining children. Discussing issues with children calmly, distraction, withdrawal of privileges and time out were used far more frequently than yelling or physical punishment of any form.³⁶⁶ Despite the relatively high usage of physical punishment reported by the children in Dobbs' study, for children over the age of 9, the most common punishments were time out, withdrawal of privileges or being yelled at.³⁶⁷ In spite of the overwhelming numbers of New Zealand adults theoretically supporting its use, repeated studies have shown that parents are unwilling to admit to actually using it. Physical punishment, slowly but surely, is going out of fashion.

³⁶⁶ Gregory, p. 50.

³⁶⁷ Dobbs, p. 95.

Conclusion: "Kids These Days"

One of the more persistent attitudes in New Zealand society is that "back in my day" children were brought up much more strictly. Talkback callers, letters to the editor and even Sir Bob Charles all agree that children "these days" are ill-disciplined, disrespectful and unpleasant to be around. It is, of course, a natural human tendency to constantly compare the present unfavourably with the past. Those who would look back to a mythical golden age (usually when they were young) where children were well-behaved, well disciplined and well-mannered need only read newspapers or the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* from that time to learn that this has never been the case. In fact, in 1910 Lord Meath was comparing children of that age unfavourably with generations that had gone before. Despite each new fashion in child-rearing, the vexed question of child discipline has never gone away. The debate between promoters of harsher punishments and kindly understanding continues to this day. The evolutionist historian would argue that the acceptable forms of child discipline have slowly softened over time, mainly due to the growth of affection in family relationships, a drop in the child mortality rate and a better understanding of psychology. Contextualist historians, on the other hand, believe that fashions in child-rearing practices follow a circular pattern, with some ages more interested in discipline and punishment issues than others. The evidence in this thesis shows that both these approaches are valuable in understanding the history of child discipline in New Zealand.

Fashions in parenting advice have come and gone since 1890, often swinging from one extreme to the other. Scientific child-rearing emphasised minimal attention and swift discipline for children, and was replaced by permissive parenting, which promoted exactly the opposite values. Since the 1960s the same cycle has repeated itself, although without running to the extremes of earlier years. While their interpretations of acceptable discipline were very different, the 1890s-1920s and the 1960s-70s shared an expectation that parents would and should use physical punishment on occasions. The permissive parenting era of the 1930s-50s and the 1980s to the present have, by contrast, both attempted to dismantle the use of physical punishment, either by ignoring it completely, or viewing it as

undignified, unacceptable and ineffective. Replacing this has been an emphasis on understanding children, and finding other ways of disciplining them. Broadly speaking, therefore, this thesis argues a contextualist approach best describes the history of child-rearing advice in New Zealand.

Within this cycle of interest in discipline issues, however, there has been some evolution. As chapters two and six show, parenting advisors in both the 1890s and the 1960s supported the use of physical punishment, but they had extremely different expectations of the kinds of punishment that would be used. Mental punishments such as isolation were considered cruel and unnecessary in the 1890s, whereas caning was considered an effective and appropriate punishment. By the 1960s, however, parenting advisors may have supported the use of physical punishment, but only reluctantly. Parents were encouraged to try all other avenues first, including isolation, and only if these were unsuccessful, to resort to smacking. More severe forms of physical punishment were unacceptable, even abusive.

In contrast, when looking at the attitudes of ordinary parents over time, this thesis argues that the evolutionary interpretation is the most appropriate. While the traditional evolutionist view of the Western family as a unit without much love or affection does not describe the New Zealand situation, ideas about what is acceptable discipline have certainly softened over time. This change, however, has been extremely slow. Despite minor changes in terminology, discipline of children in the 1950s was very similar to that of the 1890s. The only real difference was that of frequency. New Zealand children in the late 19th century spent much of their time away from parental supervision. Discipline may have been severe when meted out, but children who did not spend much time with their parents would have had correspondingly less time to be caught out in bad behaviour. In the 1950s, as highlighted in chapter five, parents supervised their children much more closely. When coupled with a nationwide panic about the behaviour of the young, this meant an increased frequency of physical punishment would have been inevitable.

