

DISCIPLINING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: PARENT INTERACTION

BY

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

Parents, within the context of the family, contribute to the socialization of children into the adult world. A method utilized by parents to socialize children and guide their development is discipline. Interaction between parents is a means by which they carry out their functions in the family such as disciplining children. Research related to interaction between the adults in the family has focused on marital interaction rather than interaction related to parenting. Therefore, health professionals and others working with families regarding childrearing and discipline in particular would benefit from knowledge on this topic.

This qualitative study explored the interaction within a mother-father dyad regarding child discipline of their preschool child in terms of: (a) their perceived discipline roles, (b) the socialization of parenting discipline style, (c) communication patterns regarding discipline, and (d) discipline problem solving and decision processes. A focused-ethnographic design was used to guide the research process. A purposive sample of 8 mother-father dyads, recruited from daycare, nursery school, and parent support group settings, participated in the study.

The conceptual framework guiding this study is family interaction theory within the context of family developmental theory. Family interaction theory views the family unit as consisting of interacting personalities and examines interactional family dynamics, including communication processes, roles, decision making and problem solving, and socialization patterns. The family developmental framework includes several basic tenants such as families proceed through developmental stages over a period of time during which developmental-based tasks occur, favorable task accomplishment results in satisfaction and success with later tasks, whereas failure to accomplish tasks leads to dissatisfaction, criticism, or difficulty in achieving later tasks. Data were collected via semi-structured face-to-face interviews, as well as fieldnotes. Measures were taken to enhance the rigor of the research process. As well, ethical integrity of the study was maintained.

Data analysis included content analysis of the interview transcripts and field notes to identify categories and themes. Data analysis revealed three themes: Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time; Discipline: So What About It?; and Parents: The Discipline Team. Parents described learning about discipline in their families of origin and then later on from a variety of other sources when they became parents. The participants' understanding of discipline and how they applied it to rearing their own children was shaped by this socialization. Discipline was defined by participants as a process involving actions on the part of the child and the parents resulting in an intended outcome of behavior change. In addition, parents described discipline in terms of guiding principles, discipline styles, and discipline tools. Participants identified factors they considered when disciplining their preschool children (e.g. the context, the nature of the transgression, and the age of the child) and the struggle therein. Team work was used by all parents to describe their interaction regarding disciplining their preschool child. Mothers were identified as taking the lead disciplinarian role in these families. The research findings and their implications for nursing research, education and practice are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Parenthood, a major role adults assume within families, provides a significant contribution to the socialization of children into the adult world. "Parenting has been described as the most challenging and complex of all tasks of adulthood," (Zigler, 1995, p. xi). The parenting role has profound effects on children's self-concept and self-image which in turn affects their parenting skills when they have children of their own (Campbell, 1992). An aspect of this role, parental discipline, has consistently been associated with children's social adjustment. Further, parental disciplinary style has been a major topic of concern regarding child maltreatment, child abuse, and negative child behavior (Forehand & McKinney, 1993; Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1991). In order for families to carry out their functions interaction must occur between family members. In this chapter, the significance of the study for the family and nursing, the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework guiding the study, research questions, and definitions of the research terms are presented.

Significance of the Study

The key building block of society is the family. There is national and international concern for the health and the quality of life in families. For example, the Canadian government places a major emphasis on improving family health. Internationally, the United Nations is concerned about the health of individual family members and the family unit, as identified in the designation of 1994 as "The International Year of the Family".

The health of the family unit itself is of concern relative to its ability to fulfill vital

functions and tasks such as parenting. A healthy family unit is usually necessary to produce healthy family members (Loveland-Cherry, 1996). A number of family functions have been identified as contributing to promoting health (Loveland-Cherry). One such function is the socialization of family members and the following placement within the society in which they live. The type of family socialization practices, in particular the type of childrearing methods, has been demonstrated to be related not only to children's health-promoting behaviors, but also those of parents (Pratt, 1976). Positive relationships between supportive childrearing methods and health promoting personal health practices have been documented (Pratt).

The literature has identified parenting as a type of interaction which takes place in the family (Bromar & McNeely, 1996). A positive marital relationship has been identified as the principle support system for parents, having the potential to influence parenting ability significantly (Belsky, 1981; Belsky, Woodworth & Crnic, 1996; Crnic, Greenberg, Ragozin, Robinson, & Basham, 1983). Furthermore, poor marital adjustment, decreased marital quality and satisfaction, have been identified as significant in relation to negative child development (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Broom, 1998; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dickie, 1987). In particular, disagreement between parents with regards to childrearing practices has been identified as more predictable of child behavior problems than general, nonchild disagreements (Jouriles, Murphy, Farris, Smith, Richters & Waters, 1991). Steinmetz (1977) identified that lack of agreement and decreased parental support regarding discipline was a frequent source of conflict between spouses. The interconnections between marital conflict, problem parenting, and negative child outcomes have been found to persist for an extended period of time, from toddler through

the adolescent period (Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1994). Children learn responses for resolving conflict in the family which are then used when they discipline their children.

Further, tensions and contradictions within a culture affect parenting (Arendell, 1997). An example of this is society's response to the issue of parental discipline. Society has limited parent's authority and decision making regarding discipline and punishment because of their association with child abuse and poor child behavior outcomes (Arendell). These strains, conflicts, and contradictions with respect to parenting, can be seen to exist among family members in their relationships and interactions. A means of exploring the issue of discipline within a family is to study the interaction between parents regarding this issue.

Promoting health within the family is continuous, yet varies across the lifespan. The focus of family health promotion has been on the growing family, with significant attention given to childbearing and parenting skills with children of a variety of ages. Rationale for this focus is the crucial effect of the early stages of family development on the formation of family patterns that affect health attitudes, values and behaviors for a lifetime (Loveland-Cherry, 1996). The significance of the family in nursing is signified by the emergence of family health nursing as a subspecialty.

Families have historically been the concern of nurses, however, beginning in the 1970's nurses considered promoting the health of families as a legitimate concern for the nursing profession (Bromar & McNeely, 1996). Since the family is the environment where health promotion is learned, provided, supported or negated, nurses need to understand their role in empowering families to reach their highest health potential (Bromar & McNeely). Numerous nursing scholars and theorists have identified the goal

of family health nursing is to improve the well-being of the family unit (Friedman, 1998; Friedemann, 1989; Pender, 1987). Nursing research focusing on families, such as this study, has evolved as a result of an increased interest in families both within nursing and other disciplines (Gillis & Davis, 1993; Murphy, 1986). One context in which nurses promote the health of families and assist parents is community health nursing. Several characteristics of community health nursing have been identified as significant to the development of family health nursing including its focus on the family and community as the unit of concern, emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention, interdisciplinary collaboration, and client participation (Bromar & McNeely, 1996).

Parenting is an area for professional assistance, advice, intervention, and direction. Community health nurses are constantly involved with families and are in a key position to help parents learn positive discipline techniques (Campbell, 1992). Therefore, community health nurses require knowledge that enables them to identify parents whose discipline strategies are counterproductive so they can assist parents to improve their discipline practices. More effective discipline methods and approaches can be acquired (Baumrind, 1993; Patterson, 1978).

Nursing has conducted a variety of research regarding families, has utilized theories from various related fields of study, and also developed some of its own theories. This study builds on this body of knowledge. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), research is worthwhile conducting if it builds knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the interaction within a mother-father dyad regarding child discipline in terms of: (a) their perceived discipline roles, (b) the

socialization of parenting discipline style, (c) communication patterns regarding discipline, and (d) discipline problem solving and decision processes. A family interaction approach within a developmental framework was used to guide the research.

Questions to be Addressed

The research study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do husbands and wives perceive their discipline roles in the family?
- 2) What influence did socialization (e.g. parents) have on the discipline practices of the couple?
- 3) What communication patterns do couples use regarding discipline?
- 4) How do couples make decisions regarding discipline of their preschool age child?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are necessary to guide research. Conceptual frameworks serve to organize research findings into a coherent structure that assists in making the body of accumulated knowledge more accessible and useful to both practicing professionals and researchers who seek to build upon the knowledge base (Polit & Hungler, 1995).

Frameworks also help to stimulate research and extend the body of knowledge by providing both impetus and direction (Gunter, 1992). A conceptual model is defined as a set of abstract and general concepts and propositions that integrate concepts into a meaningful configuration (Fawcett, 1995). Concepts are words that describe mental images of phenomena, such as family (Fawcett, 1995). Propositions are statement that describe or link concepts i.e. interaction between family and community.

The Family Interactional Theory (FIT) within the context of the Family

Developmental Theory (FDT) provided the conceptual framework for this study. Family

Developmental Theory contributed background related specifically to families with preschool children. Both of these theories are categorized as Family Social Science Theories which are descriptive with respect to how the family functions, the environment-family interchange, interactions within the family, how the family changes over time and the family's reaction to health and illness. Furthermore, this set of theories focuses on well families rather than pathological or dysfunctional families.

Family Interactional Theory

The family interactional approach arose from a social psychology and sociology grand theory, symbolic interaction (Friedman, 1998). The constructs and assumptions of this theoretical perspective have been applied to the family by Rose (1962) and Turner (1970). The focus of the family interactional theory is the family unit. It perceives the family unit as consisting of interacting personalities and examines interactional family dynamics, including communication processes, roles, decision making and problem solving, and socialization patterns. The family interaction theory will be reviewed with regard to its major components; the family unit, communication processes, roles, decision making, and socialization patterns.

The substantive approach to FIT consists of three assumptions. The first is that the family is considered to be a small group with a specifiable set of characteristics. The second, is that there is an emphasis on process in this approach, which seeks to describe the sequence in which events occur. When describing process Turner (1970) refers to productive process formulation, which incorporates the identification of turning points, where the process can go one way or another, and the crucial events, which determines for each turning point the course that the process will take. There is therefore, the

potential for a variety of outcomes. The final assumption takes into consideration the manner in which the investigator sets about dealing with the effect on family life of events and circumstances from outside the family (Turner). The family is subject to a wide range of external influences. This approach states that in order to specify the probable effect of an external condition on an object, the family, it is first necessary to have a description of the properties of the object (Turner). They therefore propose a closed system approach in which the investigator attempts to establish insofar as possible the properties of the family as a system of processes, prior to attempting to generalize about the effects of various external variables on the family. Friedman (1998) states that the use of the interactional framework to assess families emphasizes an examination of the “interaction between and among family members, family role and power analysis, family coping, relationships between marital partners, siblings, parents, children and family socialization patterns.” (p. 87). This study focused on the interaction, with regards to discipline, between and among marital partners including their roles, socialization patterns, decision making and communication processes.

The Family. The FIT views the family as a unit, focusing on observing the interaction among family members rather than studying family members as individuals (Turner, 1970). Within FIT the family is seen as a group in motion, in which each event is less important for its immediate effects than for its contribution to cumulative development. This perspective is consistent with FDT.

Role Taking. Central to the family interactional approach is the process of role taking (Turner, 1970). Roles are therefore perceived as a process rather than the conformation to a standard set of behaviors. A key to role taking as a core process in family interaction is

the tendency to shape the phenomenal world into roles. Within the ideal framework, Turner (1962) states that every role is a way of relating to other-roles in a situation. Therefore, in role taking, roles emerge as a consequence of the social interaction between two or more family members. A role can not exist without one or more relevant other-roles toward which it is orientated. An example provided by Turner (1962) states that "The role of 'father' makes no sense without the role of child; it can be defined as a pattern of behavior only in relation to the pattern of behavior of the child." (p. 23). A person will change his own role in response to a changed assessment or perception of the role of relevant others. Family members define their role expectations through their perceptions of role demands made by others. Further, they judge their own behavior by obtaining feedback from others in the family (Turner).

Turner (1962) views interaction as a tentative process, which involves continuous testing of the conception one has of the role of the other. The result of the testing process is the stabilization or the alteration of the person's own role which occurs continuously throughout the interaction. The responses of others serves to challenge or reinforce how family members enact their roles (Nye & Berardo, 1973). In Turner's definition of role there is not a neat set of rules for the person in this position, but rather the person must act in the situation within the perspective provided in part by his relationship to others who are enacting behaviors reflecting a role which he must recognize.

Two facets of role-taking have been stressed in the previous statement, namely, the process of grouping behavior into "consistent" units which correspond to generalizable types of actors and the process of organizing behavior vis-à-vis relevant others (Turner, 1962). Role taking always decrees the grouping of behavior into units. The role becomes

the context for understanding specific actions, for anticipating that a certain action will follow upon another, and for making evaluations of separate actions. An action may be judged as being appropriate in one role and yet not in another. The grouping aspect of role taking is perhaps most clearly indicated in the judgments people make of the consistency of one another's behavior (Turner). Behavior is said to make sense when a series of actions is interpretable as indicating that the actor has in mind some role which guides his behavior. Role refers to a pattern which can be regarded as the consistent behavior of a single type of actor. Different persons can enact a role which will remain recognizable despite the individual differences (Turner). Both the identification of the roles and their content undergo cumulative revision, becoming relatively fixed for a period of time only as they provide a stable framework for interaction.

A role constitutes a unique grouping of behaviors which can be recognized by others. Roles can be verified for an actor by internal and external validation (Turner, 1962). Internal validation denotes a given constellation of behavior which is judged to constitute a role on the basis of its relation to other roles. External validation of a role refers to ascertaining whether the behavior is judged to constitute a role by others whose judgments are felt to have some claim to correctness or legitimacy. The simplest form of such a criterion is discovery of a name in common use for the role. Naming does not, however, assure agreement on the content of the role, it simplifying means that people will disagree as if there were something real about which to disagree (Turner). Major norms and values serve as the criteria of role coherency.

Role validation is also anchored in the membership of recognized groups and the occupancy of formalized positions (Turner). The family is a recognized group in society

and the position of parent has been formalized with this group. External verification includes the sense of what goes together and what does not, based upon experience in seeing given sets of attitudes, goals, and specific actions carried out by the same individual. It incorporates the favorable expectation of the behavior of relevant others within the range necessary for the enactment of one's own role. Whereas roletaking is a process of devising and discovering consistent patterns of action which can be identified with the purpose of the type of actor (Turner). Through the process of role taking, family members could develop informal roles which may or may not be functional to the family in the long run.

Socialization Patterns. According to Rose (1962), society is a network of interacting individuals which comes before any existing individual. A society has its own related meanings and values by which individuals interact, referred to as culture. There is an expectation of the person to learn the requirements for behavior found in the culture and to adjust his behavior to them most of the time (Rose).

The process of socialization, according to FIT, can be considered to take place in three stages. The first stage occurs in the young infant, where learning proceeds through some type of psychogenic process such as conditioning, trial and error (Rose, 1962). The next stage takes place when the child is able to sort out the confusion of the world by means of a symbol. In the third stage, the child acquires a number of meanings, which he then uses to communicate to others and himself.

Persons are socialized not only into the general culture of a society but also into the various subcultures within it (Rose, 1962). In other words, members of a society are not only expected to learn their culture, but also the subcultures of the discrete groups within

the society. Individuals may belong to a variety of subcultures through out their life necessitating the need to be socialized into the subcultures. In addition, socialization is a continuous lifelong process as new meanings and values evolve within the society and its groups (Rose). This evolution results in the members usually learning the new meanings and values, as well as sometimes learning to no longer use the old.

This learning to drop the "old" cultural expectations, and personal meanings and values, refers to the understanding that they become significantly lower on reference relationship scale, but they are not lost or forgotten (Rose, 1962). What does occur is a continuous modification of the meanings and values based on the memory of "old" items and an integration of newly acquired meanings and values with the existing ones (Rose). Therefore through an individuals communication and interaction with others, his experience, behaviors are acquired. This process is viewed as integrative and accumulative in nature. Socialization is the process by which episodes of interaction have cumulative effects on the meaning, values and behavior of the participants. By learning the cultural norms regarding discipline parents are able to predict each other's behavior (Rose).

Communication Processes. Family interaction theory includes several understandings regarding communication processes. A person exists in both a physical and a symbolic environment (Rose, 1962). Communication occurs via symbols which are stimuli that have a learned meaning and value for people. A person's response to a symbol considers it's meaning and value for that individual rather than its physical stimulation of his sense organs. An individual learns practically all the symbols through interaction with other people, resulting in the thought that most symbols will have common or shared meanings

and values (Rose).

An individual, through the use of symbols, has the ability to stimulate others in different ways than those in which he is himself stimulated (Rose, 1962). In addition, there is a plan on the part of the individual communicating to elicit meanings and values in the other person that he has the intention to elicit. Communication can involve both the process of taking on the role of the other as well as more spontaneous expression.

Significant symbols are learned symbols which require role-taking for their communication (Rose). In communication by significant symbols the communicator may influence the behavior of the attender, but he cannot control it, for the symbol communicates by its content of meaning and value for the attender. Symbolic communication is a social process, in which the communicator and the attender both contribute to the content of the communication as it impinges on the nervous system and behavior of the attender (Rose). Communication by means of significant symbols involves words and gestures intended to convey meaning from the communicator to the observer. Role-taking is involved in all communication by means of significant symbols. It means that the individual communicator imagines, evokes in himself, how the recipient of his communication understands the communication.

Through the communication of symbols, a person can learn extensive numbers of meanings and values, and hence ways of acting, from other people (Rose, 1962). Thus, it is assumed that most of the modern adult's behavior is learned behavior, and specifically learned in symbolic communication through a social learning process. In summary, communication is the process by which persons interact with other people to learn culture, an elaborate set of meaning and values shared by members of a society, which

then guides much of his behaviour.

Decision Making. Family interactional theory refers to decision making as a process by which future symbolic solutions and other potential modes of action are examined, evaluated for their relative advantages and disadvantages in terms of the values of the individual, and one of the alternatives is chosen for action (Rose, 1962). Decision making is strictly viewed as a symbolic process. Two forms of rationale for this view are that the evaluation is made in terms of the individuals own values and that the options assessed have certain relevant meanings (Rose).

In decision making the individual takes his own role to imagine himself in various possible relevant situations. Through decision making, a person brings the imagined or expected future into the present, so that the present behavior can be a response to future expected situations, and a course of action can be determined for quite some time into the future (Rose, 1962). For example, a parent, in choosing how to respond to a child's misbehavior, engages in immediate behavior intended to get the child to stop the behavior and lays out future actions for himself that will probably get the behavior to stop.

During this process of decision making the past is brought into the present in much the same way as the future. The individual imagines the past symbolically, not only his own but those of other people which he knows about (Rose, 1962). The past influences the potential selection of present and future courses of action in terms of what the individual knows, or thinks he knows, about the past.

Friedman (1998) states that the interactional approach to understanding family relationships is most relevant to family nursing. The focus on the processes within the family is viewed as a primary strength of this theory. The main limitation in using this

approach is that the family is considered in a vacuum, with no attention given to the context in which the family finds itself (Friedman).

In the present study, the conceptual model, FIT, has guided the research process including the development of research questions, the literature review and the choice of methodology. The study explored the role played by each parent with respect to discipline and the differences between the two parents. Inquiry and observation in the present research project also considered the communication processes and decision making used by parents around discipline. Further, parents were asked to describe their socialization in their family of origin regarding discipline and the perceived effect this has on their ability to discipline their own child.

Literature was reviewed in relation to the main components of the FIT including roles, communication, decision making and socialization. Further, a qualitative methodology was chosen, as it is consistent with the perspective of symbolic interactionism, which is a basis for FIT.

Family Developmental Theory

The developmental model consists of several basic assumptions including: “developmentally-based tasks occur at a specific period, successful achievement leads to happiness and success with later tasks, and failure to achieve tasks leads to unhappiness, disapproval, or difficulty in achieving later tasks.” (Friedman, 1998, p. 86). Duvall (1977) was a pioneer in the application of these principles of individual development to the family unit in her classic book, *Family Development*. The age of the oldest child formed the basis for outlining the eight stages of family development. In each stage of family development, Duvall and Miller (1985) identified overall family developmental needs and

tasks which needed to be accomplished. The stages began with the marriage of the couple and ended with death. A family stage is a period in time in which the structure and interaction of role relationships in the family are qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from other intervals (Klein & White, 1996). Several theoretical legacies have provided the historical roots of the FDT including; symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism, the sociology of work and professions, systems theory and more recently from family life stress (Mattiessich & Hill, 1987). The three basic assumptions of FDT, as outlined by Aldous (1996) are: family conduct is the entirety of the previous experiences of family members as conceived in the present and in their anticipation of the future; families develop and evolve overtime in similar and consistent ways; and families and their members execute certain time specific tasks that are set by themselves and by the cultural and societal context.

Developmental theory was an attempt to exceed the structural-functional and interactional frameworks in that it addresses the passage of time (Friedman, 1998). The significant strength of the family developmental approach is that it provides a basis for understanding what a family will be experiencing at any stage in the family life cycle (Friedman). The development of the model at a time in history when the traditional nuclear family was the focus has been identified as a major weakness (Friedman). However, this was not an issue in this study as the definition of family is the nuclear family. Family developmental theory does not address situational events and therefore it was utilized in this study as background to the family interactional theory.

The FDT was used in this study to inform the time frame in the development of the family at which the study would be conducted. The choice of the family in the

preschool stage was guided by the FDT as it identifies the family at this stage of development as having a significant contribution to the socialization of the child. Further, FDT recognizes that childrearing at this developmental stage places a lot of demands on parents and requires an enormous amount of support. The FIT then guided the researcher as to the specific areas to explore in the family in this developmental stage with regards to the interaction between the parents and discipline.

Definition of Terms

To clarify the meaning of the major concepts in this study definitions have been provided. The definitions of the terms include:

1) Family - a nuclear family with a mother, father and preschool child living together, the husband and wife may or may not be legally married.

2) Discipline - the use of methods to raise, educate, or dissuade negative child behavior; a broad positive system of guidance of the young child (Hammer & Turner, 1996).

3) Parent - an adult engaged in the provision of rearing and caring for a child.

4) Parenting Discipline Style - the tendency of parents to use certain methods to raise and educate children, or dissuade children from engaging in particular behaviors.

5) Family Interaction - family dynamics, including communication processes, roles, decision making and problem solving, and socialization patterns.

6) Family Health - "a dynamic process that includes the activities a family uses to promote and protect the well-being of the family as a unit and individual family members." (Loveland-Cherry, 1996, p 26).

7) Preschool Child - between the age of 3 and 5 years, and the oldest child in the

family.

8) Role - a normatively defined, more or less consistent, set of behaviors which are presumed of a person within a given social position (Friedman, 1998).

9) Decision Making - “the interactional techniques which family members employ in their attempts to gain control in the negotiation or decision making process” (McDonald, 1980, p. 843).

10) Socialization - the process by which episodes of interaction have cumulative effects on the meaning, values and behavior of the participants.

11) Family Communication - a symbolic, transactional process of creating and sharing meanings in the family (Galvin & Brommel, 1986).

12) Marital Communication - “the overt and covert patterns of communication in which partners exchange information and expectations in order to share tasks, convey feelings, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and show their caring.” (Heinicke, 1995, p. 279).

Summary

In summary, the significance of the problem was identified, the purpose of the present study was presented, the research questions stated, and major concepts were defined. The conceptual framework for this study, the Family Interactional Theory within the context of the Family Developmental Theory, was presented and analyzed. The family serves a significant function in society through the socialization of children. The discipline of children is one method parents use to carry out this function in the family. The importance of this study lies in the potential to determine the contribution of the parental interaction in discipline behavior. This knowledge will provided nurses working with

families, the impetus to intervene to assist couples to gain insight into the significance of their combined parental discipline.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Socialization of children occurs in the family. Within the family, parents are the primary source of influence and use discipline to shape child behavior. The review of the literature includes a review and discussion of the relevant theoretical and research literature. Available literature from the fields of nursing, sociology, and psychology are examined. The purpose of this literature review is to present an overview of the knowledge related to the family according to the following headings: the family, approaches to studying the family, preschool children and their families, parenthood, marital interaction and parenting, marital conflict and child development, parents and socialization of children, and parental discipline.

The Family

The basic social unit of our society is the family. Therefore, it is the social institution with the most significant effect on its members (Friedman, 1998). The family has such a powerful influence on an individual that it may shape the outcome of that person's life, whether he or she succeeds or fails. In human organizations the family unit is situated in a position between individual and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Friedman identified two basic purposes for the family including "(1) to meet the needs of the society of which it is a part, and (2) to meet the needs of the individuals in it." (p. 4). The definition of family will be discussed as well as socialization, roles, decision making and communication in the family.

The family system is composed of many subsystems and is also part of a larger suprasystem (Casey, 1996). According to the literature, the client of the family nurse may

be the individual within the context of the family, the family interactional system of dyads, triads, or other groupings; the complete family unit; or family groups (Friedemann, 1998; Swanson & Albrecht, 1993; Wright & Leahey, 1994). Subsystems which exist in a family unit include dyads such as parent-child, and marital. Family functions are accomplished by subsystems within the family. The family is also nested within a larger suprasystem including religious affiliations, communities and organizations. The basic family system is the husband-wife dyad, which expands as children are added to the family. This study focused on family interactions within the family unit and specifically on the interaction within the mother-father dyad.

