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MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE IN THE DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Since becoming the first English speaking country to legislate against the physical discipline of children in 2007, there has been much debate in New Zealand for and against the parental practice of smacking. For some it has meant a welcome amendment to legislation that protects the human rights of children, for others it raises fears that parents can be criminalised for smacking their children and that the rights of parents to discipline their child, as they see fit, are being eroded. Working for an organisation that fully supports the Amendment to Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961 and that promotes the human rights of children; the motivating factors that encourage a parent to stop the practice of physically disciplining their child became of interest to the researcher for this thesis. Ten participants, who had used physical discipline and who had made a decision to stop the practice, were recruited to take part in a qualitative study. The data collected was analysed through a thematic analysis process using five motivational contexts found in previous research on the topic. The five contexts were experiential, relational, biographical, regulatory and ideological (Davis, 1999). The findings of the research for this thesis concur with the previous research and add further information about the motivating factors. The findings also identify the strategies that parents have found useful to achieve success in their endeavour to change their disciplinary practice. Furthermore the importance of and the distinction between the human rights of the child and parental rights have been highlighted.

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