The more severe forms of physical punishment, so commonly accepted in the 1950s, were becoming less acceptable by the 1970s, and an increasing number of

parents even admitted to feeling guilty about smacking their children. However, this did not materially change their discipline habits. Despite the fact that physical punishment with implements has become even less socially acceptable in the last 30 years, chapter nine shows it has remained a part of life for many children. Even smacking has become socially unacceptable in public and parents reluctant to admit using it on all but the rarest occasion, despite evidence from children which suggested otherwise. New Zealand parents are most certainly and unavoidably influenced by the anti-smacking messages around them, but the evidence suggests that it is more likely that their ideas on discipline, rather than their practice, have been affected. Social acceptability does not always determine how people act, and what they say in public does not always reflect their private actions. Change in this area, like all forms of evolution, has been extremely slow.

Although very few parents have recognised their importance at the time, parenting organisations, experts and government policies have been extremely important in shaping ideas on child discipline in New Zealand. When the vast majority of parenting experts are in agreement, their advice inevitably has some impact on parenting practice, but this may not be evident for many years. Sir Truby King and his contemporaries were relatively unusual in that their advice followed fairly closely the standard parenting practice of their day. Since then, parenting practice has been at best a generation behind that which has been promoted by parenting advisors, and at worst deliberately in opposition to it. It has only been in recent years that all but the most extreme advocates of physical punishment have agreed with Dr Begg's view that smacking with an open hand was acceptable as a last resort only, but any more severe punishment was not. Ironically, however, by this time parenting experts would no longer differentiate between different forms of physical punishment. For the entirely opposite reason, most would even agree with Emmeline and Sir Truby King, that there was no real difference between a smack and a thrashing with a stick. It remains to be seen how effective these modern parenting advisors will be in changing the way New Zealand children are disciplined.

One hundred years ago the ideal parent was a loving, but somewhat distant disciplinarian. Half a century later, the ideal parent was a kind, understanding friend, who focused far more on encouragement than discipline. Since the 1960s, a varying mixture of love, discipline and fun has been considered the key to good parenting. Although the recommended path has differed wildly, this thesis argues that the goal of parenting has been the same throughout the years since 1890. It has always been about raising children who will become happy, healthy adults. The changing fashions in child-rearing advice have been driven by new thinking on how best to achieve that goal. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the emphasis was on raising a useful citizen, as it was believed that this was the only path to a happy life. Therefore, parenting advisors focused on teaching parents to make their children independent, strong and even hardened to the rigours of life. Little attention and strict discipline were integral parts of this package. By the mid-20th century, psychologists rather than doctors were the largest influence on child-rearing techniques, and the emphasis shifted to the emotional health of the child, rather than the physical. Understanding, support and allowing children to express their feelings without fear of punishment were therefore the keys to raising a happy child. Through the 1960s and 70s, advisors returned to an emphasis on the importance of discipline to teach the child self-control, and therefore preparing them for adult life. Since the 1980s, both the long term and the short term goals have been taken into account. Preparing a child for adulthood was an important part of the child rearing process, but so also was enjoying their company while young.

This process reflects a change that has been taking place in western society over many years. Inflicting pain as punishment was once an acceptable method of discipline, not only for children, but for criminals, naval cadets, shop apprentices and even women. The growing acceptance of each of these groups as people in their own right, rather than simply extensions of their fathers, husbands or masters has led to the outlawing of physical violence against them. As the editor of the *Monthly Review* wrote in 1960, once violence against women had been outlawed, it was inevitable that violence against children, including physical punishment, would eventually follow. Punishments against the body, including strapping and caning,

were once considered the most effective method of both punishing bad behaviour and ensuring it did not happen again. Punishments against the mind were generally considered cruel, unnecessary and ineffective. However, the exact opposite is now the case. Short term isolation (otherwise known as time out) is recommended by parenting advisors as an extremely effective method of teaching children about consequences, especially when reinforced with plenty of love and attention for good behaviour. Any form of punishment against the body, including smacking, is seen as cruel and ineffective, not to mention undignified for all concerned.

By 2007, the vast majority of influential institutions of New Zealand society were officially against the use of physical punishment. Parenting advisors may have failed to convince the public at large that smacking was wrong, but unlike their counterparts in the 1950s, they had succeeded in gaining the support of community groups and government ministers. This was enough to ensure the official legal justification for physical punishment of children was removed. Despite the overwhelming public opposition to the repeal of Section 59, the influence of so many organisations has inevitably been felt in the wider community. The government, driven partly from within and partly under pressure from interested groups, was unable to remain neutral on the issue. After many years of considering child discipline a private family matter, it was forced to take a stance and change the law.