Definition of Family

The definition of the family has become a debated subject (Arendell, 1997). The family has been defined in a variety of ways depending on such factors as the culture and the time in history in which it is being defined. Family composition can take several forms including nuclear, extended, and single-parent. Family in this study is defined as a nuclear family with a mother, father and preschool child living together; the husband and wife may or may not be legally married. This definition of the family is consistent with Turner's (1970) definition of the family unit in Family International Theory, "nuclear family is a unit consisting of a man and woman united as husband and wife in socially recognized marriage and the natural and adopted children they have accepted as part of that unit." (p. 5).

Family Functions - Socialization

In the society perspective, the family functions to fulfill a need through its generation and socialization of new members. Further, the family provides a structure, a grouping of

individuals, that society can identify as an entity (Williams & Leaman, 1973). Another need the family fulfills for society is the creation of a kinship network that provides stabilization to the society. In addition, the family serves a purpose as providing the link between the individual and society. In this capacity the family acts as a buffer or mediator in that it takes the basic societal demands and responsibilities which it then shapes and molds to fit the needs and issues of the family members.

Another function of the family is to meet the needs of individual family members. The family acts as a stabilizing force in the lives of the adult members, meeting their emotional, socio-economic and relational needs. The family cares for the children both physically and emotionally as well as guiding their development of personality. Parents interpret the world and society for children thereby intervening for them. The family has long been seen as the most vital context for healthy growth and development (Duvall, 1971). The main learning context for an individual's behavior, thoughts, and feelings is the family (Friedman, 1998). One manner in which the success of the family can be determined is through the evaluation the outcome of the socialization process.

Socialization or rearing of children is a primary function and responsibility of the family (Nye & Berardo, 1973). The function is performed by the family for the children, for the family itself and for the society as a whole. Socialization is a life long process which begins at birth and ends at death (Friedman, 1998). Family socialization tasks include problem solving, disciplining and reinforcing acceptable social behavior (Campbell, 1992). It is the process through which persons continually modify their behavior in reaction to the experience of societal patterns of interaction and thereby acquire their own patterns of behaviour (Honigman, 1967). Most socialization occurs

unceremoniously and obscurely, so that changes made in response to altering conditions go quite unnoticed.

The socialization is considered to include the process of childrearing. Socialization in the family refers to the provision of variety of learning experiences. Children learn how to function and assume adult roles in society through these experiences (Friedman, 1998). The cultural knowledge of the next generation is acquired in the family, particularly from the parents. Parents carry the responsibility of moving children through the developmental process including all of its challenges and hurdles. The prime responsibility for shaping an infant into a capable social human being able to completely participate in society falls on the parents. Some examples of what parents impart to their children include roles, language, societal norms and a sense of contributing.

According to Friedman (1998), "Socialization involves learning, which entails the use of social control mechanisms such as discipline." (p. 372). Both positive and negative controls can be used, within discipline, as a means to socialize children. The determined appropriateness and use of these controls vary among societies and families. Positive discipline reinforces positive behavior and encourages a child to use its own resources for growth (Nelson, Erwin & Duffy, 1995). Negative discipline, such as punishment, lacks guidance and does not teach alternative desirable behavior. Socialization and discipline will be discussed in further detail later in the literature review.

Family Roles

A central concept to understanding internal family dynamics is that of family roles (Friedman, 1998). Family members enact multiple, intricate roles (Anderson, 1996). Within the family, each member occupies formal and informal positions. The formal

rules, which are in place when roles are named from positions within an organization, do not necessarily fit entirely the experience when the role is played or taken in actual interaction.

Family functions are carried out by members of the family who enact roles. Duvall (1977) views family roles as reciprocal, in that the roles played by each family member are related directly to roles played by others in the family. Roles are culturally defined and are passed on to succeeding generations as "correct" behavior. Each of these roles are defined by the norms which both the family and the larger society expect of the person occupying a given position. The position a family member holds is a location in the family associated with a set of social norms. A family, then, can be seen as composed of a number of positions related to each other in dyads or paired positions such as "father" and "child", "father" and "mother". A role is a part of a social position consisting of more or less integrated or related set of social norms distinguishable from other sets of norms forming the same position (Aldous, 1974). For instance, father plays many roles in the family- that of income provider, disciplinarian and companion to name a few. These concurrent roles may be thought of as a role cluster. This study focused on one role within the clustering of roles for mothers and fathers, that of disciplinarian. Although a role is defined by the expectations of the group has for it, social norms, it is rarely played in exactly the same way. The manner in which a person actually plays a given role may be termed behavior.

As a person develops and evolves throughout his lifetime he is expected to take on new roles and abandon others as well as redefine roles that are presently occupied.

Aldous (1974) refers to this last process as role making and states that there is a great deal

of role making occurring in today's families with the changing conditions. An example of the changes is the emergence of dual income families and the resultant effect on who is responsible for the family and home. Further, when a husband or wife become a parent they are expected to take on the roles of mother and father. If the individual is to be an acceptable member of the family, he must play these roles expected of him by virtue of his position in the group. If he does not, or is incapable of doing so, for one reason or another, his adjustment in the group, and hence his personal adjustment, will suffer, as does also the adjustment of the family group and its other members.

Role conflict occurs when multiple roles, with their profound requirements, are perceived as having competing expectations (Anderson, 1996). Chassin, Zweiss, Cooper and Reaven (1985) conducted a study of 83 couples, which investigated the role perceptions, self-role congruence, and marital satisfaction in dual-income couples with preschool children. A questionnaire packet was used to measure marital satisfaction, and role and self-perceptions regarding three roles, the parent, and spouse and worker roles. The researchers found evidence of two types of role conflict; intra-role conflict and inter-role conflict. According to Nye and Berardo (1973) conflict involving two roles is inter-role conflict whereas intra-role conflict considers only one role, but two perceptions of it. The intra-role conflict was reflected in significant differences between men and women in their perceptions of the spouse and parents roles. The researchers state that this intra-role conflict could result in interaction difficulties between men and women when they interact within these roles (Chassin et al.). With respect to the parenting role, it was found that women discounted the father role contributions which may result in men feeling their parenting contribution are devalued by their wife.

Regarding inter-role conflict, there was evidence of significant differences in the content of the worker, parent and spouse roles, more so for women than men (Chassin et al., 1985). In addition, a second indicator of inter-role conflict, which produced conflict, involved the extent to which an individual's own characteristics were congruent with the demands of their multiple roles both in the eyes of his/her spouse and in his/her own. The perception of congruence of multiple roles in the eyes of the partner was more significant than one's own rating. Marital satisfaction was found to be related to how both partners saw themselves as filling the spouse role (Chassin et al.).

Role sharing was prominent in the past, prior to the industrial revolution when families worked collaboratively and many of the family roles were shared because of the economic realities of the times (Anderson, 1996). This way of functioning is seeing a resurgence, again possibly as a result of the economic realities of our time. Smith and Reid (1985) define a role sharing marriage as both partners having equal claim to the roles in the family. According to their study, there is a greater threat to a role-sharing marriage when children are younger because of the increased demands, such as time and responsibilities, required of the couple to raise young children (Smith and Reid).

Family Communication

The communication structure within the family serves to facilitate the achievement of family functions (Friedman, 1998). In addition, patterns of communication have a significant impact on all members of the family as information is passed between and among the members. Communication can be defined as the process of exchanging desires, feelings, information, needs, and opinions (McCubbin & Dahl, 1985). Communication in the family can be referred to as a symbolic, exchange process of

creating and sharing meanings in the family (Galvin & Brommel, 1986).

Horowitz (1995) describes three types of communication; verbal, nonverbal and metacommunication. Metacommunication refers to “messages about the message; the relationship aspect of communication.” (Horowitz, p. 69). The process of reading between the lines of the message’s content to its subtleties and meaning is metacommunication. Family communication is a complex and dynamic process. Most family communication takes place within the subsystems, therefore analysis of subsystem communication is significant. The first trait of a healthy family according to Curran (1983), is clear communication and the ability of members to listen to each other. Further, Hoffer (1996) states that communication is one of the most significant factors in interpersonal relationships.

Family communication process can be defined as “the processing of information within the family or its subsystem” (Friedman, 1998). Communication involves a sender of the message, a receiver, and some transaction between the sender and the receiver (Hoffer, 1996). The sender is the individual who is attempting to transmit a message to someone else, the receiver is the individual for whom the message is intended. Transaction, a dynamic process, refers to the sending and receiving of messages as well as the response created by the message in both the sender and receiver (Hoffer). A communication pattern develops when members of a family carry out transactions with each other over a period of time (Hoffer). However, there is always some distortion in the sender’s message produced by either the sender, via the interaction between the sender and receiver, or by the receiver. This distortion is often caused by anxiety or differences in the frames of reference of the interactants.

Each family has its own unique communication style or pattern. Multiple factors influence family communication patterns such as the immediate context in which the interaction takes place, the family life cycle stage, the family form, the gender of the interactants, the background of the family members and the family's socioeconomic status (Friedman, 1998). As a result, each family develops its own unique mini-culture. A challenge of couples when they marry is to form a shared relational culture which has its own shared meanings (Jenkins, 1995).

Several areas have been identified in which experiences in the family of origin or family background, as a result of ethnicity, influence family communication. These areas include talk, emotional expression, and tolerance for the expression of conflict (Sillars, 1995). Talk refers to the extent and explicitness of the information shared (Sillars). In some families it may be expected that messages be verbally explicit whereas in others, families roles are very structured and predictable resulting in messages having a collective understanding and therefore considered implicit. The expression of emotions varies widely among families with regard to amount of encouragement and tolerance. Just as with emotions, the expression of conflict in families, also varies. There can be significant differences within families to the tolerance for the expression of confrontation, disagreement, and dissonance (Sillars).

The passage of time changes family communication. One significant variation is in the explicitness and extensiveness of talk over the family life cycle. The different stages of family development result in new family dynamics and communication patterns. Changes which effect the communication patterns may include the maturation of the marriage, the addition of children to the family, and language development of the children (Hoffer,

1996). Family communication progressively increases its reliance on unspoken understandings (Sillars, 1995). Shortly after marriage the couple's communication patterns are established and repetition results (Galvin & Brommel, 1986).

Major gender differences are also noted in family communication. Research on gender communication in marital couples has shown that wives are more expressive, send clearer messages than husbands, and are more sensitive and responsive to their husband's messages during conversations and conflict (Thompson & Walker, 1991). In addition, family forms such as two-parent nuclear, single-parent and stepparent family affect family communication. This is exemplified in research conducted on stepparent families in which conflict within the family is the most commonly cited feature of communication (Burrell, 1995).

Communication processes can be described as either functional or dysfunctional. A description of functional communication processes includes clear, direct transmission and reception of both the content and instructional level of any message (Sells, 1973) as well as congruency between these two levels (Satir, 1983). Content refers to the information conveyed or the literal definition of what actually was said whereas instruction refers to the intent of the message (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967).

Families can be referred to as having functional and dysfunction methods of communicating. The foundation of a successful and healthy family is believed to be functional communication processes (Barnhill, 1979; Satir, 1972). In functional family communication there is clear and congruent communication. In dysfunctional families the communication is ambiguous and/or transmitted indirectly. In addition, there is an acceptance of each other's differences by family members whereas in dysfunctional

families there is a self-centeredness and the need for total agreement (Satir, 1972, 1983). An extremely dynamic two-way process is an example of communication in a healthy family. Curran (1983) identified hallmarks for functional communication including the sharing of power within the family, the ability to listen, and the ability to recognize nonverbal messages. Regarding emotional communication, healthy families display a full range of feelings as opposed to unhealthy families where there are restrictions regarding the expression of feelings (Hoffer). There is a valuing of openness in communication in functional families as seen by respect for each other's feelings, thought and concerns, spontaneity, authenticity and self-disclosure. In dysfunctional families there is a lack of empathy and an increase in the number of communication areas, which are closed.

Finally, conflict and its resolution varies between functional and dysfunctional families (Vuchinich, 1987). Vuchinich observed conflict behavior in 52 families in a routine home setting, at dinner. Conflict resolution in functional families involves open discussion and once strategies are reached to solve the conflict they are implemented. Conflict functions to maintain family communication and interaction. Verbal conflict is an everyday occurrence in normal family interaction. However, there needs to be a balance struck between enough and too much (Vuchinich). The resolution of conflict is an important task of family interaction therefore, couples need to learn to have constructive conflicts. Vuchinich states a significant influence in family conflict is that mothers are the most diligent in bringing conflicts to a closure. There is future significance to constructive expression of conflict and constructive resolution in that parents act as role models for their children (Freidman, 1998). Where as according to Hoffer (1996), "Conflicts are painful for the dysfunctional family." (p. 101).

Decision Making in Families

Decision making in families refers to “the interactional techniques which a families members employ in their attempts to gain control in the negotiation or decision making process” (McDonald, 1980, p. 843). The family decision making process is a principle index of power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Central to the decision making process is how decisions are made. The techniques used in family decision making identifies the relative power of each family member and his or her participation in family decision making. Healthy families are able to make efficient and effective decisions (Hoffer, 1996). Studies of decision making in relation to marital satisfaction have found that satisfaction is highest in families where decision making was equally shared (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983).

The literature describes three decision making processes; decision making by consensus, accommodation, and de-facto decision making (Turner, 1970). There is a tendency in families to primarily use one method of decision making. The first method, decision making by consensus, is considered a healthy way to make decisions in North America. Decision making by consensus can be described as mutual agreement by all involved on a particular course of action (Freidman, 1998). When conflict occurs in a family, negotiation is one of the major methods used by families to handle the situation (Klein & White, 1996). Turner (1970) refers to consensus as occurring when family members negotiate an agreement to a solution that is seen as meeting their personal or joint values. As a result, family members have equal satisfaction and commitment to the decision. Agreement on consensus decisions is achieved by open discussion and negotiations. It is the most complex and difficult to achieve method of decision making

because it requires a significant degree of interdependence and equality between family members. Klein and White (1996) state that democratic and egalitarian families tend to use negotiation more often.

In decision making by accommodation, the second method, family members' initial feelings about an issue are antagonistic. This is followed by one or more members of the family, willingly or unwillingly, making compromises. The only goal of some members to agree is for a decision to be reached (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). It may require that a voluntary concession be made by all members or a sacrifice by one family member so the others may have their way. Turner (1970) suggested that members who have conceded are not privately or publicly convinced that the best decision was made. Accommodation decisions are made somewhere along a continuum from coercion to compromise with coercion being the least functional and compromise being the most functional. Decision making is determined to be more coercive or more compromising depending on differences in the relationship under which accommodation takes place and the difference in the participant's attitudes toward their commitment. Compromising includes the making of concessions by all family members involved. Coercion results in an unwilling agreement by one or more family members, in such that the commitment is only assured through continuous coercive power. Dominance of one member over the other is exerted through the threat of penalization. In accommodating there is a decision to agree to disagree (Galvin & Brommel).

A de-facto route can be used by families to reach decisions in which things are just allowed to happen without any planning (Turner, 1970). Decisions just occur without any active, voluntary decision making. In addition, de-facto decisions may be made when

issues are not presented or discussed (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). In other words, the decisions result from inaction. This form of decision making is seen in many families who are disorganized and have multiple problems as they often feel powerless to control their future. Further, de-facto decisions may occur when there are communication problems in the family.

A study was conducted by Olson (1967) regarding decision making involving 35 couples who were expecting their first child in the next few months. Data were collected both in the form of answers to a questionnaire and through discussion of decisions which most couples need to resolve shortly after the birth of their child. Study results indicated that there was no significant relationship between measured power and the actual observed power in the decision making (Olson). Both husbands and wives were equally poor in predicting who would actually exercise power in a decision making situation. Further, it was found that empathy was necessary for congruence in decision making but not a sufficient condition.

Families Today

Today's families live in a rapidly changing society. The family continues to experience dramatic shifts resulting in more varied and complex structures and lifestyles than families of the past (Skolnick, 1993). One of the structure and lifestyle changes referred to frequently in the literature is the increase in dual-earner families. This change has led to a shift in which the couple shares more in parenting responsibilities, thereby becoming co-parents and partners in this endeavor. The increase in shared parenting responsibilities as in other partnerships, brings with it an increased need for communication, understanding, and joint decision making. The role of women has always been

inseparately connected with the family, as women had many tasks such as to care for ill family members and housekeeping; however, the male role is becoming increasingly connected with childrearing.

Further, family life and family nursing are significantly influenced by a number of trends. These trends include a high information society, increasing emphasis on self-help and self-care, consumer demand for participation in decision making, more complex and increased technology, and changes in the type of and age configuration of families (Naisbitt, 1984).

In summary, the family, the basic social unit, has the most significant affect on its members through the function of socialization. The mother-father subsystem of the family carries out many of the family functions including childrearing. Roles are enacted by family members to carry out their functions within the family, such as parent and disciplinarian. At times there may be conflict related to roles in the family when there is competing expectations. Communication is a process used by families to carry out functions. Each family has its own communication style, which may be labeled as functional or dysfunctional. Families engage in a variety decision making processes in which some are more effective than others. At the present time, the family is experiencing a significant shift in the need to share many of the responsibilities, such as parenting, as a result of the increased number of dual-income earning families.

Approaches to Studying the Family

Since the 1950's, over 20 disciplines have studied the family including sociology, psychology, human ecology, educational psychology, health education and nursing to name a few (Bromar & McNeely, 1996). Nursing has not only utilized theories from these

related fields but has also developed some of its own theories and carried out its own research regarding families. In the 1980's and 1990's, interdisciplinary work has become known as "family science" and it is considered by some to be a distinct discipline with its own body of knowledge (Burr & Leigh, 1983).

One of the most important aspects of nursing is the emphasis placed on the family unit. The family, as well as the individual, group and community are the nurse's client. Empirically we realize that the health of the family members and the quality of family life are closely related. However, not until the last decade has attention been paid to the systematic study of the family in nursing. Presently, the study of the family in nursing has grown significantly.

Conceptual sources for family nursing theories have evolved from three traditions: nursing models/theories, family therapy theories and family social science theories (Friedman, 1998). Presently, there is no one conceptual framework from any of these theoretical traditions that can thoroughly describe the relationships and dynamics of family life and family nursing (Friedman). Therefore, nurses must draw upon a variety of theories to effectively study families.

Family social science theories is the overarching tradition from which the conceptual framework for this study is culled. Of the three traditions, family social science theories are the most developed and informative with respect to how the family functions, the environment-family interchange, interactions within the family, how the family changes over time and the family's reaction to health and illness (Friedman 1998). Furthermore, family social science theories focus on healthy families whereas family therapy theories have been developed to work with troubled families and are therefore generally

pathologically-orientated. These theories were developed from various family social science disciplines, mainly sociology. A review of the literature regarding social science theoretical frameworks used to study families, shows that there has been little consensus as to what theories constitute the major theoretical frameworks. Friedman has identified the major theories from the family social science area, which have been determined to be useful to the understanding of families and family health nursing, as Structural - Functional Theory, Systems Theory, Family Developmental Theory, Family Interactional Theory, Family Stress Theory, and Change Theory. Since the 1960's, it was generally recognized that three family conceptual approaches have dominated the field of the family including; structural - functional, interactional, and developmental (Nye & Berardo, 1981).

Robinson (1995) has presented a conceptualization of nursing research with families which helps to clarify how nurses relate to families with respect to the unit of interest and data collected (Appendix A). She proposes a schema which unifies the perspective of both person and family in that the artificial separation regarding either the family or the individual is eliminated. She identifies having both individual and family as part of the conceptual picture as the advantage to this schema. There is however, a shift in focus of attention such that depending on the perspective some parts of this picture will be in the foreground whereas others will form the background (Robinson). In the presented schema she identifies types of nursing research on four primary distinctions regarding the unit of interest: “ nursing research of individual/family member, nursing research of individual/family subgroup, nursing research of family group, and nursing research of individual/family system.” (Robinson, 1995, p. 13).

Within the first level of research, individual/family member, the foreground consists of the person as individual, as family member or both whereas the background is the family (Robinson, 1995). In the second level, individual/family subgroup, the relationship in the subgroup is foreground with the family being the background. In nursing research of the family group, the third level, the unit of interest is the family as separate and different from individuals/family members. The last level, individual/family system, persons are conceptualized as only members of the family.

Further, within each of these main categories, three additional distinctions can be determined regarding the level of data being used including individual, relational, or transactional level data. Individual level data consists of data gathered from a single member of the family in which other family member's views, perceptions, or actions are not referred (Fisher, Kokes, Ransom, Phillips & Rudd, 1985). Individual data collected from two or more family members who are in some way related to each other by the researcher is relational level data (Fisher et al.). Transactional level data includes data from members of a family in interaction and reflect the persons and relationships as well as views with general agreement regarding the person and/or family (Robinson, 1995).

To summarize, a variety of theories have been developed to study the family and presently not one is able to describe the family thoroughly. The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the tradition of family social science theories. A schema was presented by Robinson (1995) who provides clarification with respect to the unit of interest and data collected in relation to families.

Preschool Children and Their Families

The preschool years along with infancy and toddler years, form a crucial part of a person's life (Murry Beckmann & Proctor Zentner, 1997). Preschool children have much to learn at this stage, especially in the area of independence. They must achieve enough autonomy and self-sufficiency to be able to handle themselves without their parents in a variety of places. Preschool children are emerging as social beings. In addition, emotional and intellectual growth is becoming more apparent at this stage in their development in their ability to form mental images. Mental images identified which are applicable to child behavior and discipline include the expression of self in anger, the control of primitive impulses, and beginning to be self-critical with references to a standard set by others (Murry Beckmann & Proctor Zentner, 1997).

Families, as well as individuals, have been identified as having family lifecycles or stages (Williams & Leaman, 1973). Families with preschool children is the third stage in the family development theory framework. This stage begins when the firstborn child is about 3 years old and ends when the child is 5 years old. The family is now becoming more complex and growing in numbers (Duvall & Miller, 1985). Family life during this stage is demanding and busy for parents as they are struggling with childrearing and their own personal development (Friedman, 1998). The couple is attempting to integrate their parental responsibilities along with continuing to meet each other's needs. Included is the issue of the couple achieving a mutually satisfactory means of addressing the tasks required for raising the children and maintaining a household. In addition, there are increased demands on both parents' time, as it is probable that both parents are employed outside the home. Satir (1983) refers to parents as the 'architects of the family', designing

and directing family development, therefore it is crucial for them to strengthen their partnership.

Family functions or tasks vary with the stage of development. Nine family developmental tasks have been identified by Duvall and Miller (1985) for the stage of families with preschool children. Tasks that are applicable to the present study include: sharing household and childcare responsibilities with other family members; socialization of children; and maintaining healthy relationships, communication within the family and outside the family.

Hammer and Turner (1996) state that the chief role of the parent as the child moves through the preschool period is that of nurturance. Webster's (1994) refers to nurture as "to educate or to further the development of". This role can be filled by either parent. A broad interpretation of nurturance is offered by Bigner (1989) which states that nurturance maybe seen as a psychological process of emotional gratification and satisfaction of needs through words, actions, and physical touch, such as warmth. Factors, which can tribute to a nurturing environment for the preschool child, are the emotional climate in the home, as well as the consistency of discipline and discipline styles. The relationship between the parents immensely contributes to the emotional environment in the home. These factors will be discussed in more detail later in the literature review.

A critical period for preschool children is the transition to elementary school as many of the developmental tasks of a preschooler, such as autonomy and self-sufficiency, are significant to a positive outcome. The importance of parenting to the development of preschool children is pointed out in a recent study (Cowan, Cowan, Schulz, & Heming, 1993). The study conducted with preschool children and their parents found that children

who were secure, autonomous, task motivated, less aggressive and scored higher on kindergarten achievement tests had parents who were less conflictive in their interaction with each other (Cowan et al.). Furthermore, these parents expressed more warmth and were more likely to encourage autonomy in their preschool children (Cowan et al.). Cowan and associates found three dominant paths to ineffective parenting. "Conflict in the family of origin increases the probability of marital conflict between parents, and increases the probability of life stress early in the transition to parenthood." (p. 95). Further, they determined that during the preschool period, parenting style, and marital satisfaction and interaction foretold academic and social competence at the end of kindergarten (Cowan et al.).

In summary, the preschool years are especially significant to the development of a child. This period of life contributes dramatically to the person's ability to function socially in later years. The parental subsystem in the family has great influence regarding the outcomes for the child.

Parenthood

Parenthood is a major role adults assume within families. A significant contribution of parents in this role is the socialization of children into the adult world. The parenting role has profound effects on children's self-concept and self-image and in turn affects their parenting skills (Campbell, 1992). The term parenting includes the variety of actions and skills performed by adults who rear and care for children (Arendell, 1997). Horowitz (1993) refers to parenting as a process consisting of "tasks, roles, rules, communication, resources and relationships" (p. 45). The skills, behaviors and purpose of the complex phenomena of parenting are learned through participation in the social community

(Arendell). Parenting is affected by the tensions and contradictions within a culture.