The media has played an enormous part in this transformation. As chapter three showed, newspapers tended to reflect public opinion on discipline in earlier years. Editors of major newspapers had no qualms about calling for delinquent children to receive severe and painful physical punishment, either from their parents, or if the parents were unwilling to do so, the courts. However, chapters eight and nine reveal how over time media sources, particularly the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, have shifted from reflecting public opinion to attempting to influence it. While the *New Zealand Herald* has printed several editorials supporting the repeal

of Section 59,³⁶⁸ their major influence has been over issues such as the media storm created when Michael Drake, principal of Carey Baptist College, sent out a pamphlet advising parents on correct smacking procedure.³⁶⁹ The media attention paid to the issue not only highlighted the relatively unusual situation in which an academic institution supported the use of physical punishment, but also drew attention to the somewhat extremist views of those supporting its use, and as such played an important role in reinforcing the message that physical punishment was no longer an acceptable practice.

Finally, this thesis argues that concerns about child abuse have played an enormous role in changing views of discipline in New Zealand society. At the beginning of the 20th century, although child abuse was an acknowledged problem, this acknowledgment was confined to one sector of society only. Middle class parents punished their children for their own good, only poor parents could step over into child abuse. The occasional use of a cane, rod or strap to punish children was therefore acceptable and expected. For both parenting advisors and the general public, there was a distinct line between good, stiff discipline and cruelty. By the 1950s, this line was still firmly in place and preventing juvenile delinquency was far more important than protecting children from abuse. Parents therefore were able to discipline their children severely and even more frequently than in the past, without fear of being considered abusive. By the 1970s, however, this had changed. The so-called rediscovery of child abuse changed the rules entirely. This was not a problem confined to a small sector of society. Abusive parents came from all ethnicities and all socio-economic levels. The medical profession,

³⁶⁸ see for example, 'Editorial: Spare us a Smacking Referendum', *NZH*, May 28, 2008, retrieved 29 October 2008 from

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?c_id=466&objectid=10512819 or 'Editorial Smacking Debate has Moved On', *New Zealand Herald*, February 28, 2008, retrieved 29 October 2008 from

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³⁶⁹ 'School Shows How to Smack', *New Zealand Herald*, August 25, 2005, retrieved 29 October 2008 from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10342325. Also see Craig Smith, 'A Working Definition of Spanking', Palmerston North: Family Integrity, 2004. Accessed 11 February 2008

www.storesonline.com/members/846699/uploaded/working_def_of_spanking.pdf and Craig Smith, 'The Christian Foundations of the Institution of Corporal Correction', Palmerston North: Family Integrity, 2005. Accessed 11 February 2008 at www.storesonline.com/members/familyintegrity/uploaded/Christian_Founds.pdf

the government and child-rearing advisors all had to adjust their thinking. By far the largest impact, however, was on ordinary parents. Once the bastion of good child rearing, an occasional strapping became considered a serious warning sign at best, and abuse at worst. Although many continued to use implements to punish their children, it became something to hide.

With child abuse issues essentially ignored in the 1950s, advocates of permissive parenting had failed miserably in their attempts to change opinions on physical punishment. However, because of its association with abuse, by the 1970s many parents admitted that even smacking their children made them feel guilty. In the last thirty years, with reports of horrendous child abuse cases once again in the news, parents could no longer ignore the link between physical punishment and abuse. Without this collective sense of guilt, this thesis argues that parenting advice in recent times would have gone the way of permissive parenting. The association with child abuse has been the catalyst for UNCROC and so many community organisations joining the anti-smacking cause. Without this pressure the government may not have repealed Section 59, and parents would have been able to continue with the same discipline practices so popular in the 1950s.

Ironically, while Sir Bob Charles and others would argue that children “these days” are undisciplined, there is more interest and focus on child-rearing than ever before, and discipline is an integral part of that focus. The forms of discipline recommended may be very different to what they had been in earlier years, but the emphasis is just the same. Parenting without physical punishment is now the fashion, and with the support of so many influential community organisations, not to mention the law, it is likely to remain that way. Ideas on child discipline in New Zealand have changed enormously since Yvonne Brown was a child, or Emmeline was writing for the *Otago Witness*, but the practical application of these ideas is taking a while to catch up. Where child rearing advice has swung between supporting and deploring the use of physical punishment, changes in actual parenting practice have been for the most part extremely slow. More and more parents in recent years have chosen to use the “naughty step” instead of the traditional “darn good hiding”, but there is still a long way to go. Despite what is in

fashion or societal pressure to the contrary, many “kids these days” are likely to receive physical punishment for some time to come. The only question remaining is whether their parents will be happy to admit it.

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