These strains, conflicts, and contradictions with regard to parenting, can be seen to exist among family members in their relationships and interactions (Arendell).

Despite recent changes in the family, such as dual income earners, parenting remains firmly planted in the family (Arendell, 1997). Most child rearing and provision of care continues to occur within the family unit, even though there is an increasing number of children who spend greater amounts of time away from the family in paid child care and school. Furthermore, parents direct to some extent what takes place outside the family such as peer relationships, children's daycares and education (Arendell). The family is where children form their primary attachments and develop their sense of identity and social selves (Murry Beckmann & Proctor Zentner, 1997).

Role is another component of parenting (Horowitz, 1995). A factor, which influences the parent's role, is the differences between mothering and fathering (Hamner & Turner, 1996). Several differences have been noted in the involvement of mothers and fathers with their children including quantity, quality and style (Belsky, 1979; Belsky, Gilstrap & Rovine, 1984; Russell, 1978; Russell & Russell, 1987). In addition, mothers and fathers differ in their degree of responsibility for management of family tasks. Several researchers found mothers more likely to assume the managerial role than fathers for infants to school-aged children (Power & Parke, 1982; Russell & Russell, 1987). Whereas fathers' interactions with their children will occur more often within the context of play (Russell & Russell, 1987).

Even in the 1990's and in the case of families where husbands and wives share roles, fathers are less likely to engage in the management of the household and child care

(Coltrane, 1995). The lower level of father involvement in caregiving and other forms of interaction does not imply that fathers are less competent than mothers to care for their children. In several studies, it was found that fathers are as competent as mothers in providing care as measured by sensitivity to child cues, feeding infants, and degree of warmth expressed (Parke & Swain, 1976, 1980; Russell & Russell, 1989). However, mothers continue to engage in these activities more frequently. In general, women are dissatisfied with the amount of parenting and domestic involvement of men, whereas men are much less so or not at all (Cowan & Cowan, 1987, 1988; Dickie, 1987). Despite the uneven rates of change and although the majority of women earn less income than men, the employment of women outside the home is changing the balance of power in families and marital dynamics (Arendell, 1997).

Belsky (1984) in his classic work, has described a process model of the determinants of parenting. The model continues to be prominent in the literature on parenting competence. This model presumes that parenting is directly shaped by forces originating from within the individual parent, within the child, and from the broader social context in which the parent-child relationship is contained (Belsky, 1984). Marital relationship along with social network and occupational experiences of parents are considered to contribute to the broader social context, which is a source of stress or support. In addition, the model supposes that the historical development of the parent, marital relations, social networks and jobs influence individual personality and general psychological well-being of parents and thereby, parental and child development.

The broader social context, social interaction, was further explored by Belsky (1984) to determine the relative importance of each of the contributing factors. A study of 50

adolescent mothers found, in order of importance, that emotional assistance from the family of origin followed by support received from the spouse or boyfriend, and finally by support of friends predicted maternal attitude and affection (Colletta & Gregg, 1981). In another study involving 105 mothers of term and preterm infants, the most significant maternal support with the more positive effects was the support provided by a spouse followed by community and friends (Crnic et al., 1983). Based on these research findings Belsky (1984) concluded that the marital relationship is likely to have the greatest impact on potential parent competence rather than the social network and support gained at work. Further, he is of the opinion that the marital relationship can positively and negatively influence parental functioning (Belsky).

Belsky (1984) predicted that the quality of the marital relationship directly influences parent-child interactions in that parents who have satisfying and supportive marital relationships will have more energy to respond sensitively to their children. Also, according to Belsky, marital relations directly influence parent's psychological well-being, thereby indirectly influencing parent-child interactions. Research has found a positive relationship between marital quality and parents' psychological well-being (Wandersman, 1980).

Another body of research considers the significance of social support to health, particularly in parenting. It takes many resources to raise a child today including social support. Marital relationships provide social support such as emotional aid. The significance of social support was identified in a study by Norbeck and Sheiner (1982) of single mothers in which problems in parenting were related to the lack of a close friend and the absence of being able to call on someone for practical help. Therefore, possible

positive factors in parenting success include having emotional support and opportunities to get assistance in fulfilling parenting responsibilities.

To summarize this section, parents contribute dramatically to the individual outcomes for each child and society. Parenting is a role with differences of involvement and expectations between the two genders. A variety of determinants influence parenting including social support. A significant source of social support for spouses can be the marital relationship.

Marital Interaction and Parenting

The marital relationship has been the focus of research regarding interaction between parents in the family. A rationale for this focus may be the belief that patterns for dealing with conflict existed in the family system, the married couple, prior to the birth of the child (Wilson & Gottman, 1995). Dickie (1987) identified several facets of the marital relationship which affect parenting including emotional support, cognitive support or agreement on child rearing, and physical support or sharing actual care of the child. A couple's role arrangements and communication styles were emphasized by Cowan and Cowan (1988) as principal contributors to marital satisfaction when partners become parents. Cowan and Cowan gathered information via interviews and an extensive set of questionnaire instruments regarding mutual role arrangements in their study. The data was gathered at four time intervals, during pregnancy, 6 and 18 months after child birth, and at 3 1/2 years. They found that role satisfaction decreased for partners who became parents. During their study, Cowan and Cowan observed that the issue which lead to the most conflict and disagreement for partners was the issue of "who does what" in the partnership.

Marital interaction includes the process of communicating between the couple.

Heinicke (1995) refers to marital communication as “the overt and covert patterns of communication in which partners exchange information and expectations in order to share tasks, convey feelings, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and show their caring.” (p. 279). Numerous studies regarding the quality of the marital interaction of parents have pointed out the significance of both expressing negative affects and yet remaining on the task of resolving conflicts (Heinicke & Guthrie, 1994; Pratt, Kevig, Cowan & Cowan, 1988).

The developing child is significantly affected by the preexisting husband-wife system. The husband and wife relationship contributes significantly to the context of parent-child interactions. The quality of the husband-wife relationship has been found to have especially good predictability regarding child development (Erel & Burman, 1995). Research has indicated that husband-wife interactions in which emotional support was observed, strongly correlated with sensitive interactions for both mothers and fathers with their children (Dickie, 1987). In addition, there was noted a difference between mothers and fathers in situations with low emotional support; fathers were less sensitive than mothers (Dickie).

A study was conducted by Benzies, Harrison and Magill-Evans (1998) in which they examined the relationships between parent interactions with healthy term and preterm 12 month old infants, family socioeconomic status, marital quality and preschool behavior problems. The sample was nonrandom and matched at birth by infant gender.

Questionnaires were the method of data collection. Results showed that the occurrence and impact of the child’s problematic behaviors as reported by the mother were predicted

by maternal views of marital quality at 12 months (Benzies et al.). With regards to the father, the impact of behavior problems was predicted by marital quality and family socioeconomic status (Benzies et al.).

It is the expanding gap between husbands and wives with regard to roles, experiences, and perceptions in the family as partners become parents and not the change in parental status itself which has been related to a decline in marital satisfaction (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). It is even possible to predict what the child would be like in preschool from what the marriage was like prior to the arrival of the child (Cowan & Cowan). Cowan and Cowan also found that mothers and fathers who described their marriages as happy and satisfying when their children were 18 months old, were warm, responsive, structuring, and limit setting when parenting their toddlers. In contrast, parents who were cold, angry, unresponsive and unable to set limits were unhappy and with their marriages and depressed (Cowan and Cowan).

Parental satisfaction, more so for men than women, is entangled with perceived marital quality. Several researchers have found that fathers are more likely at risk for poor parent-child interaction if marital quality is decreased (Belsky et al., 1991; Broom, 1998; Dickie, 1987). In addition, a study conducted by Sears, Maccoby and Levin (1957), indicates that mothers' proclaimed respect for their husbands was systematically related to the praise they provided to their preschool children. The reasons for these linkages are not well understood at this time, however, some knowledge has been acquired regarding the link between child development and the marital relationship. Most of the study in this area so far has focused on the impact of conflict on child development.

In Belsky and associate's (1996) study of troubled families with toddlers, they found

that marital quality in general may not be related to parent-child interaction and child behavior, but rather marital processes directly involved in rearing children. They measured the frequency with which spouses supported or undermined each other's parenting efforts and compared this to the three groups of families; stable-troubled, unstable-troubled, and stable troubled. The amount of support or undermining was measured by "the frequency with which one parent in the family (1) supported the spouse's parenting efforts, (2) undermined their partner's parenting, and (3) undermined the other parent while expressing negative emotion" (Belsky et al., 1996, p. 573). They found that families experiencing more trouble in the second year of their child's life were frequently unsupportive-emotional in their co-parenting (Belsky et al.).

A study was conducted by Jourilies and associates (1991) in which they measured a specific aspect of marriage, childrearing disagreements, to gain a better understanding of the link between marital interaction and child behavior. The goal of the research project was to demonstrate that assessing specific aspects of marital functioning rather than global measures, such as marital satisfaction and quality, will improve upon the prediction of child behavior. The specific aspect of marital functioning, which they researched, was childrearing disagreements and nonchildrearing disagreements (Jourilies et al.). The first sample included 200 mothers of three year old boys in which they completed nonstandardized measures of marital functioning and child behavior. The second sample consisted of 87 mothers of boys 4-6 years of age which completed the index of childrearing as with the first sample as well as standard measures of child behavior and marital functioning.

The results from both samples demonstrated that parental disagreements about

childrearing was more predictable of a variety of behavior problems in boys than general, nonchild disagreements and general marital adjustment (Jourilies et al., 1991). In sample one, after accounting for general, nonchild disagreements parental childrearing disagreements enhanced upon the prediction of problem behavior in these children. In addition, in the first sample, childrearing disagreements improved upon the prediction of behavior problems after taking in to consideration the boy's exposure to marital conflict (Jourilies et al.). In the second sample, childrearing disagreement improved upon the prediction of internalizing behavior problems after controlling for general marital adjustment as well as exposure of the child to marital conflict (Jourilies et al.). The results demonstrate the significance of conducting research in more specific aspects of marital functioning, such as parental interaction and disagreements regarding areas of childrearing and discipline.

In summary, the marital relationship and interaction has an affect on parenting through the support it can offer. A couple's marital satisfaction and quality can be influenced by a variety of factors such as role arrangements and communication styles, which in turn contributes to their ability to parent and ultimately child development. Further, specific aspects of the marital relationship and interaction, such as childrearing disagreements, may be more significant than others.

Marital Conflict and Child Development

Wilson and Gottman (1995) state that marital conflict must be considered in order to understand the processes that link the marital and parent-child subsystems. Friedman (1998) states that conflict and decision making are activities that can be observed in the daily activities of the family. In 1959, McCord, McCord and Zola published research,

which found that the home atmosphere had a significant effect on whether a child became a criminal. Homes, which they described as having a cohesive environment, resulted in fewer criminals and vice versa, homes in which there was conflict even though affectionate produced more criminals (McCord, McCord & Zola). Interparental conflict is significant regarding child development outcomes, the more conflict the poorer the outcome (Block, Block & Gjerde, 1986; Long, Forehand Fauber & Brody, 1987).

Three potential mechanisms through which the marital interaction affect child development has been proposed (Wilson and Gottman, 1995). One method is the modeling of behavior, as parents provide especially strong models for children based on their roles in the family. Researchers feel that aggression is a behavior that has been modeled by parents (Bandura, 1973; Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). Furthermore, it has been found that parents who engage in marital aggression are more likely to use aversive methods, such as physical punishment, in dealing with their children (Jouriles, Barling, & O'Leary, 1987). Through continuous exposure to interparent aggression, children may learn that this is an acceptable strategy for dealing with disagreements rather than problem solving. Patterson (1971) states that in families where the parents are disengaged, oblivious, or insensitive to typical communication gestures by their children, the child's acting out or aggressive behavior may be reinforced by the attention the parent provides to this behavior. In other words, the parent reinforces the child's destructive behavior by increasing attention to the child when he engages in this behavior.

Children are also affected by marital conflict as it creates a stressful experience for them. Studies have shown that children were more distressed at witnessing interadult anger when they had observed repeated incidences of interadult anger or had a history of

exposure to interparental physical aggression (Cummings, Iannotti, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985; Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-Yarrow, 1981; Cummings, Pellegini, Notarius, & Cummings, 1989). Parenting factors can also mediate between marital conflict and child dysfunction. Child behavior problems can often be explained by disruptions in parenting (Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990; Hess & Camara, 1979). The reasoning for parental conflict being associated with increases in child aversive behavior relates to the parents becoming absorbed by their own conflict and therefore are less consistent or effective in their discipline practices (Patterson, 1982). Inconsistent childrearing has been associated with both marital conflict and child behavior problems (Block et al., 1981; Patterson & Stouthamer, 1984; Stoneman, Brody, & Burke, 1989). Further, studies have shown that when parents focus on their own issues they may become less effective providers and facilitators of social opportunities for their children (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991; Ladd & Golter, 1988).

The inability of couples to resolve disagreements is especially detrimental when it extends to decisions regarding children. Marital conflict may have negative child development repercussions through the erosion of the couples' ability to form agreements about childrearing practices and be supportive co-parents. Block and his associates (1981) found that parental disagreement about childrearing practices related both to subsequent marital dissolution and aggressive behavior in boys and withdrawn behavior in girls. Frequent conflict between spouses may reduce the availability of an important source of support in childrearing, one's partner. The observation of triadic interactions among mothers, fathers and their infants has given valuable information about how this system of support works. Belsky and Volling (1987) found when studying infants and their

parents that high levels of positive behaviors between parents such as sharing pleasure, showing affection, and complimenting each other was associated with positive and responsive parenting behaviors.

Steinmetz (1977) studied 57 intact families, with a wide variety of demographic characteristics, regarding marital conflict. A random sample was collected with quotas for each geographic district. Data were collected both through in-depth semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Results identified that a frequent source of conflict between spouses occurred when one parent did not support the discipline implemented by the other parent (Steinmetz).

Emery (1982) determined marital discord to be the best familial predictor of childhood behavior problems. In addition, research has found an association between marital discord and negative parenting styles, and children raised in these families had poorer peer relations and had worse physical health. (Belsky, 1984; Gottman and Katz, 1989).

Baumrind and Black (1967) discovered that despite energetic and at times conflicting interactions, the families of competent children were not marked by discord or strife. Also, these households experienced better coordination and the disciplinary approach was concisely communicated with consistent enforcement. A positive marital relationship has been identified as the principle support system, having the potential to influence parenting ability significantly (Belsky, 1981; Crnic et al., 1983).

Youth behavior problems in relation to interparent conflict were studied using a two study replication with a total sample size of 800 (Buehler, Krishnakumar, Stone, Anthony, Pemberton, Gerard & Barber, 1998). They examined both internalizing and externalizing behavior in relation to the frequency of parent disagreement, and style of

conflict used by the parent. The style of conflict was described as either overt or covert. They found that interparental conflict accounted for 20% of the variance in youth misbehavior (Buehler et al.). In addition they found that the frequency of disagreement was less related to problem behavior than aggressive conflict. These results were fairly consistent for gender, nondivorced and divorced families, socio-economic status, and preadolescent and early adolescent youth (Buchler et al.).

In review, conflict is a natural part of family life. Marital conflict and conflict between parents results in negative child development outcomes when the conflict is elevated or not resolved. Mechanisms proposed for this affect include modeling of the behavior, the creation of stress for the child as a result of the conflict, and the inability of the couple to parent effectively because of being consumed in the conflict. Furthermore, parental disagreements regarding childrearing can be the source of conflict.

Parents and Socialization of Children

The socialization of children, which is a primary task of families with preschool children, is carried out by the parents in the family. Parenting has been viewed as a complex matter (Rubin, Stewart & Chen, 1995). The addition of a child is seen as both stressful and joyful for the family unit (Bornstein, 1995). Most people would agree that children represent a challenge to their parents. Most times these challenges are met by parents with acceptance, warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness. However, at times, for reasons we are only beginning to understand, the challenge of parenting is met with coldness, unacceptance, neglect and/or hostility. Several reasons have been discussed in the literature for this difference in parenting behavior. Possible rationale for these child rearing behaviors include an environmental basis or perhaps they are related to the infant

and child characteristics that lead parents to interact negatively with or feel negatively about their offspring (Belsky, 1980). Perhaps too, parents themselves have experienced particularly negative childrearing histories in their family of origin resulting in the modeling of behaviors of their own parents and family culture or norms in the rearing of their children (Rogosch, Cicchetti, Shields & Toth, 1995; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Rubin, Stewart and Chen (1995) suggest that when parents think about childrearing and child development trends in ways that deviate from the cultural norms, and/or when they interact and respond to their children in psychologically inappropriate ways, they will develop negative relationships with their children. Further, it is believed that when parent-child relationships and parent-child interactions within the family are negative, the potential outcome is poor child development (Farrington, 1991; Jacobson, 1978; Johnson & O'Leary, 1987; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Rubin, 1993).

Many definitions of social competence have been proposed. A commonly accepted definition is that proposed by Rubin and Rose-Krasnor (1992) in which social competence is defined as the consistent demonstration over time and across settings of behavior considered to be friendly, cooperative, altruistic, successful, and socially acceptable. The development of social competence and incompetence is likely to be influenced by a variety of factors both internal and external to the child. Cognitive ability, temperament and physical appearance are factors internal to the child which have been identified (Bates, Bayles, Bennet, Ridge & Brown, 1991; Green, Forehand, Beck & Vosk, 1980; Langlois & Stephan, 1981). The reinforcement of certain behaviors by peers and the child's parents have been identified as external factors (Hartup, 1985; Patterson,

Littman, & Bricker, 1967).

Positive child outcomes of family functioning and socialization have included prosocial behavior (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Putallaz, 1987), and social and cognitive competence (Long, Forehand, Fauber & Brody, 1987; Long, Slater, Forehand & Fauber, 1988). Parents serve three functions in the child's development of social competence (Hartup, 1985). First, the many competencies for social interaction develop within the context of the parent- child interaction. Second, the child is provided emotional and cognitive resources within the context of the parent-child relationship, which support the exploration of the environment, by the child. Thirdly, all subsequently formed extrafamilial relationships are based on the relationships earlier developed in the family and specifically with the parents. Therefore, it is within the context of the child's relationship with his/her parent that the child develops her future parenting behaviors.

Lack of social competence has been identified clearly by two manifestations, aggression and social withdrawal (Rubin et al., 1995). Childhood aggression and social withdrawal have been shown to predict the development of psychological difficulties such as those associated with school drop-out, criminal behavior in adolescence, articulation of externalizing disorders, and adolescent internalizing nature (Farrington, 1991; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; & Rubin, 1993). Several poor child outcomes such as aggression (Hetherington et al., 1982; Jacobson, 1978; Johnston, Gonzalez & Campbell, 1987; Patterson, 1982), conduct problems/disorder (Johnson & O'Leary, 1987; Jouriles, Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Jouriles, Pfiffner & O'Leary, 1988), delinquency and antisocial behavior (Emery, 1982; O'Leary, 1984; G. R. Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Peterson & Zill, 1986) and anxiety/withdrawal (Johnson et al., 1987; Long et al.,

1987; G. R. Patterson, 1993). have been linked with family functioning and parental conflict.

The relationships experienced in the family, especially with the parents, informs all subsequent relationships. Shereshefsky and Yarrow (1973) found that women who reported more positive relationships with their mothers were rated by observers as more confident in their role as mother, as having better functioning marriages, and their infants to be more self-sufficient. In addition, men who became more involved in the care of their 18 month old children, who experienced less parenting stress and whose marital satisfaction declined less, had a tendency to describe their family of origin as more cohesive, more communicative and lower in conflict (Cowan and Cowan, 1988). Belsky (1984) has identified three sets of data which support the generalization that the linkages between parents' psychological well-being and their ability to function as a parent may be traced back, at least to some extent, to the experiences parents had growing up.

One set of data originates in studies conducted regarding child abuse which points an association between the experience of being mistreated as a child and the likelihood of mistreating your own children (Belsky, 1978, 1980; Parke & Collmer, 1975). The second set of research findings linking the developmental history and parenting are studies of depression. This research indicates that persons who develop depression often have a risk factor of a stressful separation from their own parents as a child (Brown & Harris, 1978). Also, depression has been related to difficulties in caring for young children (Frommer & O'Shea, 1973a, 1973b) which results in less than optimal development of the child (Radke-Yarrow, Cummings, Kuczynski, & Chapman, 1985, Sameroff & Seifer, 1983). Study findings focusing on fathers provided the third set of data linking the influence of

parents on their child's parenting (Belsky, 1991; Snarey, 1993). This research reveals that both high levels of father involvement in one's own childhood and low levels of father involvement predicted high participation in the care of one's own children.

Bronfenbrenner (1980) offers a potential reason for what appears to be an inconsistency in the processes of personality development and identity of the male. Fathers who have a positive, involved relationship with their sons are likely to be modeled by their sons.

While, sons of fathers who are not involved, will not develop a significant relationship with their father and therefore will not identify with them or model their behaviour after them (Bronfenbrenner).

Belsky (1984) summarizes with this statement, "Supportive developmental experiences give rise to a mature healthy personality, that is capable of providing sensitive parental care which fosters optimal child development." (p. 86). Therefore, a child develops their future parenting role within the context of the family and specifically the parent-child relationship. Sameroff and Seifer (1983) state that in any society that endures over several generations there must be a codified system of child rearing and socialization of members into appropriate roles in order for the society to continue. Therefore, almost all psychological child development theories and the current literature support that parental attributes and behaviors, as well as on the quality of the parent-child interaction, influence a child's social and emotional development in general. In addition, more specifically the development of competent and adaptive versus noncompetent and maladaptive behaviors.

Belsky, Woodworth and Crnic (1996) studied 69 families with male toddlers regarding family interaction in which information was gathered over an 11 month period using a

variety of data gathering methods including observation and questionnaires. Belsky and associates applied the process model of the determinants of parenting developed by Belsky (1984), described above, to this study in an attempt to predict troubled families in the second year of life. At 15 and 21 months of age families described as troubled were more likely to try to control their child's behavior, depended the least on control-plus-guidance behavior management methods, had children who defied them more often and had the greatest amount of escalation of negative affect when they tried to control their child (Belsky et al.). In regards to the determinants of parenting, the troubled families were associated with lower socio-economic status, and decreased perceived social support by both mother and father.

To summarize, children are socialized in the family, mainly by the parents. Parents meet the challenge of rearing their children in a variety of ways. The means and methods they choose can result in child socialization outcomes along a continuum of positive to negative. These outcomes have lifelong effects for the child and society including the ability of the next generation to parent their children.

Parental Discipline

A major topic of concern in our society is the discipline of children (Forehand & McKinney, 1993). The processes of parental control and setting limits regarding child behavior, the how and when parents attempt to use discipline, and the effectiveness of such attempts have been found to vary widely among families (Elder, Caspi, & Downey, 1983; Holmes & Robins, 1988). In addition, parental discipline roles have varied historically. Discipline practices labeled as inconsistent, lax and punitive have been linked with negative outcomes for the child (McCord, McCord, & Zola, 1959; Weiss,

Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1992). Further, ineffective discipline and dysfunctional discipline styles have been associated with marital discord (Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff, & Acker, 1993; Emery, 1982).

History

The parent discipline roles of mothers and fathers in North American families has been shifting over time (Forehand & McKinney, 1993). In the 1600's and 1700's, the discipline of children was in the domain of fathers. In the 19th century, mothers took on the responsibility for disciplining children as the fathers left the home to find employment. Fathers have re-entered the childrearing forum in the 20th century but not in the discipline aspect. Currently, the father's role in discipline and the development of children has been increasingly recognized as significant. This strengthening of the father's participation in childrearing has been necessitated by mothers being employed outside the home and the need to share more of the responsibilities around the home (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). It is evident from several studies and the historical shift, that when considering parenting practices such as discipline and child-parent relationships, fathers need to be included (Phares & Compas, 1992; Williams, Radin & Coggins, 1996). Therefore, if both parents are participating to a greater extent in the discipline of their children there is a need to explore the interaction between the parents regarding discipline.

Defining Discipline

Discipline has been conceptualized and defined in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, in our society the terms discipline and punishment have been used synonymously. Often when someone refers to discipline they may mean punishment, including physical

punishment. The definition of discipline is evolving. Some of the most common methods of discipline used in the past are being redefined as unacceptable, not recommended, and even detrimental to the child. Physical punishment, including spanking are being defined as child abuse by some researchers (Gelles, 1990; Steinmetz, 1995).

The word discipline itself is derived from the Latin word disciple, which means “teaching”. Hammer and Turner (1996) state that “a system of discipline should imply a broad positive system of guidance of the young child” (p. 46). Nelson, Erwin and Duffy (1995), state that true discipline is not about punishment and control. Discipline is a process by which young children are guided and taught, assisting them to make positive decisions about their behavior, and gradually allowing them to accept responsibility for their choices and actions (Nelson et al.). Further, they state that “The question of how we choose to discipline our children goes right to the heart of parenting.” (Nelson, Erwin & Duffy, 1995, p. 202).

Various classifications of parenting disciplinary styles have been referred to in the literature for almost 50 years. Researchers have attempted to identify stable parent attitudes and behaviors, which can predict child behavior outcomes. Early investigators referred to the distinction between permissiveness and restrictiveness regarding discipline (Baldwin, 1949). The most widely referred to approach, which has set the ground work for the development of other classifications, was identified by Baumrind (1971).

Discipline Styles

Baumrind’s (1971) classification includes three styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive which vary in regards to two dimensions, warm-hostile and autonomy-control. A permissive parenting style, according to Baumrind (1966), can be described as warm

but not controlling or demanding in their interactions. There is no attempt by the parent to exert power and control over the child, rather the parent allows the child to control their own behavior as much as possible. The parent reacts to the child's behavior in an accepting, affirming and nonpunitive manner. In regards to an authoritarian parenting style, the parent attempts to control, shape and evaluate the child's behavior through the use of a set of absolute rules. A high value is placed by the parent on obedience. When the child disobeys, the methods of dealing with the transgression focuses on punitive, forceful measures such as physical punishment, threats, and belittling. Authoritarian parents lack warmth in their interactions. The third style, authoritative, where parents value both child autonomy and explain restrictions, the parents ensure there is control and that guidelines are followed. Authoritative parents are warm, receptive, and accepting in their interactions.

Discipline plays a significant part in the socialization of children which is one of prime tasks of parents. The socialization of children occurs over time within thousands of parent- child exchanges. An aspect of this role, parental disciplinary style, has consistently been associated with children's social adjustment and been a major topic of concern (Forehand & McKinney, 1993; Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1991). A means of identifying dysfunctional parenting techniques, that has been significantly researched, is to determine the parent disciplinary styles (Baumrind, 1971).

Numerous determinants of parent discipline style have been studied including demographic characteristics, cultural groups, parents perceived ineffectiveness, maternal affective disorders, stress and marital accord (Arnold et al., 1993; Day, Factor, Szkiba-Day, 1994; Emery, 1982; Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995; Radke-Yarrow,

Cummings, Kuczynski & Chapman, 1985; Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1992). The evidence is mixed in relation to demographic characteristics and parent discipline style regarding marital status, employment status, education level or salary level (Day et al., 1994; Lenton, 1990). A rationale provided for the poor child development outcomes of children in which their mothers have affective disorders, depression and bipolar disorder, is the potential laxness and inconsistency of their parenting style related to the confusion and preoccupation with self in these disorders (Radke-Yarrow et al, 1985).

The consequences or outcomes of parenting discipline styles have been studied by a variety of researchers. Studies observing child behavior and parenting styles have found that parents who have poor, ineffective styles were associated with behavior problems in the child such as aggression, delinquency, low self-reliance and low self-control, as well as being less friendly (Baumrind, 1966; Baumrind, 1971; Baumrind & Black, 1967; Day et al., 1994). A growing body of knowledge suggests that an authoritative parent discipline style is most conducive to fostering positive child outcomes such as self-reliance, self-control, cheerfulness, and achievement as well as promoting social competence (Baumrind, 1978; Denham, Renwick & Holt, 1991; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1978; Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989). Most of the studies on parent discipline styles though have focused on mothers (Baumrind, 1966, Baumrind & Black, 1967; Denham, et al., 1991; Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1992).

Denham and associates (1991) conducted a study of 48 preschool children in which the children and their mothers were videotaped while engaged in four tasks. They found that mothers who were able to support their preschool children, to create appropriate structure and limits, to allow autonomy, and avoid hostility resulted in socioemotional

competence in peer interactions among their children (Denham et al.). Further, sadness and feelings of rejection in the children could be predicted by lack of support and autonomy (Denham et al.).

Further, Trickett and Kuczynski (1986) found parents differ in approaches to discipline. They studied 20 abusive and 20 nonabusive families with children age 4-10 years. A self report method was used to gather data related to child misbehaviors, parental discipline and affective reactions, and children's responses to discipline. Control parents were found to use more reasoning techniques and simple commands whereas the abusive parents more frequently used punitive methods of discipline (Trickett and Kuczynski). Further, the type of discipline used by nonabusive parents was dependent on the type of negative child behavior, however, abusive parents tended to use punishment no matter the type of misbehavior by the child. Finally, children who were abused more often behaved aggressively and were more likely to object to parental interventions.

Inconsistent Discipline

Inconsistent discipline is another link to negative child outcomes which has been widely studied. Negative outcomes, which have been linked, include child conduct problems (McCord, McCord & Zola, 1959; Zucker, 1976), depression (Gelfand & Teti, 1990; Holmes & Robins, 1988) and child aggression (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Wahler & Sansbury, 1990). Inconsistent discipline has been divided into two primary types, intraparent and interparent. Intraparent inconsistency refers to a parent who reacts indiscriminately to their child behaviors, does not follow-through, gives in, and unpredictable changes of expectations and consequences when rules have been violated. Holmes and Robins (1988) found mothers to be more inconsistent in their discipline than

fathers. The study of inconsistency usually refers to intraparent inconsistency with very little being known about the phenomena between parents, interparent (Holmes & Robins, 1988; McCord, McCord & Zola, 1959).

Two parents acting at odds or conflicting with each other regarding discipline across time is interparent inconsistency. Parents may conflict regarding discipline procedures, the regulating of rule infractions, and the determination of consequences for breaking rules. A parent in Steinmetz's (1977) study identified the value of consistent parenting when she indicated that her and her husband spoke about child discipline frequently before making a decision so that they displayed a united front or interparent consistency. Jouriles and associates (1991) proposed that parental childrearing disagreements lead to inconsistent parenting which then may result in child behavior problems.

Mother-Father Discipline Styles

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding parenting styles of mothers and fathers examining both determinants and outcomes including marital relationships and child behavior. Research findings regarding the discipline differences between mothers and fathers are conflicting. Baumrind (1982) found that the parent was more likely to be the disciplinarian for the child of the same sex. However, several researchers have not found significant differences between mothers and fathers regarding discipline including their reactions to misbehavior or their involvement in teaching/correcting behavior (Bronstein, 1984; Noller, 1980; Russell & Russell, 1987). Further, Margolin and Patterson (1975) found that when all members of the family are present, parents are more likely to react negatively to a child of the same sex. A study conducted by Day, Peterson and McCracken (1998) found that mothers were more likely to spank their children than

fathers.

Two studies have been conducted regarding childrearing parental agreement (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981; Deal, Halverson, and Wampler, 1989). Block et al. (1981) reported a quantitative study of 83 parental dyads, involving the comparison of individual responses to a set of California Q-sort items regarding childrearing values and orientation, to obtain an objective index of degree of parental agreement. The sample was obtained by inviting all families with children in the nursery schools to participate in the study. However, the sample was limited as black families were under represented. The index was found to be significantly related to psychological functioning in children ages 3-7 years, to significantly forecast marital status 10 years after the agreement was initially assessed, and to relate to family characteristics. Parental agreement was also determined to be associated with observed ratings of mother's low authoritarianism and categorizing of the home environment as nonsuppressive.

A quantitative study conducted by Deal et al. (1989) examined parental agreement on child rearing in relation to parental, marital, family and child characteristics in 136 intact families with a preschool age child. A convenience sampling method was utilized which resulted in a sampling bias as lower functioning parents were underrepresented. Observation and a self-report questionnaire package including the Behavior Problem Checklist, the Temperament Assessment Battery, The Dyadic Adjustment Scale, the Relationship Inventory, the Family Environment Scale and the Block Child-rearing Practices Report Q-sort were employed to study the families. Self-reports have a risk of response bias in that there is tendency for some respondents to distort their responses (Polit & Hungler, 1995). The results indicate that parental dyads who possess high

parental agreement have family and marital relationships commonly attributed to healthy families. However, there was only partial support for a relationship between parental agreement and child outcomes.

These above studies regarding the relationship between parents and discipline are limited by the quantitative methodology. Both of the studies focused solely on the congruence or amount of agreement-disagreement between the parents gained through questionnaires and observation. The participants are limited in their responses by the forced choice questionnaires or by what the researcher determines to be significant to observe. Quantitative methodology is grounded in a positivistic, reductionist, and empiricist paradigm (Playle, 1995). This choice of method limits the understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the participant, as there is no attempt to document and interpret the whole of whatever is being studied from the person's point of view or frame of reference.

The processes involved in or informing the discipline decisions or roles of the parents were not studied thereby limiting the understanding regarding the interaction process between the parents with regards to discipline. Further, a constructionist view of the world has been recommended as most appropriate when studying family interaction (Eisler, Dare and Szmukler, 1988). Therefore a qualitative methodology was chosen for this study. This mode of qualitative analysis is consistent with the purpose of this study which is to provide an understanding into the interaction between parents with regards to disciplining their preschool age child. This will be discussed in further detail in the methodology chapter.

In review, discipline is a method used by parents to socialize children and control their

behavior. The role of parents regarding discipline has shifted over time. At present, society and parents are confused as to meaning and methods of discipline. A variety of parenting styles have been identified, some more effective than others. These styles can differ between parents resulting in conflict. In addition, a lack of consistency in discipline can result in negative child development outcomes.

Summary

In summary, no studies have been conducted regarding the process of interaction between parents and disciplining children. Disciplinary practices have been determined to be significant in many diverse areas of child development such as the acquisition of moral values (Brody & Shaffer, 1982), aggression, delinquency (Day et al., 1994) and performance at school (Dornbush et al., 1978). Disciplinary practices, then, would seem to be crucial in the raising of children to become effective members of society.

Research has supported the significance of inconsistency of discipline, and the different styles of parent discipline regarding child outcomes. Furthermore, study results have linked disagreement between parents with respect to discipline to poor childrearing outcomes and child behavior problems (Jourilies et al., 1991). Interaction between parents, especially mother-father conflict, has been related to negative child behavior outcomes (Emery, 1982; Block et al., 1981; Long et al, 1988; Long et al, 1987). Therefore, based on the outcome of the theoretical and research literature, research which adds to the knowledge of family interactions, specifically the interaction between parents concerning discipline is crucial for families and those professionals who assist them with their parenting and childrearing.

Further, this thesis project explored several topics for research in families as

recommended by Thompson and Walker (1991) including; gaining an understanding of the mothers' and fathers' involvement in everyday parenting activities, exploring parenthood as a source of and occasion for power, and examining how partners support and undermine each other's involvement in parenthood. This study took a qualitative approach to focus on the interaction between parents regarding discipline of their preschool child.

Theorists across several disciplines have continued to describe similar phenomena in their observations of families. Nursing has been associated with family health care for a long time, and nurses are in a unique position to continue adding to the body of knowledge about family functioning through nursing research. Nursing can significantly contribute by further study of families in their ability to achieve and maintain health (Casey, 1996).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following chapter provides the methodology for this study as well as the details of the research design. Further, the sample, setting, and data collection methods, ethical considerations, data analysis and methodical limitations are identified, described and discussed. The selection of the methodology and research design for this study has considered the degree of currently available knowledge, and the purpose and nature of the research problem to be studied (Artinian, 1988; Polit & Hungler, 1995).

The methodology chosen for this study was qualitative. This decision was based on the following description of qualitative research. Qualitative research has several fundamental goals which are to describe, explain, and understand the phenomena under study (Morse, 1994). According to Field and Morse (1985) the essence of the qualitative approach is its ability to study the empirical world from the perspective of the participant, not the researcher. Qualitative methods are flexible and somewhat unstructured, capturing reports and observations (Brink & Wood, 1989). The qualitative researcher attempts to attain rich, real, deep, and valid data (Leininger, 1985).

A mode of qualitative analysis, specified by Artinian (1988) as descriptive, is to “present rich detail that allows the reader to understand what it would be like in a setting or to be experiencing the life situation of a person or group.” (p. 139). This mode of qualitative analysis was consistent with the purpose of this study which was to provide an understanding into the interaction between parents with regards to disciplining their preschool age child. A further rationale for the fit of the methodology was that the conceptual framework for this study and the mode of qualitative analysis are grounded in

the theory base of symbolic interactionism (Artinian). Using the perspective of symbolic interactionism, data analysis focused on the meaning of the events to the interactants in the setting (Blumer, 1969). In addition, a reductionist view of family interaction research has resulted in the decline of the usefulness of the research results for clinicians and ultimately a decrease in the popularity of family interaction research (Eisler et al., 1988). Eisler, Dare and Szmukler, recommend the constructionist view of the world as most appropriate when studying family interaction, and therefore a qualitative methodology was used. Finally, there is heightened agreement that qualitative methods of research are pertinent and congruent with the views and goals of nursing (Sandelowski, 1986).

Qualitative methods are most appropriate when the researcher is attempting to describe a phenomena from the insider perspective (Field & Morse, 1985). According to Leininger (1985), qualitative research ideally attempts to document and interpret the whole of whatever is being studied from the people's point of view or frame of reference. In this research study, I attempted to gain an understanding of the interaction between parents regarding discipline from the parents perspective. In addition, this methodology is useful when little is known about an area of interest as it allows the researcher to generate knowledge, and to gain an understanding of the phenomena (Artinian, 1988). To date no studies have been conducted considering the interaction of parents regarding discipline.

Study Design

A focused ethnographic method was chosen for this study because it facilitates an understanding of a small group's own perceptions regarding the issue being researched, interaction between parents and discipline. The appropriateness of this research design will be discussed in relation to the subject to be studied.

An ethnographic approach was appropriate for studying family interaction concerning discipline as it provides a method to gain an understanding of the phenomena in its entirety from the participants perspective. I gained knowledge and understanding of the phenomena of discipline congruence from the participants themselves (Brink & Wood, 1989). Ethnography is a way of gathering, reporting, and analyzing the ways in which participants sort the meaning of their world (Aamodi, 1991). Further, conducting this study in the families' homes, provided for a natural or contextual setting which is an attribute of the ethnographic approach (Hughes, 1992). Leininger (1985) states that the ethnographic approach is beneficial for nursing research when the intention of the researcher is to learn about an experience that has not been adequately studied or to gain fresh insights. Therefore, this research design was suitable for studying the issue of parent interaction regarding discipline, which has not been explored to date.

Dobson (1985) refers to "adapting ethnographic methods to small-scale dimensions involving a similar chain of activities, but with a limited focus of inquiry, a smaller number of participants and a shorter time span" (p. 78). Werner and Schoepfle (1987) suggest that there is a trend to apply ethnographic methods to any social unit or isolatable human group rather than an entire culture. Kleinman (1992) describes a subtype of the ethnographic approach, "focused" ethnography, which concentrates on a specific or narrow area of inquiry. He describes focused ethnography as a study of a local world and the social reality within it, the "experience" (Kleinman). The social experience, culture, consists of interpersonal movement, transactions, communications and other social activities between and within the persons. Therefore, a study of the everyday experience within the context of the family, including the interactions and communications, can help

us to understand the social experience or culture of the family. According to Morse (1991b), ethnographies which are topic-oriented and study a small group can be referred to as focused ethnographies. Hughes (1992) suggests that an ethnographic approach is applicable to small social aggregates, such as the family, based on the flexibility of the approach, and the basic defining principles and goals of understanding human behavior which guide ethnography. An understanding of the cultural rules, norms and values and how they relate to health can be gained through an ethnographic study which focuses on a social unit or processes within a small group (Boyle, 1994). Ethnography involves the study of culture of which social interaction is a significant component.

Sampling

In qualitative research, the selection of an adequate and appropriate sample is important, as the quality of the research is dependent on appropriateness and adequacy (Morse, 1991). Sampling within an ethnographic design is considered complete when the researcher is satisfied with the richness of the data, the data accurately portray reality, and the data are meaningful to report (Munhall, 1989; Germain, 1993).

Adequacy refers to a sample size which generates sufficient and quality data (Morse, 1991a). Factors taken into account when determining the sample size include the type of study and the richness of the data. Sandelowski (1995b) states that sample size in qualitative research is relative with consideration to the intentions of the purpose of sampling and the qualitative product. A guideline that was employed in determining actual sample size was to continue to collect data regarding the research focus until no new information was obtained or theoretical saturation was achieved (Morse, 1991a; Sandelowski). Considering the focused ethnographic method, an adequate sample size

may be 10 for certain homogeneous samples such as in this study as it should be adequate to generate a thick, rich data base (Sandelowski). A qualitative study has no statistical requirements mandating a specific number of participants, the goal of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability) guides the sampling process. A sample size of 8 mother-father dyads was recruited to participate in the study based on the above factors.

Appropriateness requires purposeful sampling, selection of participants most able to meet the informational needs of the study (Morse, 1991a). The research participants were selected according to the sampling criteria with the intent of including participants who have/are experienced with the phenomena of interest, discipline of a preschool child. The purposive sampling technique is congruent with qualitative methodology (Sandelowski, 1995b; Morse, 1989). Purposive sampling is recommended to cover the full range, the breadth and depth, of the phenomena being studied. A purposeful sample selection technique was used for this study.

The target population for this study was mothers and fathers of preschool age children, ages 3 to 5 years old. Mothers and fathers of preschool children, who met the eligibility criteria, were the accessible population. The rationale for these criteria was to include participants who have had experience with the phenomena. Further, the oldest child being preschool age was used to determine the developmental stage of the family. Two parent families, living together, served as the definition of family used for this study. The sample for the study was limited to parents who met the following eligibility criteria:

- two parent families - the family is intact with both parents living at home
- the oldest child is between the ages of 3 and 5 years old

Recruitment and Access

Research participants were recruited from daycares, nursery schools, and parent support groups in the city. The recruitment process was initiated by obtaining written approval for the study from the daycare institutions, nursery schools, and parent support groups to access research participants concurrently with pursuing ethical approval for the study (Appendix B).

Upon ethical approval, mother-father dyads were approached to participate in the study indirectly by myself through placement of invitations, an Invitation to Participate (Appendix C), in the lockers assigned to the children at the daycare. If parents wished to participate, they were asked to contact me at the phone number provided on the invitation. At this time I screened families according to the criteria of both parents living at home. When a family had been identified on the telephone as meeting the sampling criteria, I provided further explanation of the study, answered any questions, and invited the parents to participate, Phone Invitation to Participate (Appendix D). In addition, parents were asked if the preschool child would be present in the home at the time of the interview. If the parents responded yes, I asked them if they had any difficulties or concerns with asking questions regarding discipline while the child is present. This was not a concern for any of the parents.

After the parents agreed to participate, consent was obtained by myself from both parents in their home prior to the interview (Appendix E). The data collected included a semi-structured interview with both parents. I explained the study by using a set format in the Interview Guide, I also collected all data, thereby strengthening the internal validity through constancy of conditions (Appendix F). The interviews were audio taped and

transcribed with the permission of the participants.

Setting

The interviews were conducted with both parents present in their home. One purpose in choosing this setting was that it enabled me to work with participants in their natural setting, a main tenet of ethnographic research (Hughes, 1992). Another purpose was an attempt to minimize the influence other settings, such as the daycare, on the way parents would respond to the interview context. It is thought that the home would be the least likely place for what Goffman (1963) describes as social drama, or the creation of illusions and impressions. A third reason for utilizing this setting was to potentially increase the sample size given the convenience of not having to travel and/or either bringing their children with them or getting someone to care for their children.

Data Collection

The unit of interest for data collection for this study according to Robinson's (1995) schema was the Individual/Family Subgroup (Appendix A). This unit of interest is a relational subgroup of the family including two or more persons as individuals and family member, with the foreground being the relationship and the family in the background. The subgroup researched was the mother-father dyad with data collection attention given to individuals, family members, and the relationship between them. The family as background was considered to be the context of the subgroup. Whatever the focus of the attention, only data that were appropriate to the subgroup were gathered (Robinson, 1995). Data were collected on all three levels, individual, relational, and transactional as each offers a distinct point of view of the unit of interest.

The individual level consists of data from a single family member, mother or father,

with no mention of the views, perceptions, or actions of other members of the family (Fisher et al., 1985). Data collected from the individual included demographic data. Data consisting of information about the person and/or family, collected from two or more family members believed to be related to each other in some way by the researcher, is considered relational data (Fisher et al.). The third level, transactional, was data from family members in interaction, reflecting the persons and relationships along with commonly held views regarding the person and/or family. Transactional level data in this study included data regarding the interaction of the couple during the interview.

In qualitative research methodology, the tool for collecting data is the researcher (Lipson, 1991; Rew, Bechtel & Sapp, 1993). Data were collected by me through two major methods: interviews and fieldnotes. According to Bauman and Greenberg (1992), qualitative interview methods have the ability to provide rare access to the complexity and variety of human attitudes, values, and behaviors. In addition, a reflective journal was also kept to assist me in considering the researcher's role in the research process.

Interviews

Ethnographic interviews are aimed at describing the cultural knowledge of a participant. In this focused ethnographic study the interview generated cultural knowledge about the interaction between parents when they disciplined their preschool child. In an ethnographic interview the researcher is interested in the person's experiences, what a person thinks, and how this person's perspective of reality compares with another persons (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992; Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). Fetterman (1989) states that for ethnographers the interview is the most important data collection tool. This is especially true when researching families. The intimate nature of families limits the access of the

ethnographic researcher to the family (Larossa, Bennett & Gelles, 1981). It is very rare that a family would invite a researcher to come live with them. In addition, a researcher cannot become an actual member of the family. The inaccessibility of the family provides rationale for the use of interviews as a method of data collection in family research, as it remains the most efficient, and generally the most practical method (Larossa, Bennett & Gelles, 1981).

Once couples had volunteered to participate in the study, interview appointments were made for approximately 1 - 1 1/2 hours in length at a time that was convenient for them. Advantages of face-to-face interviews include higher response rates and the ability of the researcher to offer clarifications for questions (Polit & Hungler, 1995). Interviews were conducted in the parent's homes. The interviews began with an explanation of the study (Appendix F) to the participants and obtained informed consent from both parents (Appendix E). All interviews were audio taped with the permission of the participants and transcribed verbatim. The use of the tape recorder minimized note taking during the actual interviews, so as to minimize the interference with the informality and conversational nature of the interview.

The interview was conducted with the couple, since the couple was the unit of study in this research project. Allan (1980) states that interviewing spouses together rather than interviewing individuals may provide data that could not be obtained if interviewed separately. It is the interaction of the couple as they are interviewed that provides the researcher with data that are not otherwise available (Allan 1980). Several advantages to utilizing the couple format for interviewing have been identified by Bennett and McAvity (1985). One of the advantages is that the couple interview provokes an expansion of the

information which may lead to a clarification of differences or result in validation of agreement between husband and wife. The researcher also gains an understanding of the extent to which couple's disagree on the questions being studied when the couples disagreement is openly acknowledged in the session.

Joint interviews were conducted with mothers and fathers to gather behavioral interaction data which can be directly observed (Allan, 1980). Joint interviews allow the gathering of transactional level data which include a measure of the subgroup relations. Robinson(1995) states "the focus here is on a relational subgroup in the context of the family from the perspective of person's alone and persons in interaction." (p. 18). Therefore the data may include both concerning and of the subgroup.

Throughout the duration of the interview, the observed interaction of the husband and wife provided data on spousal behavior not easily acquired in other methods. Bennett and McAvity (1985) state that "the joint interview permits and encourages spouses to portray themselves as a couple." (p. 102). The joint interview added to the richness of the data as this form of interviewing allows an opportunity for the researcher to witness how the couple act together including how they cope with disagreement, how they strive to support and influence each other, and how decisions are made. The joint interview format is consistent with the symbolic interactionist perspective as it is concerned with the way in which social reality is actively constructed and carried out (Rose, 1962).

A semi-structured format was utilized for the interviews for two purposes. First, to assure that important areas of data collection were addressed by providing a common framework for each interview. Second, to allow some freedom for participants to reveal

what was significant to them. A semi-structured interview guide comprised of open ended questions was used to guide the interview (Appendix F). The open ended questions consisted of descriptive questions, structural questions and contrast questions (Spradley, 1979). These three question types are recommended by Spradley (1979) as they facilitate the gathering of rich data. Dobson (1986) recommends the use of an interview schedule to guide the conversation in ethnographic interviews considering the informal style. The interview collected descriptive data focusing on an everyday experience in family life, discipline of a child.

The collection of behavioral and cognitive data is facilitated through description, which is accentuated in ethnographic interview techniques (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992). The interview began with asking the parents to describe a discipline situation which happened over the weekend, followed by more specific questions regarding topics such as discipline role, and socialization. The rationale for this process was that it is difficult for people to directly report most human behavior (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992). Descriptive data collection minimizes this issue as it allows informants to describe a variety of instances of the situation under study, which can be examined together for patterns (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992). The interview ended by asking participants if they would like to contribute any additional information and by asking them if they have any further questions. The participants were also asked if could be contacted at a later date for clarification of the content of the interview. The intent was to conduct one in-person interview with each family. The interviews lasted about one hour in length on average.

My interviewer role was consistent with that recommended in general ethnographic research in which the interviewer takes on the role of pupil (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992).

The interviewer role of pupil assisted me to avoid making assumptions which increased the opportunity for unanticipated topics and issues to arise. To further facilitate access to the person's own perceptions and perspective it was important to treat the participant's language as data. Cultural meanings are communicated through language and therefore provide insight into the structure and categorization of their reality. It is imperative for the interviewer to utilize as much as possible the participant's own language during the interview such as when probing for more detail (Bauman & Greenberg, 1992).

During the interview, demographic data were also collected regarding the sample using a Demographic Data Form (Appendix G). The Demographic Data Form provided information about chosen characteristics of the participants and the family in general. The variables of age, level of education, employment status and number of hours spent child rearing were collected for each parent. Data were also collected regarding the preschool child, including age and sex. Additional data were collected regarding the family unit, including the number of children in the family, family income, and religious affiliation.

The interview guide and Demographic Data Form were pretested with two families from the target population, mothers and fathers of preschool age children, prior to its application with the sample (Polit & Hungler, 1995; Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). The interview guide and Demographic Data Form were also pretested with a colleague and revised based on the feed back. The pretest served many purposes including determination of the approximate length of time required to complete the interview, sequencing of the questions, any difficulties the participants might have had with the questions, and that information being obtained would provide useful and interesting responses to the research questions. The guide and demographic form was revised as

necessary throughout the pretest.

Fieldnotes

Field notes were also maintained during the course of the study. Data related to participant observation were recorded in the field notes. Cobb and Hagemaster (1987) identify field notes as crucial in the data collection process of a qualitative research project. Emerson, Fritz and Shaw (1995) describe fieldnotes as written records which filter participant's experiences and concerns through the person and perspectives of the ethnographer. Fieldnotes were written after the end of each interview. Data with regards to the environment, the interaction observed between the parents, and between the parents and the child (if any occurred) were collected in the fieldnotes. I documented in the field notes any gestures, cues or reactions of one spouse to the other in the course of the interview. Observation assists in validating and interpreting information gathered through interviewing. Notes were in the form of salient points.

Fieldnotes were made by me and privately taped immediately following the interview to minimize the time between observation and recording to limit problems with recall and loss of detail. I ensured adequate time for recording after each interview. Morse and Field (1995) suggest sequencing the events in the order in which they occurred and letting the events flow from the mind to the recorder.

I also kept a reflective journal during the data collection process and data analysis to aid in contemplation of the research process. This method, based on reflexivity, required me "to continually reflect on her/his relation to the research process, both in relation to choice of method and in gathering and interpretation of data." (Stevenson, 1996, p. 103). Thoughts about relationships, propositions, and hypotheses that emerged from the data

were also recorded in the journal. Rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, reflexive researchers try to understand them by examining their beliefs, values and interests. There is great onus on researchers to be reflexive in their analysis of data, demonstrating to the reader that they have given careful consideration to the impact which their methods may have had on the data. The researchers own thoughts and experiences related to the interview were also documented in a reflexive journal after each interview. In the view of the use of self as instrument in qualitative research the investigator uses her/himself as a measuring device, so that the personal reactions as well as behavioral observations become part of the data (Cassell, 1977). The journal aided the researcher in separating the objective and subjective records.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) suggest that the researcher organize notes according to distinct “packages” of material according to whether they are “Observational Notes”, “Theoretical Notes” or “Methodological Notes”. Observational notes are defined as statements about events experiences mainly through watching and listening. They are not to interpreted, they are as reliable as the researcher can construct them. Each observational note is a piece of evidence or a property of a context or situation. It is the who, what, when and how of human behavior. The typed transcripts of the interviews and typed transcripts of the fieldnotes from participant observations were considered observational notes in this research project.

Theoretical notes are defined by Schatzman and Strauss (1973), as representing the self-conscious attempts to derive meaning from any of the observational notes. The researcher interprets, infers, and hypothesizes through relating observations.

Methodological notes, on the other hand, are defined as instructions to the researcher, a

reminder and critique of the researcher's own procedures. The method for recording data in this study as identified above are consistent with Schatzman and Stress's identification of "packages" of material. These procedures are identified as contributing to the development of the researcher's thoughts about the observations.

Data Analysis

In focused ethnography, as in most qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are a simultaneous and continuous process (Cobb & Hagemaster, 1987; Sandelowski, 1995a). One process is not completed prior to beginning the next. Rather, both require a fluid, flexible, and somewhat intuitive interaction between the data and the researcher (Brink, 1989). Field and Morse (1995) identify the first major task in analyzing interview data as becoming familiar with the data, immersion in the data. Therefore, after each taped interview I listened to the interview in order to gain familiarity with the data (Field & Morse, 1985). Cogg and Hagemaster (1987) state that in ethnographic research, data are constantly processed, through note taking, searching for patterns and determining preliminary explanations. Following this process, the interview tapes were prepared into raw data for analysis by transcription. The tapes were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist in order to preserve as much as possible the essence of the interview.

The data analysis began with an examination of the demographic data through the use of descriptive statistics. The description of the sample characteristics included frequencies, ranges, and measures of central tendency, as appropriate to the data.

Qualitative data analysis refers to a process in which the data are broken up or down into different parts (Sandelowski, 1995). This process was achieved by a technique referred to as thematic content analysis following the steps outlined by Burnard (1991).

Data collected via semi-structured, open-ended interviews and full recording of the interviews is recommended for this process (Burnard). Content analysis involves the development of categories and themes from the raw data (Burnard). An inductive approach was used, meaning that codes were developed during the process of analysis. Codes were continuously revised, deleted, broken down and added. The generated codes used words or phrases that were identified patterns in the data. Each transcript was reviewed repeatedly resulting in immersion of myselfthe researcher in the data.

Coded sections of the transcript were related to each of the categories, then copied and pasted into the appropriate file. I then reviewed all the categories and made a list of categories that were used for further analysis of the data. Categorical definitions and labels evolved as the data were coded. Categories were then aggregated in an effort to meaningfully reduce the data (Burnard, 1991). Once all the codes had been identified, the computer files of categories were searched for themes and patterns both within and across the categories. Similar codes were grouped under broader categories, themes. Each of the themes were examined and data within the themes compared and contrasted. In the final stage of data analysis, I wove the themes together into an integrated whole (Polit & Hungler, 1995).

To facilitate the analysis of the data it is imperative that a data filing system be developed. This system allows the researcher to store and retrieve the data quickly and easily. The Microsoft Word program was utilized to prepare transcripts thus facilitating the cutting and pasting of similar codes and categories together. Further, an appropriate data management system enhances data analysis by simplifying the comparison of participant responses and the identification of unusual or different answers. Computer

files were created for each category.

Measures to Enhance Methodological Rigor

The integrity of qualitative research studies is ensured through measures taken to enhance the rigor of the research process. Rose and Webb (1998) state that it is imperative for qualitative researchers to establish rigor. The process utilized to determine the rigor of the qualitative research process is referred to as assessing the study's trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Criteria to establish trustworthiness for this study are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Yonge & Stewin, 1988).

Credibility

A qualitative research study is credible when the researcher has been able to present accurate descriptions and interpretations of a participant's experience such that the people undergoing that experience are able to recognize it as their own (Sandelowski, 1986). Credibility in this study was enhanced through a) informal member checks throughout the interview process, b) validating emerging concepts during subsequent interviews, c) negative case analysis, d) progressive subjectivity, and e) ongoing debriefing with thesis chair.

Member checks is an ongoing process which can be informally conducted every time a researcher seeks clarification or elaboration of interview content or meaning from the person being interviewed (Sandelowski, 1993). I conducted ongoing member checks during the interviews. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the most significant method for establishing credibility is member checks. Reasonable interpretation of the data was enhanced through debriefing, in which the interim analysis, findings and stresses

were discussed with my thesis chair (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Negative case analysis was conducted to revise formulated hypothesis in consideration of all known cases.

Progressive subjectivity, the process of monitoring the researcher's own emerging impressions, was monitored throughout the research project. This was achieved through a reflexive journal that I kept. Also, prior to interviews, I reviewed previously gathered data and field notes to analyze the progression of my understanding of the developing constructs.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability of the research findings from this study situation to be applied to contexts outside of these circumstances (Sandelowski, 1986). Transferability is entirely based on the degree to which remarkable conditions overlap or correspond (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The burden of proof for claiming transferability is on the receiver (Guba & Lincoln). Transferability was increased through thick description and verbatim quotations in the report (Germain, 1993). In addition, the researcher provided clear accounts of the setting, sample and data collection procedures to facilitate transferability.

Dependability

Dependability is influenced by the constancy of the data over a period of time (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To facilitate dependability I provided detailed and clear descriptions of the research process through the use of field notes (Yonge & Stewin, 1988). The field notes contain detailed accounts of the research process and decisions made related to the method. In addition, audiotapes were transcribed verbatim and the coding of data into categories and themes was reviewed with my thesis committee members. Finally, the chair of my thesis committee oversaw the process to ensure it was documented

appropriately and trackable and therefore auditable.

Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with assuring that the study findings are grounded in the data themselves (Sandelowski, 1986). That is, the interpretations and analyses are rooted in the contextual realities of the participants and not the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To establish confirmability, the participant's own words were used in the findings to verify my interpretations of the data, thereby facilitating the readers ability to determine if the analysis reflects the participant's reality. In addition a confirmability audit, an examination of the quality and appropriateness of the method of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln), was conducted by my thesis committee. In addition, the auditability of a study is mainly demonstrated in the produced report through the availability of information regarding decisions made and methods adopted (Sandelowski). Finally, confirmability is achieved through careful attention to the above identified criterion areas for rigor, namely, credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Ethical Considerations

The rights of the persons participating in this research study were protected. There were minimal risks to the participant as described by Polit and Hungler (1995). Robinson and Thorne (1988) note that nurses involved in qualitative research face dilemmas such as informed consent, immersion in the data, and researchers intervention within the research context. Larossa, Bennett and Gelles (1981) suggest that informed consent is an issue in qualitative family research. In order to limit potential conflict, participants who were clients of Youville Centre, where the researcher was employed, were not considered for the study. In this study, the rights of the person were protected through a variety of

strategies beginning with seeking approval for the study from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Nursing Ethical Review Committee.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is based on two major elements, the right to self-determination and the right to full-disclosure which are imbedded in the principle of respect for human dignity (Polit & Hungler, 1995). The right to self determination indicates that prospective participants have the right to voluntarily determine whether or not they will participate in a research study. Furthermore, included is the right to decide at anytime to stop participating and the asking of questions at any point in the research process. According to Polit and Hungler (1995), full disclosure refers to the participant being informed of the full nature of the study, the responsibilities of the researcher, the right of the participant to decline participation in the study, and the potential risks and benefits. Technically, informed consent in a qualitative study is problematic in that the nature of the inquiry precludes prior knowledge of exactly what will occur in the research situation (Larossa, Bennett & Gelles, 1981; Robinson & Thorne, 1988). In this study, as recommended by several qualitative researchers (Ramos, 1989; Munhall, 1988), consent involved an ongoing process of clarification throughout the data gathering period. Larossa and associates (1981) present four aspects of family research which point to the significance of informed consent. These are "(1) the pervasiveness of family life, (2) the inaccessibility of family life, (3) the physical setting in which qualitative family research is conducted; and (4) the resemblance of qualitative family research to therapy." (p. 305).

To ensure informed consent, participants were provided with written and verbal explanations of all aspects of the study. In addition, participants were informed that

participation in the study was strictly voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at anytime without penalty. Participants were informed that refusal to participate did not affect their relationship with the daycare or nursery school provider. Informed consent was obtained separately from each parent (Appendix E). The consent form included content that ensured the participant had the knowledge and understanding to make an informed decision such as the purpose of the study, the extent of their involvement and potential risks and benefits (Polit & Hungler, 1995). There were no direct benefits to the participant, except the knowledge that his/her participation provided understanding. A burden was the amount of time required to complete the interview and demographic data form, which was approximately one hour. The potential development of conflict between parents (i.e. disagreement) was another possible burden. Further, participants were apprised on the consent form that there was one situation during which the confidentiality would be breached; if the participants disclosed any information related to abuse of a child, as child abuse is reportable by law. This did not occur during the study.

Confidentiality

All participants were guaranteed confidentiality in that all information provided by the them wasl not reported publicly in a manner which resulted in their identification (Polit & Hungler, 1995). Numerous approaches were taken to assure confidentiality. Individuals were identified by a code number only (interview tapes and transcripts). Further, the list of participant names was kept in a locked filing cabinet separate from any data. In addition, daycare and nursery school personnel had no knowledge of who participated in the study. The transcriber was briefed an all matters of confidentiality. All information related to the study will be stored in a locked file cabinet for seven years.

However, there was one situation during which confidentiality would be breached, if the participants disclose to me any information related to abuse of a child, as child abuse is reportable by law. Participants were apprised of this information on the consent form and prior to signing the consent form.

Lipson (1994) identifies intervention as a potential ethical issue in qualitative research and ethnography. She states that intervention of some kind is inevitable, however, the extent and type is dependent on the population being studied (Lipson, 1994). The dilemma as identified by Lipson (1994) is not whether to intervene, but what should be done and how can it be done responsibly. In regards to the potential for me to intervene within this research context, parents requesting information regarding parenting discipline were provided with contact information or referred to the day care coordinator.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

A strength of the study was the rich, descriptive data gathered by the interview process. This rich data set can be attributed to conducting interviews with both parents present, which facilitated interaction between the parents resulting in the researcher being able to observe interactions.

A limitation of this study was the focus on only the interaction within the family and not the entire environment which can influence the discipline of children. However, the Family Interaction approach suggests that there is a need to begin in the family and then expand to other larger systems which might influence behaviour (Turner, 1970).

Summary

Ultimately, the quality of the research itself is determined by how well the processes of asking, listening, understanding, and retelling are executed (May, 1991). This chapter

described a qualitative methodology to explore the interaction between parents concerning discipline of their preschool child. An ethnographic approach and in particular a focused ethnography was used. Specific information regarding recruitment, setting, and method of data collection were discussed. In addition, a data analysis plan was described, measures to enhance trustworthiness were outlined and ethical considerations were discussed. A summary of the study findings have been shared with the participating daycares, nursery schools, and parents as requested. Results will also be submitted for publication in journals of nursing, child development, and those related to family issues.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the analysis was to identify common categories and themes that emerged from the data. At the beginning of this chapter, information describing the families who participated this study is highlighted. The remainder of the chapter is organized according to the three themes which arose from the data.

The first theme, *Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time*, describes learning about discipline. Initially parents learned about discipline in their families of origin and then later on when they became parents from a variety of other sources. This learning and socialization shaped the participants' understanding of discipline and how they applied it to rearing of their own children. The second theme, *Discipline: So What About It?*, parents defined discipline as well as describe guiding principles, discipline styles, and discipline tools. In addition, parents depict what factors they took into consideration when disciplining their preschool children and the struggle involved. *Parents: The Discipline Team* was the third theme. Team work was described by all the families in disciplining their preschool children with the mother taking the lead.

The Families

The families are described in terms of their demographic characteristics. A demographic form was completed by each parent to gather the information about the family and it's members. To facilitate easy access to the information, the demographic data for the families is outlined in Table 4.1 (page 92) and Table 4.2 (page 93). Table 4.1 contains information related to the whole family and the children in the families. Table 4.2 contains information specific to the parents in the families. Eight families participated

in this study and a total of sixteen family members were interviewed. The families included nine preschool children as one family had two children who were preschool age. The number of children in the families ranged from one to three, with a mean of 0.75 children per family. There were twice as many males as females with regards to the gender of the preschool child. The mean age of the preschool children was 3.67 years. Parents ranged in age from 26 to 39 years with a mean of 33.44 years. The combined family annual income ranged from approximately \$10,000 to above \$70,000 with a mode of above \$70,000. Parents' educational level ranged from grade 11 to 12 years of university, with a mode of 4 years of university. The mothers, on average, had lower levels of education than the fathers. All of the fathers were employed full-time outside of the home. Five of the mothers were "stay at home moms", one mother worked part-time, and two mothers worked full-time.

In summary, the majority of families who participated in this study had one child who was almost four years old. The parents in these families were in their early thirties with respect to age. Most of the parents had some university education with the average parent having completed four years of university. The fathers in these families were employed full-time while more than half of the mothers were not employed. The income of the families varied significantly, however, most of the families earned a middle to high income.

Table 4.1

Demographic Data: Children and Family

Variable	Mother	Father	Children	Family	Total
Number of Participants	8	8	9		27
Number of Children Per Family					
1				4	
2				2	
3				2	
Age Of Children					
Mean (years)			3.67		
Range			3-5		
Gender of Preschool Children					
Male			6		
Female			3		
Combined Annual Income					
Below \$10, 000				0	
\$10,000 to \$19,999				1	
\$20,000 to \$29,999				0	
\$30,000 to \$39,999				1	
\$40,000 to \$49,999				0	
\$50,000 to \$59,999				1	
\$60,000 to \$69,999				1	
Above \$70,000				4	

Table 4.2 Demographic Data: Parents

Variables	Mothers	Fathers
Age		
Mean (years)	32.3	34.6
Range	26-39	31-39
Highest Level of Education		
11 years school	1	0
12 years school	1	1
1 year vocational	1	1
2 years vocational	0	1
3 years university	1	0
4 years university	2	2
6 years university	1	1
7 years university	1	0
9 years university	0	1
12 years university	0	1
Occupation		
Student	1	1
Stay at Home Parent	5	0
Sales	0	3
Professional	1	3
Computer Industry	1	1
Number of Hours of Employment per Week		
0	5	0
20	1	0
40	2	7
55	0	1
Estimate of Number of Hours Parenting per Week		
20	0	1
30	1	2
40	0	3
55	1	2
100	1	0
>100	5	0
Religious Affiliation		
Christian	3	4
Jewish	1	0
Muslim	1	1
None	3	3

Themes and Categories

Data were analyzed through a process of open coding typed transcripts and then grouping similar codes together into categories. Following this process, the categories were organized into broader themes. Three themes containing twelve categories were developed. Excerpts from the data are cited to illustrate the characteristics of the themes and categories.

Figure 4.1

Presentation of Themes and Categories

- I Learning about Discipline Takes a Life Time
 - Discipline: What I learned from my parents
 - Present day sources of discipline information

- II Discipline: So What About It?
 - Discipline: A process
 - The guiding principles
 - Discipline style
 - Discipline tools
 - It depends! Factors taken into consideration
 - Disciplining: It's a struggle

- III Parents: The Discipline Team
 - Team Work - What it looks like
 - Team Conflict
 - Team Building - How they get there
 - Team Leader- Who Takes the Lead?

Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time

The theme *Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time* was present in all the parents' interviews about disciplining their preschool children. Parents described learning about discipline from a variety of sources. This theme incorporates discipline knowledge learned from being disciplined as a child as well as information learned as a parent of preschool children. This theme is comprised of two categories "Discipline: What I

learned from my parents” and “Present day sources of discipline information”. The category “Discipline: What I learned from my parents” describes what parents learned from their parents about discipline and how they were socialized in their families of origin. The category “Present day discipline information” describes sources of information parents have used since becoming a parent themselves.

Discipline: What I learned from my parents. Parents identified that what they learned about discipline as a child from their parents had a significant impact on how they disciplined their own children. Parents also spoke of the conditions that influenced their parents’ discipline practices including: birth order, societal norms, and customs. Parents noted and discussed some aspects of their parents’ discipline practices that influenced their own practices. These included: who was responsible for disciplining and why, parent discipline styles, and discipline tools. In addition, participants described how they critically appraised their parents’ discipline practices and modified their own practices in response to this appraisal.

Participants identified that childhood discipline experiences influenced their discipline practices and formed the basis for their discipline decisions. In the following excerpt, a mother described applying discipline practices she experienced as a child when disciplining her child. In addition, the father described knowing that his response in a discipline situation was right because of what he experienced as a child.

Father2: So I know that was the right thing to do and I could have envisioned my mother or my father doing that when I was a little guy too.

Mother2: I think a lot of the things that we apply, we remember from when we were kids and the fact that it had an impact on us (Interview 2, p. 6, 256-260).

Parents identified conditions that may have influenced how their parents disciplined

including: birth order, societal norms, and customs. Birth order, whether they were the youngest or oldest child in the family, was identified by several parents. A mother described herself as being the fifth child in the family and here parents were more lax in their discipline style with her than her older siblings.

Mother1: Not much. Well I was the fifth child so I was kind of left to do what I wanted to do and I was a brat because of it. That's how I was. I got away with way too many things. Mom would get to the point where she was annoyed and then she would just, stop already kind of thing (Interview 1, p. 8, 334-338)

Another influence recognized by parents was societal norms or customs. A father who was raised in a Middle Eastern country described an approach his father used. When his father was angry with him his father would slap him on the face followed by a showing of affection.

Father4: My father, it all comes back to our customs. He was very concerned about my studying. And if I didn't do my studies he gave me a slap on my face. Okay, he would really get angry. I had quite a number of slaps on my face you know. I wouldn't call that abuse okay, he would not leave a mark or anything like that, but it would show that he was quite angry. And after I would have my cry and things like that he would kiss me. And he would say, remember that I love you (Interview 4, p. 10, 413-421).

All parents described critically appraising the discipline practices of their parents. The critical appraisal of their parents' discipline practices can be seen to be influenced by today's context including the changing societal norms and customs such as acceptance of physical punishment and acceptance of fathers' participation. This appraisal resulted in similarities and differences in their parenting practices in contrast to how they were parented. A mother spoke about learning to discipline from her parents, the powerful influence this had on current discipline approaches, and her struggle to discipline differently.

Mother6: I suspect that my parents probably were similar to the way I am. Because that is where I would have learned all this. You know. I have some memories of stuff with them and I am probably more similar and there are probably more similarities than differences. And what I've actually recently been trying to do is really sort of identify some of those kinds of things and then look at what I want to do differently and try to be aware of them and also try to teach myself different things. You know what I mean, but its like really, it's like fighting a pattern or something (Interview 6, p. 13, 574-582).

Critical appraisal of their own experience of discipline as a child was a method parents used to improve present discipline practices with their children. One mother identified wanting to improve her discipline practices in contrast to how she was disciplined.

Mother6: Yes. For sure, because I am trying to be better. I think every parent tries to do better (Interview 6, p. 15, 666-667).

Two steps were identified by the parents as being involved in this appraisal process. In the first step, parents evaluated their parents' discipline practices in relation to themselves. The second step involved determining the effectiveness of the discipline tool with their children. This father reflected back on how he was disciplined as a child and the perceived outcomes of his parents discipline practices on him.

Father5: Well, you know, sometimes I was thinking about that too. I had occasion to kind of think that I wished that I'd had a little more discipline in my upbringing you know, just a little more push. Just so, I feel maybe I could have accomplished a little bit more when I was younger. Because it took a little while to settle in.... (Interview 5, p. 12, 469-474).

Some parents identified wanting their children to have better childhood experiences than they had as a criterion for disciplining different. In the following excerpt, a mother described remembering her childhood in which her mother was somewhat abusive and not wanting her son to have the same memories.

Mother8: When I think back to my own mother and stuff like that, are these

the memories he is going to have of his childhood (Interview 8, p. 16, 680-683).

If parents determined that the discipline practices of their parents were acceptable to use with their children, then they proceeded to the second step in the process. This step determined the effectiveness of the discipline tool with their own children. A mother described initially choosing to use a discipline tool that her parents had used, and then reconsidering that tool based on the lack of anticipated outcomes with her son.

Mother1: The message wasn't really sinking in to him [child]. So, even though this is what we wanted to do because our parents had used it and we felt that you know, we just probably decided to hold back because it didn't seem to be effective.... (Interview 1, p. 10, 427-430).

Further, participants critically appraised their parents discipline styles. Parents identified both positives and negatives of their parent's discipline style whether it was lax or strict.

Mother2: But my mom was very, I wouldn't want to say strict, because she wasn't but she had very high expectations for behavior which I think we are trying to have with David as well. Because I feel generally if you have high expectations, kids will usually live up to them. And learn to live up to them (Interview 2, p. 9, 377-383).

Some participants viewed themselves as parenting similarly to their parents, while others described themselves as disciplining very differently depending on whether their appraisal was positive or negative. A father reported purposefully choosing to be similar to his father because he determined his father to have done well in disciplining him and his brothers.

Mother3: You're similar to your dad, how you talk to the kids.

Father3: Yes, I think I'm very similar to my dad, very, very similar. And that's on purpose, because I thought it was, sort of in spite of how I turned out, I think he did a pretty good job. Yes, compared to other friends when I was growing up, compared to other parents or

whatever, I sort of thought they had it on the ball. And I really liked that he didn't raise his voice. I always thought that was really easy to understand and so from that ... (Interview 3, p 10, 443-441).

Participants noted that each of their parents had differing levels of responsibility for discipline in their family. Participants identified their mothers as mainly responsible for discipline when they were a child. A father observed his mother as responsible for discipline and his father as having rarely disciplined him.

Father2: My father never disciplined me actually. I mean it was just, the timing just wasn't there. My dad worked nights and he got home after I was gone to school and left before I got back from school, so it was mostly my mother (Interview 2, p. 9, 364-368).

Mothers assumed primary responsibility for discipline when they were children because fathers were often absent from the family for long hours and thus, were not available to participate in the discipline process. In addition, fathers were viewed as not engaging in discipline effectively.

Father8: I guess my dad was very quiet and worked really long hours so you know he was away a lot. The classical distance father kind of situation (Interview 8, p. 12, 520-523).

Mother3: My dad never had any part of the discipline. I remember that. He does not have that much of a, not backbone (Interview 3, p10, 468-470).

A few participants identified their parents as working together to discipline their children. However, parents who identified their fathers as being involved in the discipline process described the father's role as limited. Fathers participated only when they were invited by mothers or when mothers delegated the responsibility. Mothers often used the common line of "wait till your father gets home". A father described a typical "wait till your father gets home" scenario where his mother delegated the responsibility for discipline to his father for an incident that had occurred earlier in the day.

Father3: There was a couple of times where when he was really the disciplinarian it was always right around supper and it was kind of when he got home because supper was on the table the issue was dealt with right then and there.

Interviewer3: But more because your mom had placed it on him.

Father3: He was ready for it when he got home (Interview 3, p. 9-10, 387-403).

In this study, mothers continued to take primary responsibility for disciplining their preschool children. The mother as lead disciplinarian was consistent across the generations with all families in this study continuing this practice. In addition, parents described a difference in the role that fathers assumed in disciplining their children. Fathers described themselves as taking more of an active role and working more cooperatively with their wives to discipline their preschool children.

Father8: Well I think the main thing for me is I am around a lot more for Sam than my dad was. My dad, I remember years where we would all have dinner, and then dad would have dinner at 8 or 9 or whenever, when he got home. And then on weekends he would usually work one of the weekend days. You know that kind of thing. So maybe the difference for me is I am involved more so that I am there to talk about the good things as well as the bad and talk through the bad and that sort of thing (Interview 8, p. 13-14, 575-583).

Parents described the discipline styles of their parents and used a variety of terms to illustrate these styles including “strict”, “lax”, and “control”. It was noted by several couples that each parent in the couple had experienced different parenting styles as a child. A couple identified the differences between how they were parented with one set of parents as strict and the other as providing more freedom.

Father5: But I was given a fair amount of freedom. I don't know if that was because of who I was or you she was or both.... it wasn't a really strict upbringing.

Interviewer5: So that seems to influence you partially.

Father5: I think so, yes. The little things don't really bother me, just the big things.

Mother5: I guess my parents were pretty different and I guess you know if I think about it, because my parents were very attentive. And they paid attention, especially my mom. She paid attention to everything. So and they were a lot stricter. I think when we were younger they were really strict you know. I think, you know, they had rules about noise levels and those kinds of things and I think we are much more relaxed about those things (Interview 5, p. 10-11, 411-428).

Another mother described the need for control by her parents as a negative discipline style. She attempted to use a different, less controlling, discipline style than her parents.

Mother6: I'm sure that just seeing that I've been really conscious of the fact that I don't have to always be in control, its sort of good for the kids to sometimes let them be in control. I think that makes them feel good too. Because I think that is something that when I was a kid there was a lot of control, not bad control, but I think I'm trying to be a bit looser. I may have gone too far sometimes, the other way (Interview 6, p. 23, 985-991).

In addition, a mother reported her parents discipline style as being too lax and the result being that she was a "brat" as a child. She also describes how she disciplines differently than her parents.

Mother1: I think about how I parent different and how my parents kind of, I think because I was a brat and I wasn't disciplined, I wanted to discipline and I wanted to let my child know why they couldn't do what they were doing and what they should be doing so they could learn how to act. Because I don't know I felt like I almost didn't like me and like I was just a brat. Like whatever situation we were in, in church or whatever I just got my way, I got everything I wanted and I was very spoiled and I didn't want to have a spoiled child so I definitely parent differently than how I was parented (Interview 1, p. 10, 431-440).

Participants noted that their parents used a much narrower range of discipline tools than what is presently available to them. These tools included: spanking, other forms of physical punishment, discussion, grounding, tone of voice, and warnings. Physical punishment was a common method of discipline employed by their parents.

A tool that was commonly referred to by the parents as being both different and similar to what their parents used was spanking. All the parents except one were spanked as a child. Most parents reported being spanked infrequently and as deserving of the spanking as a response to their behavior.

Father1: That was actually their main punishment back then. Like there wasn't abusive or anything, but it was.... So we can probably count, there are probably less than 20 times that I was ever spanked as a child but it, you know when it got to that point it was I probably deserved it. (Interview 1, p. 9, 373-394).

A few parents identified themselves as not using this tool despite having learned it from their parents. A father described his none use of spanking as a discipline tool as the main difference between how he was disciplined and how he disciplines his son.

Father2: I see a lot of similarities in the way we, I mean my mother and I disciplined. But there are some differences too. I guess it was a different time back then. And when I really got out of hand I would get spanked and that just doesn't happen with David anymore. So that is the main difference I think (Interview 2, p. 9, 364-373).

Two parents identified use of physical discipline that was more severe than spanking including "being whacked on the head" and "slap on the face".

Mother8: I always got whacked. So I always remember that. I used to get whacked on the head a lot of times (Interview 8, p. 13, 545-546).

Participants reported a wide variation in the frequency their parents used teaching and discussion as discipline methods. A few parents noted this as a common method of discipline used by their parents. However, most parents described their parents as rarely teaching or discussing in the process of discipline. Several parents described themselves as spending more time talking and teaching than their parents did when disciplining.

Father6: It was stop it now or else. It was done or, I would find out the rest of that story if I continued. Yes. Where I will, there is no what will happen, and what do you think was wrong with that, do you

think it was fair, everything ... I do a lot more talking than my dad did (Interview 6, p. 14-15, 610-633).

Another tool that a parent indicated he does not use but experienced as a child was intimidation. A father described himself as parenting differently than his father with respect to the use of intimidation and tone of voice.

Father7: You know, I would also say, more from intimidation. He would never, I don't believe I was ever spanked.... Yes, or just a tone in my father's voice, it would scare the living bajezees out of me....I don't think I am the same. No I don't think so. I don't think I carry the same tone and inflection in my voice (Interview 7, p. 8, 328-338).

Parents also identified discipline tools that they did not experience while being disciplined by their parents which they use with their children. These tools included limiting a child's access to toys or other possessions, limiting TV watching, and "time-out". In the following excerpt, a father described parents today as having many more discipline tools to use than his parents. He observed that his parents moved much more quickly to the use of physical punishment because of the limited number of alternative discipline methods available to them.

Father1: I guess if there is anything different, it would be we are not just focused on any one, they maybe added one or two different things of disciplining, but we have many more, maybe multiple methods that we use. Like, they would even so much as stop us from watching TV for a day or something. I don't remember them ever doing that I just remember you know, you can't do this because, or when it got out of hand then you would get the spanks, so it was (Interview 1, p. 9, 381- 388).

The socialization or teaching regarding discipline moved across the generations. A few parents identified that they were influencing the discipline techniques used by the grandparents to discipline their grandchildren.

Mother6: Although sometimes when I've been at my mom's I notice she is

using language that she has heard me use. So it probably goes both ways because she also said that, by the time you have your grandchildren, you kind of forget some of this stuff. (Interview 6, p. 13, 588-693).

Parents noted a variety of discipline practices which they learned from their parents including: who takes the lead in being responsible for discipline, discipline styles, and discipline tools. Critical analysis was used by parents to evaluate the effectiveness of their parent's discipline practices. The experience and analysis by the parents resulted in similarities and differences in discipline practices between the generations. Parents described the significant impact this learning had on how they discipline their children.

Present day sources of discipline information. Parents described obtaining information they used to facilitate their ability to discipline their preschool children. Both internal and external sources of information or resources were reported by the parents. They also identified some of the types of information they sought from these sources. In addition, parents referred to a process by which they critically analyzed the information offered them and judged the source of the information. In the process of critically analyzing the discipline information they acquired, parents drew distinctions on two levels. On one level, they discriminated between what they believed was a "right" or "wrong" method of discipline, and also what fit with their philosophy of discipline. Several parents also noted a preference that this information should be presented in a concise format and not require a lot of time to acquire, as they did not have time to spend reading or watching TV.

All parents identified gathering information on discipline from a variety of sources. Each family identified receiving discipline information from an average of three to five sources. Mothers tended to gather most of the information. Parents identified external sources of information more often than internal sources. The sources can be grouped into

six categories in order of popularity: acquaintances, printed material, multimedia, professionals, God, and common sense, Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 - Sources of Discipline Information

Sources of Discipline Information			
External	Internal	Frequency	Total
Acquaintances			13
Other parents		5	
Family		4	
Friends		3	
Playgroup		1	
Printed Material			11
Books		6	
Magazines		3	
Newspapers		2	
Multimedia			5
TV		3	
Video		1	
Internet		1	
Professional			3
Daycare		2	
Parenting Course		1	
	Common Sense	3	3
	God	1	1

The source of information used most frequently by parents to acquire discipline information were acquaintances. Acquaintances included people such as other parents, family, friends, and other members of a play group. Some of these people the parents knew well including family and friends, while others were just other people out in public, strangers. Parents described acquiring discipline information from other people by observation and through conversation. A common factor in who parents seek information from is a mutual experience of childrearing.

Father2: We have some friends that are in the same sort of life stages we are, they have kids that are the same age as David or thereabouts,

and we talk to them a lot. (Interview 2, p. 7. 294-297).

Mother8: Exactly. And I remember bringing it to play group and you know this young mom, told me about strike one, strike two, strike three and that is where I started doing the time outs and stuff like that. And it worked. But the last two weeks, and it only lasted two weeks, and whatever, thank God, its over. But it was just a short period and you know I did bring it up to play group. I did ask about it. (Interview 8, p. 9, 381-387).

This providing of information may be solicited, as in the above example where the mother asked the play group, or unsolicited. Unsolicited information was identified by the parents to be more commonly offered by their families. Extended families offered unsolicited information based on their perceived responsibility or right to assist other family members.

Discipline information was gathered through observation both with people they knew well and others they had just recently come in contact with. Parents described observing friends and family disciplining their children and what they learned. The most common method of acquiring discipline information from strangers was observation. Parents described other parents modeled discipline behaviour. In the following excerpt, a mother stated she gathered information by talking to and watching other mothers who lived in her subsidized housing complex. In addition, she judged the source of the information as being "good" or "bad".

Mother6: And also really from watching and talking with other moms. People I see out here. Some are good or bad teachers (Interview 6, p. 8, 348-349).

Another source of discipline information mentioned by all the families was printed material, such as books, newspapers, and magazines. Mother did more of the reading of the printed material than the fathers. This couple described using a book as a source of

discipline information and they selectively read parts of it. They also critically appraised the information read with regard to philosophy and style of discipline.

Father3: We have a couple of books that we probably haven't read cover to cover, fairly detailed books and they sort of, you have to buy into a particular you unique philosophy and style of child rearing from A-Z, so I think we've picked up points from that but I at this point we certainly haven't bought into the sort of over all ...

Interviewer3: You just adopt certain pieces that fit with your ...

Mother3: Definitely, I don't think you could take everything out of a whole book with respect to your child. (Interview 3, p. 6-7, 264- 274).

The third most common source of discipline information identified by parents was multimedia sources. Multimedia sources of information included TV shows, videos, and the Internet. For one couple, TV shows were a source of discipline information, especially child care shows.

Father3: Television shows.

Mother3: Yes, child care shows (Interview 3, p.6, 242-251).

Professional sources including parenting course and daycares group were mentioned as sources of information. In families where the child attended daycare, it was often mentioned as a source of discipline information. A family who immigrated to Canada and was without many parenting supports identified the daycare as a source of information on how to deal with their child sleeping in their bed.

Father4: It was hard to find out why he does that. You know he is still doing that but not much. He usually comes in after 6 am. The best thing that worked for us was going and talking to the daycare....

Mother4: After we had talked to day care and they suggested some ways of handling the situation. It was a big problem for a while but now (Interview 4, p. 16, 643-673).

Father1: We went to a parenting course too.

Interviewer1: A parenting course?

Father1: It was very helpful, and it was with other parents in the audience so you can laugh at yourself and also learn something. I thought it was really well done. There was a lot of things from there that we were

able to take up. Not everything works for your situation, but we were able to get some good tips on how to deal with situations there. (Interview 1, p.5-6, 231-234).

Internal sources of information with respect to disciplining their preschool children were also mentioned. A few families identified two internal sources of information, common sense and God. The internal source, referred to by parents as common sense, appeared to be based on their lived experience of being parented and having parented.

Mother8: I mean its not like we seek out books in the library or go to those speakers. I mean a lot of it I think is common sense and you know, I think nowadays, there is so much thrown at parents that they are almost taught that they have no common sense. And it just comes down to just sitting down and trying to figure out your kid. I mean that's how I feel (Interview 8, p. 8, 321-333).

Another mother related drawing wisdom and strength from God when disciplining her preschool child.

Mother1: Plus I mean you do the best that you can and you know, personally I do a lot of praying for wisdom and it's a great source of strength and encouragement when you don't know what to do.

Interviewer1: When are in doubt?

Mother1: Yes, you draw from God. (Interview 1, p.5-6, 235-241).

Parents spoke about acquiring a variety of types of discipline information such as learning discipline tools, principles of discipline, and how to respond to a variety of discipline situations or issues. Parents learned both what to do and what not to do about disciplining their preschool children.

Father3: Family too, for sure. And whether or not, there are things we want to avoid, I mean we may see something in someone else in which, man I'm never going to do that. So its much of what to do as in what not to do (Interview 3, p. 6, 257-260).

Father2: I think we were in the restaurant just the other day and one of the things that really struck me was there was a family there and the mother was talking to her 3 boys and saying, if you don't settle down we are going to the car right now. And she must have said it

20 times. Well, at what point do you go to the car, is it the 25th or the 30th time? You know, if you are going to say something like that you better be willing to carry through on the threat. Then its not a threat right (Interview 2, p. 6-7, 249-277).

Parents acquired information about discipline from a wide variety of external and internal sources. These sources included: acquaintances, printed material, multimedia, professionals, God, and common sense. Information was not taken at face value by parents, but was critically analyzed prior to incorporating it into their discipline practices. Further, the information gathered from these sources covered topics including discipline tools, principles of discipline, and how to respond to a variety of discipline situations or issues.

In summary, the theme *Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time* described the methods by which parents learned about discipline and the knowledge they acquired. In the category “Discipline: What I learned from my parents” parents described the socialization of discipline within the family of origin. Sources of information about discipline parents acquire while parenting were identified and described in the category “Present day sources of information”. Parents described a process of critically analyzing the information and knowledge they learned.

Discipline: So What About It?

Parents identified discipline as an important aspect of their lives and their children’s lives. Parents had various opinions and experiences they wanted to share regarding disciplining their preschool children. Parents described discipline as a process that occurred almost every day in raising their preschool children and as involving a variety of struggles. According to the parents, the discipline process was guided by principles. Despite these guiding principles parents identified differences in styles of discipline.

Several discipline tools were identified by parents and were critically appraised. In addition, parents described a variety of factors they took into consideration while disciplining their preschool children.

The theme *Discipline: So What About It?* consists of six categories “Discipline: A process”, “The guiding principles”, “Discipline styles”, “Discipline tools”, “It depends: Factors taken into consideration”, and “Disciplining: It’s a struggle”. In the first category, “Discipline: A process”, parents defined discipline and described it as a process involving several steps or actions. In the second category, “The guiding principles”, parents described principles upon which their discipline practices were based. ‘Discipline style’, the third category, highlights the different styles of discipline used by parents. In the fourth category, parents described and evaluated the discipline tools they used when disciplining their preschool children. The fifth category, “It depends: Factors taken into consideration”, examines factors that parents consider when disciplining their preschool child including the context, the age of the child, what the child did, and the child as a person. In the last category, “Disciplining: It’s a struggle”, parents identify and characterize discipline situations that are difficult and challenging.

Discipline: A process. All of the parents described discipline as a process. The process they illustrated involved three elements: the actions or behavior on the part of the child, actions or reactions on the part of the parent, and changes or outcomes because of discipline intervention. Some parents identified all three elements, while most parents identified at least two of the elements.

Mother 1: I guess I would say that. It seems to be working. Any child, every age brings up new things you know, and I guess and so you are teaching. I am still teaching me and I’m 30 so it’s a long process you know. Its just like when you are teaching and always trying to

guide various behavior or what you feel is misbehavior so ...
(Interview 1, p. 14, 599-604).

Mother1: I think of um, that we are teaching them, and they do something they are not supposed to, and you tell them no, they can't do that and then you explain to them why they can't do it, and what they should be doing, that's I think my best definition of discipline
(Interview 1, p. 3, 110-114).

Many parents described their discipline actions as teaching. Some of the words used by parents to describe teaching included talking with their child and giving them explanations.

Father2: I guess to me it just means trying to teach him the right way of doing things. And sometimes it's not very easy on us (Interview 2, p. 4, 140-141).

Some parents equated discipline with the concept of punishment. Two parents described the process of discipline as including both teaching and punishment as this father who emphasized teaching and minimized punishment as the goal.

Father8: No I'm thinking like the process of discipline is the process of learning to have self control you know. And nobody perfectly gets that. So like you learn that you can't always have the thing that you want right now or there are times there are things you don't want to do. Like brushing your teeth and you do them for a reason. And you know it might be a matter of that you have to learn how to get along with others, or you have to learn how to put off immediate gratification for future rewards. All that sort of thing and you know I guess discipline is there to give you a chance to learn that. So it can be applied in a kind of educational way or it can be applied in a kind of a punitive way and I guess we try to as much as possible to apply it in a kind of educational way. And avoid the punitive you know to the greatest extent possible (Interview 8, p. 6, 246-259).

Whereas, another family identified discipline as being different than punishment in that discipline was proactive and punishment was reactive.

Interviewer7: You see those as different.

Mother7: Yes. I do anyway. I think it's a little bit different. That's a really tough one. Punishment I would say would be like a consequence,

more of a consequence I think. Disciplining I think is kind of showing him on the right path.

Father7: Yes, I would agree with that, because discipline is almost a pre a pro-active approach, where punishment is a reactive (Interview 7, p. 4, 149-159).

Most participants identified learning as a general outcome for their child as a consequence of the discipline process. Parents described both long-term and short-term outcomes of discipline. A couple of families identified short-term outcomes in terms of specific child behaviors the child would learn.

Father7: Obey rules. Listening, doing as you are told.

Mother7: Obey, listening, behaving (Interview 7, p. 4, 143-145).

Another parent identified an outcome of discipline as an alteration or change in the child's behavior.

Mother5: They stayed and they ate. But, okay, yes if discipline was sort of trying to alter their behavior ... I'm trying to think of a time that during the last week where someone did something that we had a bit more focused and concerted effort (Interview 5, p. 2, 46-49).

Several parents identified long-term outcomes of discipline for the child as learning self control and self-discipline.

Father8: You know ultimately I guess its about learning some kind of self control. You know, whether its (Interview 8, p. 6, 241-242).

Father5: Well I think of 2 things. One is sort of discipline, that means administering discipline or you know sort of saying, directing, this way. And the other I think of discipline as something that they learn and something that they acquire.

Mother5: Kind of self-discipline.

Father5: Yes (Interview 5, p. 4, 145-152).

Parents defined discipline as a process involving actions on the part of the child and parent resulting in outcomes or changes. The parents' discipline actions were described as either teaching, punishment, or both. Parents described discipline as having both short-

term and long-term outcomes.

The guiding principles. Parents reported two principles which guided their approach to discipline; consistency and no hitting. The principle of consistency was identified by all of the families. An example of how significant consistency was as a guiding principle to these families can be garnered in this excerpt where the mother equated consistency with the word discipline.

Interviewer2: Okay, when we say the word discipline, what are some thoughts that come to your mind?

Mother2: The importance of being consistent (Interview 2, p. 3-4, 133-136).

Parents identified two perspectives on consistency with respect to discipline. There was consistency with rules they enforced and limits set in their homes. Secondly, there was to need to follow through on a consequence or limit set. Some parents identified consistency as being important with respect to policies and rules, but not as significant to their specific approaches to handling a discipline situation.

Father5: You know, we sort of talked about how different they are, but in a way even if we are using a different approach, its not so bad, I don't think you really need to have a cohesive approach to discipline. I mean you have to have certain policies around what things are right and what are wrong. And I think our values are very close even though of discipline styles and our emphasis is different. So, I think we've sort of become quite comfortable in sort of being different.

Interviewer5: Being different on you approaches but knowing that what you value, that guides that approach is the same.

Mother5: Yes. I think we are close you know (Interview 5, p. 17, 694-706).

Most of the parents described consistency as the ability to follow through when they have set a limit or boundary for their child.

Mother7: Yes, I think when you make a consequence, is to make sure you can follow through on it. I think it's a huge one (Interview 7, p. 5, 211-212).

However, some of the parents talked about the lack of ability to be consistent even though they valued consistency as a principle in their discipline. A mother described a situation where she attempted to put a consequence in place, but did not readily follow through.

Mother6: But I'm very good at that and I think I probably threatened him with taking away the ice cream 2 or 3 times before I actually did it. So I need to keep it more effective I think (Interview 6, p. 18, 795-797).

Another principle that guided discipline was no hitting and no spanking. This principle was identified by three of the families. In most of the families who had this rule, it was consistently applied as seen in this quote where it applied to all members of the family including the pet.

Father2: No we don't hit him.
Mother2: We've never slapped his fingers or spanked him or anything like that. That's not done.
Father2: By the same token, he is not allowed to hit us.
Interviewer2: Okay, it goes both ways. Exactly. We don't hit you, you don't hit us.
Father2: That's right.
Mother2: That's one of the rules. He doesn't hit the dog. We don't hit in this household as a general rule (Interview 2, p. 5, 192-209).

A couple of families identified themselves as striving to achieve the principle of no spanking but fell short. In the following excerpt, a discipline situation in which the fathers ended up spanking his daughter. Both parents agreed that they endorsed the principle of not spanking their children, yet they were unable to follow through.

Father3: Anyways she scratched me on the forehead and I spanked her when she did that. Just one, but on the bum, it was pretty hard because we don't do that.
Mother3: Yes, we don't do that.
Father3: But, and I think, looking back on it, I did it, more because I was mad than I thought it would have an effect on her, because it doesn't (Interview 3, p. 2, 61-69).

Parents identified two principles guiding their discipline process; consistency and no

hitting. The principle of consistency was applied by more families than the principle of no hitting. Families identified an inability to always apply these principles even though they were highly valued.

Discipline styles. Parents recognized and described differences in their parenting discipline styles. In addition, it was evident that there was a difference in the styles of the parents with regards to discipline. However, there was no relationship identified between styles of discipline and demographic data such as income level and education. The only identifying characteristic which had a significance was gender. Most parents described their parenting styles in relation to the style of the other parent. One mother stated clearly that she felt that her and her husband had a difference in styles of parenting.

Mother5: Well I think we have different styles with the kids too. And I think you tend to be much more even with them. And I would be maybe get mad at them quicker.

Interviewer5: So you would tend to react faster and he would lay back and let some things play out a bit more.

Mother5: I would think (Interview 5, p. 9, 372-379).

Parents used criteria to determine differences in parenting styles including the quickness with which they would respond, how consistent the parent was with discipline, and the amount of talking and understanding of the situation the parent would engage in with the child. Most parents identified the speed of the response to a discipline situation as a way of describing differences in parenting style. Mothers responded faster to a discipline situation than fathers.

Interviewer3: And you don't find that anyone responds first generally, like if both of you are near a situation, both of you both of you respond equally fast or does one person feel more responsible in some ways.

Mother3: I think probably I do

Father3: Yes, I think Tammy would become vocal about it right away whereas I would try and listen (Interview 3, p.8, 319-327).

Parents who were slower to respond were described by the other parent as lax, slower to respond, having more patience, and being more tolerant. This mother described her husband as more tolerant in a situation than she was.

Mother7: I think John is a little bit more, if the word is tolerable, in what he is doing. He can tolerate a little bit more than I would. But I know that he would respond once he reaches his sort of thing (Interview 7, p. 11, 467-470).

Several parents described the ability to be consistent as a means of identifying styles of parenting as this mother described the difference between herself and her husband.

Mother2: I think I am generally more of a softy, I am a soft touch. I am more prone to want to give in but Tom supports me in helping me to ensure that the consistency is maintained.

Father2: Well that's for sure, we don't reach our break point at the same point. You know, at what point do you start to initiate discipline. I think I probably approach that quicker than Jan would. She's more patient in that regard (Interview 2, p. 8, 325-332).

Several parents spoke of influencing or attempting to influence the other parent with respect to their parenting style.

Mother7: I'll take over, I find John to be a little bit more lax that way and I try to push him, to follow through (Interview 7, p. 7, 271-272).

Another criterion used by several parents to describe discipline style was the use of discussion and the amount of understanding the parent attempted when disciplining her/his child. There was not a gender difference identified in these families with respect to the use of discussion as a method of discipline or the intent to understand the child's position on the issue. An example is one family in which the mother described both parents as having similar styles of discipline.

Mother1: It's pretty equal. Kevin sits and talks to him too and you know, if he needs to be spanked or any discipline method that we are using, I will just jump in and use it. And sometimes because I am with him more I tend to go to do it more and if I don't feel like dealing

with him then I figure like you know he needs to do it, then I will mention it or you know (Interview 1, p. 7-8, 306-315).

In another family the father described the importance of understanding and talking in his discipline.

Father3: I don't want to sound like to think about it too much, but for me discipline is they better know what's expected of them and if they are going to be disciplined, exactly why. Like have a super clear understanding. Because that might, I guess every parent's goal is, if you discipline once, it's effective enough that you never have to discipline for that exact same scenario again. And it obviously never works but that's kind of what I think so maybe, I do it a little more slowly and sometime Jenny probably thinks I talk way too much instead of just acting. But I think discipline should be something that occurs once with enough understanding of the situation and an understanding of the ramifications that it doesn't have to be exercised again. It's a bit idealistic but I think about that (Interview 3, p. 4-5, 169-182).

Further, the mother in this family described the father's way of responding as having more patience.

Father3: Yes, and I think again I try to explain more and Jenny tries to react more because Tammy has 100 situations in 8 hours and I have you know 2 or 3 between 6 and 9 o'clock that I have to react to so maybe I find that I have more time.

Mother3: He has more patience. He has more patience than I would (Interview 3, p. 7, 297-302).

Fathers more often than mothers referred to physical punishment as an alternative in disciplining their preschool children, however, if the parents supported the use of physical punishment then both parents indicated using it as a method of discipline.

Father1: We usually spank, as a last resort, but I think like I've probably come around with that issue more with you know that's with a lot of kids that 's the only way you can get through to them and once you are actually in it and doing it, you realize how ineffective it is at times, when you have to do different things to keep them in line. But, it's also letting the kid be a kid too and knowing what's appropriate for that age. Like it's hard to separate that from what's most convenient for you at that time and what are you actually

disciplining them for. For inconveniencing you or for doing something that is just inappropriate? (Interview 1, p. 4, 160-173).

Parents differed in their styles of discipline. The families in this study used a variety of criteria to identify differences in discipline styles. There were no dramatic differences in discipline style noted with respect to gender in the data. Both parents were identified as engaging in discussion and talk with their children, mothers were quicker to respond, and fathers referred to physical punishment in the interviews slightly more often than mothers.

Discipline tools. Parents identified a variety of discipline tools they used when disciplining their preschool children. Parents identified an average of 7.6 discipline tools, with a range of 5 to 10 tools. The discipline tools can be arranged along a continuum with regards to the purpose of the discipline action. Most of the time, parents described using discipline tools in combinations or sequences. At times parents used combinations of discipline tools at the same point in the continuum while at other times used discipline tools in a sequence that moved along the continuum. In addition, parents critically analyzed the discipline tools they used to discipline their preschool children. Criteria that were applied to analyze the discipline tools included “effectiveness”, and “pros and cons”.

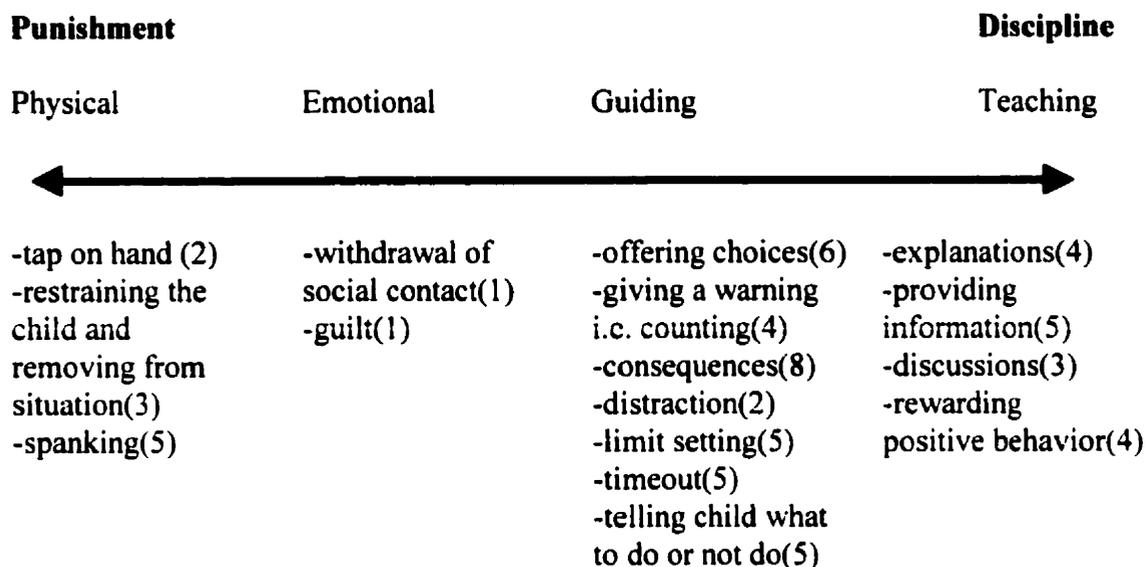
Effectiveness of a discipline tool referred to either achieving the desired outcome or to the child’s reaction. Pro and cons addressed strengths and weakness of a discipline tool. Most parents identified a discipline tool as effective based on the desired outcome. One family gauged the child’s reaction on his ability to think and learn.

Father6: And a lot of things too, is one thing that teaches me or points me in the direction is watching his reaction to it too. And if I go and think it really soaked in or didn’t really do anything, then there is no use

going back to it because it is just clouding his thinking.
 Mother6: His self. His self contemplation or something. Then I can sort of, when I take some time and I just start looking, how are things going, is this how I want his life to be (Interview 6, p. 10, 404-412).

According to present day definitions, this continuum can be divided into two end points, punishment and discipline, depending on the intent or purpose of the parent's actions as seen in Figure 4.2. The purpose of discipline was to teach and guide the child. Punishment, with the intent to control the child's behavior and to make the child "pay" for her/his transgressions and suffer. The remainder of this category refers to discipline at one end point on the discipline continuum with punishment the other end point. In the following excerpt, a father described punishment as the lower end point of his discipline continuum.

Father3: I look at punishment as a part of discipline. Like there is a segment that if it gets to the point where in the explanation of what they have done wrong and what was expected of them, that then there may be punishment where they lose something they like or not being able to do something So that's where the difference lies. Yes. It may or may not need to be part of the whole disciplining action (Interview 3, p. 5, 200-211).

Figure 4.2 Continuum of Discipline tools

- () number of families identified this tool

The punishment category, at the one end of the continuum, can be divided into two subcategories: emotional punishment and physical punishment. Both categories result in the parent intending the child to “pay” or suffer for her/his misbehavior. The difference between the two subcategories was the method of punishment, one emotional and the other physical. Physical punishment involved physical contact with the child’s body through a variety of means such as hitting or taping and resulted in both physical and emotional discomfort or suffering. Physical punishment included spanking, tapping on the hand, and physically removing the child from the situation.

In the following excerpt, a father critically analyzed spanking as a method of discipline using two criteria “pros” and “cons”, and effectiveness. He was uncertain about the effectiveness of spanking, but determined there was power to it as a discipline method in respect to the minimal amount of guilt inflicted on the child.

Father5: Well I’m not, like with spanking I don’t know how effective it is sometimes, but on the other hand, I would rather spank a child than

make him feel guilty about it you know. You think a lot of parents work on guilt and I always sort of thought well you know, spank them and they pay for their crime and you know you can kind of move on from there. I like to, if you just discipline, finish it right there, whether you've told them or sent them to bed early or made them stand in the corner, or whatever, or spank them, that its over, when its over. And that's kind of where I was at with that (Interview 5, p. 16, 668-677).

A few parents described physically picking the child up and removing her/him from the situation as a method of disciplining their child. This method is consistent with punishment in that the intent of the parent is to control the child's behavior rather than guide or teach.

Mother8: I picked him up. "Don't pick me up, you can't pick me up." And I put him on the bed, plopped him on the bed and he took the book and threw it. I said, Andrew, its time to go to bed. And "I don't want to go to bed, I don't want to go to bed, I want to playdoh now." (Interview 8, p. 5, 211-215).

Emotional punishment resulted in feelings of anguish or mental distress for the child. Only one couple identified punishment with the intent to induce emotional suffering with their preschool child. This couple recently immigrated to Canada from the middle east. In the following excerpt, the father described using a discipline method of withdrawing from social contact with his four year old son which resulted in prolonged emotional suffering.

Father4: But he had a tough time doing that and then I had to stop talking to him for about a day and a half. He was very upset about that. And I was, anytime I come home from work, he wants a very huge hug and he was upset that I didn't hug him. And after that I trusted him, that I am going to start talking to him (Interview 4, p. 5, 198-203).

The discipline category can be further divided into two subcategories of teaching and guiding. The difference between teaching and guiding being that guiding involved a specific intent by the parent to direct the child's behaviour without physical or emotional coercion. With teaching, the parent imparted knowledge which the child then was free to

act upon. These two terms were used by parents such as this mother to describe their discipline.

Mother1: Every age brings up new things you know, and I guess and so you are teaching Its just like when you are teaching and always trying to guide various behavior or what you feel is misbehavior so (Interview 1, p. 14, 600-604).

Teaching expects the child to cognitively participate in the process and to take responsibility for his/her actions. Discipline tools that could be included in the teaching category include explanations, discussion and providing information.

Father6: We have done that. But at the same time, I like to go again, one step further and just let him know. We saw what you did, we don't agree with it, it could have just been a 3 year old boy thing, but there's a point where you have to say okay this is not going to be acceptable and hope it doesn't happen again. We will have to sit down and talk about it a lot longer. Just to let him know (Interview 6, p. 20, 860-866).

Another tool that parents used to discipline their preschool children was rewards for positive behavior. This mother described rewarding positive behavior, eating vegetables, with positive consequences, being able to have cake.

Mother5: It's hard to know what to do. Well we have twins that are two and developmentally they are fairly close but they are not exactly the same and so for me, one of the things that is hard is Amanda, she understands, like eat the vegetables and then you can have your cake. But Susan, maybe doesn't understand so she in terms of sort of disciplining them in that way, its hard to be fair (Interview 5, p. 3, 98-104)

Parents identified a variety of discipline tools that could be categorized as guiding the child's behavior including: consequences, choices, limit setting, timeout, telling them what they can or can't do, a warning, and distraction. Parents described using these tools individually or in combination. A mother described a consequence she applied to her child who was chasing the neighbours cat

Mother7: Just today, my son chases the cat next door, and he got scratched and this morning I told him there is no more chasing the cat because the cat is going to get you, and when you chase the cat, you go back inside the house. And John agreed with me and Alex went chasing after the cat of course, and I brought him inside.... (Interview 7, p. 1, 7-12).

Giving the child a warning by counting is a discipline tool often used by parents and which several parents identified as effective to achieve the desired behavior.

Mother1: the counting method has been great. Like I say a change has come around in that way, that we use spanking a lot less right away, whereas I will use counting and it will work. Like if I'm wanting him to do something ,.... its more for getting him to do what you want him to do (Interview 1, p. 12, 503-508).

In the following example, a mother described using choices and consequences as discipline tools with her son and provided examples of choices she would offer him. A mother also described using a variety of discipline tools in sequence to guide her child's behavior.

Mother7: I give him a choice. I give him a choice of what he should be doing. He could sit or he could walk and hold hands, or he could sit in the stroller. I give him a choice. And if he says something else, like that's not in the choice. That's not the choices, sonny. Basically you know, I give him choices basically, and consequences too. I give him consequences as well (Interview 7, p. 5, 190-196).

Mother2: Helping him to learn how to recognize boundaries. What we often do with the hockey stick, he had hit the furniture before and he got a warning. And the warning is always a part of the discipline. If you do this again, then this will be the consequence. So it gives him a choice with which he can behave. He can make his choice about what he wants to do. And warn him of the consequences in advance and then follow through on the consequences (Interview 2, p. 4, 158-165).

In addition, parents described moving down the continuum from discipline to punishment if the child did not respond to the initial discipline tools. A mother described

moving down the continuum in the discipline end from teaching, talking and giving explanations, to guiding, warning and a consequence.

Mother1: Like we, you know, try the talking to him, try to get him to do what we want initially, and you know explaining why, and that sort of thing and if he doesn't want to agree with that, then its you know we start counting or whatever and then giving a consequence... (Interview 1, p. 4, 155-158).

Ideally explanations and the provision of information should be used to discipline a child, however, at times the discipline situation moved along the continuum from teaching to guiding to physical punishment. These parents described two such scenarios.

Father8: I mean the first part, is ideally how it would be handled. As much as possible, you want to handle it by explaining, why something is the wrong thing to do and why such and such is a better thing to do. Like, so, every night just about we have the same discussion about why you need to brush your teeth. You know, if you don't in the long run you will have this pain, you know, you will lose your teeth.

Mother8: We've said it all. Cavities.

Father8: And you know its about safety, you explain what the danger is on the road. And he's really good. He's never on the road. But you know, you explain, why you have a rule so he understands the rules aren't just there capriciously but there are, at certain times of day, if he's really exhausted, and he's kind of being nutty there's not really any (Interview 8, p. 7, 283-298).

A variety of discipline tools were identified by the parents in disciplining their preschool children. The purpose of the discipline action can be used to arrange the discipline tool long a continuum from discipline to punishment. The use of discipline tools in combination was common among the parents. Further, critical analysis was employed by the parents using two criteria "pros" and "cons", and effectiveness.

It depends! Factors taken into consideration. Parents take numerous factors into consideration when determining whether to discipline their children and what discipline action to take. Parents in this study recognized that their expectations vary according to a

variety of factors in a discipline situation. The factors parents considered included the context or situation, what the child did, the age of the child, and the child as a person. One mother describes several considerations in disciplining her preschool child including taking the child as a person into consideration, how they feel about themselves and the expectations she has of her children.

Mother5: Also, there is a whole kind of thing around preserving a really positive relationship with the child too. I mean, it doesn't really matter how really well behaved they are. You know, maybe they could behave well enough, but I mean, it's really sort of important to keep that so they feel good. You know, I think our disciplining is largely around so we can stand to live with them. So that they can be safe, and so that other people, when they are in their company, aren't completely turned off. And so that, I think we are fairly close on these are the things we absolutely can't stand. Certain things at the table, I think you have a lot more tolerance for things being kind of wild at the table (Interview 5, p. 6, 240-252).

All the families identified the context as a factor taken into consideration when disciplining their preschool child. Elements of the context which the families considered included the physical setting, the people involved. Most of the families identified being in a public place as a factor taken into consideration both when determining whether to discipline and what discipline action is appropriate. Parents described themselves as both reacting less to a discipline situation and as reacting more to a discipline situation in a public place. Several parents identified as this mother did that the behaviour expected of her children was different in a public place.

Mother1: Misbehavior in general I think are the parents, that we do know, most of time, what is best for a child and I think that if its a situation where we have asked them to do something and they are not listening, a lot of times, I would say that is misbehavior. Because I am not going to be on him for something that I don't feel he should be learning or know what to do. So, if I ask him to do something and he's saying a direct no, then I would say that is misbehavior. Like if he questions it or isn't sure why I'm asking

him to do it, or dawdles or whatever that can sometimes be misbehavior if he is dawdling and not doing it at the time when I am asking him to do it, but yes, I would say misbehavior is just most of the time, not doing what I ask him to do and as well as at times doing things that I am going to be asking him to do and often he just goes up and pushes another child or, yelling in a public place where he is not supposed to be yelling or that sort of thing or running where he is not supposed to be running.

Interviewer1: So doing things that aren't appropriate.

Mother1: In the place or situation, yes (Interview 1, p.5, 195-215).

Another determinant identified by a couple of families regarding the physical setting was how they altered their expectations for their child's behavior based on how conducive the setting was to facilitating cooperation from their children. One family described altering their expectations in a restaurant that was not child friendly.

Several parents also identified that they were less likely to discipline their child in a situation in which other people were around such as friends or family.

Father1: It's the hardest part is when you are around friends or family I feel that you probably don't keep up with it, like you let some things slide a little bit easier when you are around friends or family, because you don't want them to think, you are subconsciously thinking, oh maybe they don't agree with my parenting style so I will let it slide until we get home.

Mother1: You don't discuss that, that is just something you are aware of, you don't just make as much of an issue out of some things when they are around other people (Interview 1, p. 12, 526-535).

Further, several families considered the child's behavior in the context of the rest of the family members. The parents identified themselves and other children as influencing the behavior of the preschool child as well as influencing how they would respond to a discipline situation. One very insightful mother identified the child's behavior as a barometer of the environment around him.

Mother6: And usually I think I've noticed Curt's behavior is like a barometer to my daughter's behavior and our relationship and our you know how we are doing is sort of how he is doing. So it's a little stressful

around here.

Interviewer6: He picks up on, and he demonstrates it somehow.

Mother6: in some way or another. Which is good. That is what he should be doing.

Father6: Especially he will act out in a way and you can sort of tell him, we can read really what is anger or his outbursts. And a lot of times it is like Jane will come home, Curt may sit here an hour. And as soon as we get home she is nursing so he is feeling left out so, of course its natural, but one thing to do is to ... reach out.

Interviewer6: He is going to do something to get some attention.

Father6: Yes (Interview 6, p. 7, 273-292).

Another mother identifies elements of the family context which influence how she would respond to a discipline situation.

Mother5: I think in my defense, a good part of the response has to do with what is going on with me and the other kids and overall external things.

Interviewer5: Context, sort of what is happening around you.

Mother5: Yes.

Mother5: But that is not something, maybe what I am saying is maybe you have to kind of sort of be aware of the other sorts of pressures on you so you can sort of, well wait a minute, I won't really react to that (Interview 5, p. 5, 197-210).

A second factor many parents took into consideration when disciplining their children was the behavior of the child or what the child did as this mother does when determining the discipline action she would apply to the situation. This mother considered the behavior of the child in one situation to require a stronger consequence based on the gravity of the situation.

Mother5: Yes. Well, and I think maybe what they can learn from a situation, you know sort of more specific rather than generally I guess. I guess sort of different situations, you try and respond with the possible consequences of things. Like Amanda got a chair up at the stove and there was a pot of boiling water on there, so that sort of a much bigger consequence than when she gets up and plays on the sink in the bubbles, you know (Interview 5, p. 5, 184-190).

The age and developmental stage of the child, a third factor taken into consideration

when disciplining their child, was identified by all the families in this study. Parents identified that they altered their expectations of the child thereby determining whether they would discipline or not based on the age of the child.

Mother6: I would have to say, I think sort of understanding more developmental patterns, recognizing that some misbehaviors are just development and its not misbehavior its just normal.

Interviewer6: It's where they are at because of their age.

Mother6: Yes. (Interview 6, p. 6, 252-257).

Some parents identified criteria for the consideration of age in disciplining children including the child's attention span, level of intelligence, maturity, and knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Father3: I think what's important, and I bet I miss out on this a lot, is to remember how old they are and not to consider how intelligent, advanced or mature I hope they would be in that situation. Because I think as part of my ideal disciplining theory, I probably explain over their head somewhat. They maybe pick up the context of what I'm trying to say, but I think sometimes I expect that they should be better and they should understand in things that they think are okay are in fact not okay or appropriate. So I think I have to understand better or be more open minded to how 5 and 3 year olds in this case behave and just the fact that they are little girls who are this old and this is what they do and they don't pick up on the discipline right away (Interview 3, p. 6, 226-238).

In addition a few parents identified that certain rules and principles they apply to discipline would not change no matter what the age of the child as this mother does with regards to hitting.

Mother2: Exactly, I mean maybe when he is, I don't know, 6 we will think differently, I don't know, but I can't see it. I mean even when he was really little if he was reaching toward a hot stove my instinct was not to slap his hand away, to grab it, but never to hit it. So I can't see that changing in either of us (Interview 2, p. 9-10, 403-407).

Further, parents identified knowledge deficits with regards to developmental

milestones and knowing what to expect of their preschool children. This lack of knowledge made it difficult for parents to take these into consideration when disciplining their preschool children. Areas of growth and development in which parents recognized lack of knowledge and sought information included: sleeping, eating, and fighting with playmates. In the following excerpt, a mother described seeking information related to her son's eating and wanting to know what was appropriate for his age.

Mother1: Yes, I think too, depending on their age and what should be expected of them at that age. I have a hard time with Dustin because you know especially with him being our first child, its, sometimes you don't know what should I be expecting, if I don't get on this now, is this going to be a problem when he's ten, or that sort of thing. And I struggle with that. And his eating, and I talk to other people to see if that's appropriate and the different issues. And you see when you are around other people, what kids the same age, that a lot of the stuff they are doing is normal and yet, for me, its like, do I accept it as his parent, where the other parent might be accepting something that I am not and I guess, just trying to determine what is age appropriate and reacting to specific, what we have specifically do, in terms (Interview 1, p. 4, 136-149).

The fourth factor, most parents identified taking the child as a person, their personhood, into consideration in a discipline situation. The most significant example of parents taking the child into consideration with regards to discipline was a couple who talked about the inclusion of their preschool in all discussions surrounding discipline and the child when the child had fallen asleep during the interview.

Father6: This is different, because we never actually talk. Whenever we are talking about him, we always include him in the conversation. He is never left out of the conversation. It's different.

Mother6: Because then he can sort of sit here and talk about the discipline. And he's all ears.

Interviewer6: But he's not here to take it in.

Mother6: Well now he's sleeping (Interview 6, p. 10-11, 439-449).

Characteristics of the child which were considered by the parent included how tired

the child was, whether the child was ill or not, how that certain child responds to discipline, the need of the child to control the situation at times and the feelings of the child. Several parents identified the need to consider if the child is sick or tired in a discipline situation.

Mother6: I guess I am consistent in times when I just sort of do it a different way, like change the activity or not focus on it too much. And I do that usually if someone is sick or tired or I know there is some sort of outside influence. But it is also different when there is just one parent around. Because you can't always assume, that's when things can crumble, because its hard to be comforting one and yelling at another doesn't work very well (Interview 6, p. 2, 78-85).

Another element a few parents considered was the need for the child at times to be able to set the agenda or pace of a situation as this father describes.

Father8: Letting him set the agenda a lot of the time and let him if he wants to explore something and do something let him. Let him make a mess or let him get himself dirty or whatever. It's not something that you need to get mad at a 4 year old about. I suppose there is a time and place. If he's in his Sunday best (Interview 8, p. 19, 828-832).

Another mother describes this as sometimes letting the child be in control of the situation.

Some of the parents described taking the feelings and emotions of the child into consideration when determining the method of discipline as this mother does.

Mother2: Preschoolers have a sense of dignity and they don't like to be embarrassed, so I would never, well maybe not never, that is a strong word, because, yes I lose my temper, but I wouldn't want to scold him in front of other people. I would rather take him aside, even if its behind the couch over there or to another room and tell him, or even quietly lean down next to him and tell him that's not acceptable, or what, if you do this again, this is what will happen, I do not want to embarrass him or use that as a tool (Interview 2, p. 4-5, 177-185).

A couple of families considered how their child responded differently to the discipline methods and the parents took this into consideration when determining which method to

use.

Father5: Well certainly the child is important. We have 3 kids I think that they all respond differently to different things. Like Claire, the one twin who is sort of more difficult will respond quite well to positive, where the other one really, she responds quite well, well she did till a couple of weeks ago, she responded very well to a more stern approach. Our oldest, that is true as well (Interview 5, p. 4-5, 169-178).

A few of the parents describe taking what they believe is the personality or intentions of the child's behavior into consideration in a discipline situation. The parents describe their children as being generally good, pretty agreeable and being inquisitive.

Mother8: Annoying because Ken would get ticked off at him. Because its like, why aren't you doing this. You know what I do now, and I've told Ken to just walk away, just walk away if he's a fit in the basement, don't stick around, go upstairs. I mean he will come up and want a hug you know. So, he's not a, he's never been a kid who has to have lots of time outs.

Father8: Or willfully destructive.

Mother8: Yes, and he doesn't, he's not violent. He has never, I have never seen him hit another kid you know, and you know, he's not, he just doesn't do those things you know (Interview 8, p. 4, 150-161).

Numerous factors are considered by parents when disciplining their preschool children. These factors influence whether they will their children and what discipline action they will take. The factors parents identified as considering included the context or situation, the child's behavior, the age of the child, and the child as a person. The parents in this study recognized that their expectations vary according to a variety of factors in a discipline situation.

Disciplining: It's a Struggle. All parents identified struggling with disciplining their preschool child. A variety of discipline situations were identified as difficult by the parents. These situations were described by the parents through a variety of words such as frustrating, trying, hard, a struggle, a challenge, tough, and difficult. Parents identified a

variety of criteria which they used to define a discipline situation as a struggle. The criteria they identified are consistent with the definition of the word struggle including the amount of effort they must exert, the attempting to strive for an outcome, and the amount of difficulties they encounter.

Four main elements: the context, the discipline situation, the parents, and the child, were considered by the parents to contribute to the discipline situation being labeled as a struggle. The parents' struggles will be presented according to these four elements. In addition, the parents identified a few strategies they used to deal with the struggles they encountered. Including gathering information by observing other parents, talking with the other parents about the discipline situation, and working as a parenting team.

With regards to the element, context, one criteria that the parents used to define a discipline situation as a struggle was the degree of difficulty involved. One couple identified the context as difficult because it occurred in a crowded, not child friendly restaurant, and having to "make do" with the situation. Further, both parents identified having to deal with numerous discipline issues in this one dinner out in the restaurant thereby requiring them to exert a significant amount of effort.

Mother1: Its always challenging, every situation. Referring to older one only, just Dustin?

Father1: I would say Friday night was the hardest discipline wise.

Interviewer1: Why was it a challenge?

Father1: It was when we went out to a restaurant. And its a crowded restaurant and you have, its not very child friendly so you have to make do and they don't want to sit in the seats that you want. They want to sit on the same side or whatever, so it was like a constant, it was a constant struggle on Friday. It was where we are sitting and I don't want to eat that and everything you can imagine with a meal it was, we were butting heads over. So we had got through it but we didn't particularly enjoy it, I mean we didn't win. We ended up just dealing with it and we split the two of them up and it was just a local restaurant here, so, we got through it and that's about it.

- We just handled it.
- Mother1: Dustin was really whining and then, why are you whining you know, and he said, he wanted to sit on the other side and I was just trying to figure out exactly what he was wanting and I said, do you want to sit by dad, and he said yes. So then we worked it out and got to sit by dad, but then he wouldn't eat what we had given him and if he doesn't eat he doesn't get his dessert, so he did finally in the end, he did eat what he was supposed to and he got to pick out a treat, so I guess in a sense we did win but he wasn't listening.
- Interviewer1: So it was a challenge?
- Mother1: It was a true challenge yes, definitely. It was pretty frustrating (Interview 1, p. 2, 63-95).

In regards to context, another family referred to their child's behaviour in relation to other children in the family as the struggle in discipline situations.

- Father5: One of the things that is a bit of a challenge is handling your oldest daughter now trying to mimic us and discipline the younger children. And that sort of presents a different challenge. Because on the one hand we want her to get involved. I like when I am taking them out somewhere for her to watch one. Because obviously, its very hard to handle sometimes. But on the other hand it's a double edged sword. You know, she can be a little bit overbearing at times. So in a way it sort of sets a completely different dynamic. You know, we could be at the table and one of the twins will be acting up and I will say something and Diane will say something and then Kendra will say something.
- Interviewer5: So they've got three parents.
- Father5: Yes. I think it very difficult for the kids. And I think it is definitely part of the dynamic. So then we are sort of in the situation where I think we often, how do we do this, you know. Its another kind of challenge altogether (Interview 5, p. 17-18, 714-732).

Regarding the element, discipline situation, two criteria used by a few of families to identify a discipline situation as a struggle were the length of time required to address situation and the length of time the issue persisted. These criteria related to the amount of effort required by the parent to address the issue or situation. One family identified the time required for them to follow through on the consequence they had used in the situation, the period of time being a whole evening.

- Mother2:** Well you know how it is. But I think you are right. The taking away of the hockey stick was the most challenging because it was longterm discipline issue, it was the whole evening.
- Interviewer2:** So it was the duration the time.
- Mother2:** 7:00? When you put it away?
- Father2:** Yes, that's about right, and he goes to bed about just after 8, so it was maybe 1 ½ hour but it seemed a lot longer (Interview 2, p. 3, 112-121).

The need to follow through and be consistent was valued by this couple yet identified as harder to do than to give in after a short period of time.

- Mother2:** Setting boundaries. And sticking to them.
- Father2:** Yes, and that's the toughest part I think and that's why the challenge with the last question of the hockey stick. It would have been easy to give it to him after, okay, we've made our point, 15 minutes later, let's give him the hockey stick.
- Mother2:** But we spent the whole evening.
- Father2:** I said I will put it away for the whole evening. So when he did it again, I had to do that. I thought I had to anyway. Yes, I think Jan is right consistency is part of the thing that we try and strive for in disciplining him (Interview 2, p. 4, 143-155).

Another criterion that a few parents used to identify a discipline issue as a challenge was the length of time the issue persisted. Parents described issues persisting for several months without resolution. These parents described the issue of their child sleeping in their bed as a struggle due to the length of time it persisted.

- Father 4:** In a situation, about 6 months, and he was still coming to our bed.... (Interview 4, p. 8, 340).

Several couples identified a discipline situation as a struggle based on the lack of response from the child to the discipline tools they were trying to use in the situation or lack of effectiveness of the discipline tool. One family identified a discipline situation as hard as they were having difficulty connecting with their child. The parents identify the child as having a physical illness limiting their ability to communicate with him at times thereby requiring more of an effort on their part to communicate with the child.

- Father6:** I think refresh my memory. Like yesterday he was pretty aggressive toward his sister and probably because of his asthma. It kind of comes on and he was having a really hard time with it, so, and that's the hardest thing. You are able to agree, okay, this is what it is, this is showing itself right now. And that was tough, because you can't really get anything across. Because nothing will ...
- Interviewer6:** So what was challenging about it? Not getting anything across, meaning you couldn't communicate with him.
- Father6:** Couldn't get the attention. No, there was no communication with him at all. It was over here, this is where I am looking and he is focusing that way, so.
- Mother6:** Yes, talking to somebody who is walking away (Interview 6, p. 4, 172-178).

Another element, the child, related to two criteria which were identified by a few parents as not knowing what to do and striving to do their best to discipline their children, and the severity of the child's behaviour. Two families voiced uncertainty with regards to the expectations they have for their children and doing the right things. As well as the effort required to determine what they should expect was identified. A struggle identified by one father is not knowing why his son began wetting himself again and not being sure how to handle the discipline situation.

- Father7:** I would think one comes to mind is, he had been toilet trained for awhile and all of a sudden he started to wet himself again. And I don't know for what reason. But where we started to, and he was totally aware of it, so we decided first of all to take his favorite cars away every time he would wet himself. And then we stepped it up to whatever he was doing when he had wet himself we would take that activity away from him as almost a scenario of punishment.
- Interviewer7:** Okay. So, that was challenging, how would you say it was challenging?
- Father7:** Well I think challenging I think in the fact that we didn't know if that was the right thing to do. Whether we were doing some serious damage (Interview 7, p. 3, 95-107).

Another parent identified struggling with expectations in being able to take into consideration each child as an individual and being fair to each children. Even though the parent may have an understanding of the norms for children and parents they felt the need

to consider the child and their specific circumstances or personality as well. Therefore, the need to take so many points into consideration was difficult.

Mother5: It's hard to know what to do. Well we have twins, developmentally they are fairly close but they are not exactly the same and so for me, one of the things that is hard is Amanda, she understands, like eat the vegetables and then you can have your cake. But Susan, maybe doesn't understand so she in terms of sort of disciplining them in that way, its hard to be fair. Because they are not the same, but yet they watch each other very closely and there is an expectation of them being the same and I'm not really sure that Susan doesn't understand. I think she might understand but she is kind of stubborn, maybe a bit more stubborn. So, I guess the challenge comes in trying to expect more of them than they can do but not expect less either but to try and sort of gauge what they can handle (Interview 5, p. 3, 98-114).

Another aspect of children as an element of the discipline issue that was used by one couple to define a discipline situation as a struggle was the extreme behavior exhibited by the child, the amount of difficulty. If the child's behaviour was beyond the usual or more common behavior for that child this led to the parents defining the situation as a struggle. This couple described a situation in which their child had gone beyond what they considered bad behaviour to extreme behaviour.

Father3: Yes. But although you know, it was difficult because of the extreme behavior but it was good in the sense that we were right on stream, except for the fact that I spanked her (Interview 3. p. 4 141-144).

Another element, the parents, was identified as difficult in respect to working together as a team with regards to disciplining their preschool children. In a family in which the mother is a stay at home mom and the primary disciplinarian, the father identified it difficult to know what rules she had set up so that he could be consistent with her expectations.

Father7: I think its also a conscience effort on my part, just because you, its

a scenario of that's from 9-5 you are setting rules, and I don't think he necessarily wants someone to come in and rewrite all the rules that you have laid out. And I think that is a little bit of trouble that I have. I mean what exactly are the rules that Anna has set up to come and go, to pick up where she has left off. I find that difficult to do (Interview 7, p. 7, 274-280).

A factor, related to parents was the effort in dealing with a discipline situation in which there are two children involved and only one parent. The participant voiced difficulty in being able to respond to the different needs of both children at the same time and which child to respond to first.

Mother6: I guess I am consistent in times when I just sort of do it a different way, like change the activity or not focus on it too much. And I do that usually if someone is sick or tired or I know there is some sort of outside influence. But it is also different when there is just one parent around. Because you can't always assume, that's when things can crumble, because its hard to be comforting one and yelling at another doesn't work very well.

Interviewer6: No, no it's hard to know which one to do when you are the only one there sometimes.

Mother6: Yes, it is.

Interviewer6: Sometimes I think people find it easier when there's two of you because you've got two kids and you know that each of you can deal with one. But sometimes ...

Mother6: That's what I mean, I am probably not that consistent. Because there's a consistent pattern (Interview 6, p. 2-3, 78-97).

Parents identified a few methods they used to address the struggles they encounter in disciplining their preschool children. These methods included seeking information from other resources and talking with their partner at the end of the day. Several parents identified working together as a team by debriefing or talking with each other at the end of the day as a way of dealing with the struggle of disciplining their preschool child.

Mother2: Or if it's been a particularly trying day. If David is for whatever reason been acting up a lot, then its part of the debriefing of the day (Interview 2, p. 15, 657-659).

Parents identified making even more of an effort to spend time talking with the other

parent if that day was exceptionally challenging in an attempt at trying to improve their discipline practices.

Mother8: Like we always touch base with each other especially if we feel we've done something wrong. Or you know we lost our temper or, because we feel bad and so, like we always come back to each other, at least I do, I think Ken too, like when he does something wrong with him, more so maybe I was at work. And you know I did this today and I should have done that. I should have handled it better this time. And you know you just sort of, you know ... because like its always, am I a good mom? You know and all this, and I need to hear it from him that I am, because you know, you always worry you know, about, is he going to have some sort of lasting effect or memory of whatever I just said to him. And yelled at him, or whatever you know. You know, its hard (Interview 8, p. 6-7, 263-275).

The other method identified by parents to address the struggles related to a knowledge deficit was to gather information in areas where they lacked knowledge which has discussed in this thesis in the category "It depends: Factors taken into consideration".

All parents identified certain circumstances in disciplining their preschool child as a struggle. Parents identified a variety of criteria which they used to define a discipline situation as a struggle including the amount of effort they must exert, the attempting to strive for an outcome, and the amount of difficulties they encounter. One of four elements: the context, the discipline situation, the parents, and the child, were identified by the parents as contributing to the struggle. Further, parents noted a variety of strategies they used to deal with the struggles they encountered.

In summary, disciplining preschool children was identified as a complex issue by the parents including a process, principles, styles, tools, and factors to take into consideration. Discipline was described by parents as a process involving three elements: the actions or behavior on the part of the child, actions or reactions on the part of the parent, and

changes or outcomes. Certain principles were used by the parents to guide this process. In addition, parents identified differences in their styles of parenting as well as a diversity of tools they can use. A variety of factors were taken into consideration by the parents when disciplining their preschool child such as context, developmental stage, and the behavior of the child.

Parents: The Discipline Team

This theme *Parents: The Discipline Team* was evident in all the interviews. Teams are identified as having a common purpose just as these parents did in disciplining their preschool children. That stated, there are often differences as to how to achieve the purpose among team members. The parents described themselves as a team working together and supporting each other in disciplining their preschool children. It was readily apparent that these couples saw themselves as a team both in the situations they described and the agreement observed between them in the interviews. On occasion, the team members did not always support each other or agree with the disciplining process which resulted in team conflict. This conflict is common to most teams in which there is a difference of opinion on the rules of the game or how the game should be played.

Most teams have a team leader who takes responsibility for guiding, directing and building the team just as these parents identified a leader in their parent discipline team. These parent teams used a variety of techniques to build their team. This theme was developed from four categories “Team work: What it looks like”, “Team conflict”, “Team leader”, and Team building: How they get there”

Team work- What it looks like. Team work can be described as a group of people working together for a common purpose. All the parents described cooperating with each

other in the disciplining of their preschool children. Parents worked together as a team and they articulated what facilitated cooperation between the team members. In addition, two of the families discussed the perceived benefits of working together as a team in disciplining their children.

Parents used a variety of phrases to describe this cooperation and team work: “we were pretty much right on stream”, “we are both on the same track”, “we are probably both on the same page”, and “we are on a pretty good wave length together”. Several parents described that as a couple they worked together as a “team”.

Mother1: We don't usually disagree. Well, we do disagree but I can't really think of one. Can you? ...

Father1: I guess it wasn't really a case of there being a lack of support from the other one. We pretty much act as a team (Interview 1, p. 2, 51-52).

Observations of nonverbal communication in the interviews between parents, noted in the fieldnotes, identified all couples as using several nonverbal communication techniques of agreement such as nodding of the head and eye contact. Further, there were no instances noted in which the parent's nonverbal interaction was contrary to their verbal communication.

A common set of beliefs and values were recognized by some the parents as critical in being able to work together as team with regards to disciplining their preschool children.

Mother2: But we haven't had any major disagreements about how we discipline David. We seem to agree on the fundamentals and I guess that is the important part (Interview 2, p. 10, 427-429).

Parents described this sharing of fundamental values or beliefs as influencing a variety of components of the discipline process including their expectations of the child and type of discipline applied to a situation.

Mother2: I guess one thing that is critical is that we share a very similar value system and we share the same expectations of David in terms of rules you know. When David is going to leave the table he has to say, "excuse me", and those are rules that are maintained no matter who is here. And even if its a thrown together supper, that's the same behavior that is expected so because we have the same expectations, I think its just that much easier with discipline (Interview 2, p. 15-16, 661-679).

Father7: Well I think we are probably both on the same page as far as the severity of discipline. I think we are both not really involved with, don't necessarily think that spanking is effective or has a place. We believe in the scenario of removing him from the situation that he is in, and giving him a time out or taking something away, or taking something away that he was doing. That form of discipline, I think we are both on the same page with (Interview 7, p. 10, 430-437).

Several couples confirmed this sharing of beliefs and values during the interviews by supporting and agreeing with each other in their definition of discipline. In the following excerpt, the husband agreed with his wife on the difference between punishment and discipline.

Mother7: Punishment I would say would be like a consequence, more of a consequence I think. Disciplining I think is kind of showing him on the right path.

Father7: Yes, I would agree with that, because discipline is almost a pre or pro-active approach, where as punishment is reactive (Interview 7, p. 4, 153-159).

The importance of sharing similar discipline beliefs and values did not necessarily extend to discipline approaches. Most of the participants suggested it was acceptable to have parents approach a discipline situation differently as long as their fundamental values were similar.

Father5: You know, we sort of talked about how different they are, but in a way even if we are using a different approach, its not so bad, I don't think you really need to have a cohesive approach to discipline. I mean you have to have certain policies around what things are right and what are wrong. And I think our values are

very close even though of discipline styles and our emphasis is different. So, I think we've sort of become quite comfortable in sort of being different (Interview 5, p. 17, 694-703).

However, it was best when discipline philosophies and discipline styles were congruent. In addition, couples described cooperation in the form of responding to a discipline situation with a similar response or style. Parents identified a difference in their discipline styles as a common cause of conflict between them even though it was not as important as similar discipline beliefs and values.

Parents described a comfort level or understanding in knowing how the other person would respond even though the response could be different. A mother described her husband as taking longer to respond to a discipline situation but knowing that he would in the end respond to the same situations as her.

Mother7: I think John is a little bit more, if the word is tolerable, in what he [son] is doing. He [father] can tolerate a little bit more than I would. But I know that he would respond once he reaches his sort of thing (Interview 7, p. 11, 468-472).

Parents identified how they cooperated or worked together as a team during a discipline situation. One manner was supporting each other in the discipline situation either by dealing with the incident together or by sharing responsibility for dealing with the incident.

Mother2: I think I am generally more of a softy, I am a soft touch. I am more prone to want to give in but Tom supports me in helping me to ensure that the consistency is maintained (Interview 2, p. 8, 325-328).

Another means of working together was through effective communication between the couple. One parent reinforced or supported the other parent's response during the discipline incident. This was accomplished through a variety of techniques such as verbal

communication, nonverbal communication, and the actions of the other parent. The following excerpt illustrates how the father initiated the discipline and the mother supported and reinforced his response by continuing to do what the father had done.

Father2: I don't think we have to go far for that, we just came back from Safeway. And one of the things that we tell David is you have to hold our hand when you are walking through the parking lot. Well, he was a little bit tired and getting a little cranky, so I told him to hold my hand and he sort of pulled my hand away. And I said, "That's it, I told you once", and I just picked him up and I carried him to the car. And of course the screaming began. And he said, "I want to get down" and we are trying to teach him to say please all the time. So he stopped crying and sort of said, "Please, can I get down and walk?", and I said, "no. I told you once and that's it, next time, you can get down and walk, but this time you are going to be carried to the car." And the fit started again, but we are pretty much in agreement there.

Mother2: Yes, I got the easy job, I was pushing the cart. Tom handled talking to David while he was carrying him. And then when we got to the car, he put David in the car first, and then he opened the trunk, and then came and put the groceries away and I got into the car. And I just continued to ask David and talk to him about the process and what happened and explained that this was the rule and daddy told you that if you pull your hand away and don't hold hands in the parking lot, daddy will have to carry you and that is what he did (Interview 2, p. 1, 6-30).

Parents described actions that were supportive or cooperative as either doing or not doing something. Several couples identified another means of cooperating during a discipline situation through actions in which one parent stood back and did not interfere with the other parent who was handling the situation.

Father7: I think its also a conscience effort on my part, just because you, its a scenario of that's from 9-5 you are setting rules, and I don't think she [mother] necessarily wants someone to come in and rewrite all the rules that you have laid out. And I think that is a little bit of trouble that I have. I mean what exactly are the rules that Allyson [mother] has set up to come and go, to pick up where she has left off. I find that difficult to do (Interview 7, p. 7, 274-279).

Another technique used by most of the parents in a discipline situation to show

support and cooperation was verbal and non-verbal communication. A variety of nonverbal communication was identified by the participants as being useful when communicating about discipline, especially in front of the children, including tone of voice, eye contact, and touch. A couple described how they work together in discipline situations using nonverbal communication and the benefits of being able to use nonverbal communication when disciplining their preschool child.

Father2: We've been together for a long time so even, I can say, okay, in a certain tone and she [mother] will know what I mean by that. By the same token, she can sort of touch me on the arm and that will be, okay, just relax, let's take this, you don't need to rile him up in the process of disciplining him. So it's just these little kind of exchanges can mean more than you need to verbalize.

Mother2: And also, if there is a particular behavior, if he is acting up and neither one of us has stepped in yet we kind of look at each other and decide from that, again non-verbal communication, okay, its my turn, or your turn, are you going, or am I going, who is going to go on this one. Who is going to make the first move. So that's, a lot of non-verbal communication around whose turn is it or who is going to be taking the lead role in the discipline. (Interview 2, p. 11, 451-486).

Another means of cooperation was sharing the responsibility for disciplining or a "tag team" approach. Sharing responsibility for discipline, especially among mothers not employed outside the home, included the delegation of responsibility to fathers.

Mother5: Well sometimes at the dinner table, you know I've been with the kids all day, and if they are misbehaving and I just feel like I want Brian to deal with them, you know, so....I say Yes. Would you deal with this? (Interview 5, p. 14, 579-590).

In a "tag team" approach one parent takes over where the other parent left off, but not necessarily continuing in the same discipline vein used by the other parent. One couple described how the father took over from the mother in his own style in what he describes as a "Good cop, bad cop" tag team response.

Mother3: Yes, he [father] had come home and I guess you didn't really know what was going on except for she [daughter] was screaming. And then she had to stay in her room, but she wouldn't. So she kept coming into here and then she ran up to me and hit me and then tried to bite me.

Father3: Right.

Mother3: And then you intervened...

Father3: So I thought that maybe a change of scenery would be good you know. Good cop, bad cop kind of thing. So I picked her up and I brought her to her room and in the past I just sort of, if I held her long enough you know, sort of forcefully so she doesn't go crazy, because she also sometimes will hurt herself, she will scratch herself, or try to ram her head on the floor, not super hard but certainly to make a point. Anyways she scratched me on the forehead and I spanked her when she did that. Just one, but on the bum, it was pretty hard because we don't do that (Interview 3, p. 2, 52-63).

All participants demonstrated agreement, cooperation, and support during the interviews. The couples used cooperative language such as the mother in the following excerpt who spoke for herself, but then shifted to speaking for both herself and her husband. The husband continued to talk about him and his spouse as a team and used inclusive words such as "we" and "our".

Mother5: I think what I try, we try not to give up on them [children] and just kind of you know reward good behavior and kind of guide them towards doing things and trying, sometimes we end up sort of battling.

Father5: Sometimes that's our punishment. For being so misdirected. (Interview 5, p. 4, 156-161).

Families identified the benefits or outcomes of working together as a team. The benefits parents identified included more patience in dealing with discipline situations and better relationships between parents and children. One couple thought a benefit of working together as team was having more patience in dealing with the discipline situations that arose with their children.

Father2: I wonder if the fact that both of us are involved in the discipline

doesn't have something to do with the fact that we don't ever reach that break point whereas before, both of us, it was just our mothers that were primarily looking after us. Maybe that's one of the reasons.

Mother2: You have double the patience that way. With a tag team approach.

Father2: Supposedly, yes. (Interview 2, p. 10, 409-418).

Another mother identified that having both parents being involved in the discipline and supportive of each other resulted in a more positive and equal relationship between the parents and the children.

Mother5: And I think sometimes, like with our oldest daughter I felt like I was disciplining her more. And then you would lean back more and you and she had a closer relationship. When I was pregnant with the twins I was in the hospital for a couple of months, so Amanda and Scott were sort of together and then, well anyway, circumstances, and anyway it seemed to me, I think its important for both parents to be involved in the discipline because, you know, it seemed like, where am I going with this, yes, if both are involved it allows, it doesn't put undue stress on anyone's relationship with the kid. It spreads out the disciplining and okay, this isn't me being hard on you, these are house rules that will be enforced, you know. And also I think that if both parents are doing it, it shows that it's both person's house, or everyone's house. You know, it's not ... (Interview 5, p. 18-19, 748-773).

Team work was a common thread identified by all the parents when disciplining their children. They described themselves as cooperating and supporting each other in the process of disciplining their preschool child. Couples recognized the significance of having similar beliefs and values guiding their discipline to being able to function as a team. They identified several methods by which they worked together as a team in disciplining their children including effective communication, dealing with the discipline situation together or by supporting the other parent while they are dealing with the situation.

Team conflict. Parents identified that at times they were in conflict and disagreed when disciplining their preschool children. Parents, just as in most teams and partnerships, had different opinions or points of view on “handling” a situation. A variety of methods were identified by the parents to handle the conflict between them regarding disciplining their children including ignoring the situation or dealing with it.

Most parents in this study described differences or disagreements between themselves with respect to discipline issues. Disagreements which resulted in conflict included: how the parent approached or what method they used to address a discipline situation, lack of follow through on the part of a parent, and the lack of consistency between the parents. In addition, a perceived or actual lack of support from the other parent was identified as bringing about conflict.

The most common reason identified for conflict between the parents was differences of opinion with respect to how to manage a discipline situation. This mother described not agreeing with how her husband responded to certain discipline situations.

Mother8: I mean there are certain things that Ken might do that I don't. Why are you asking or giving him that choice again? Just do it Ken, you know. This is not the point to answer questions. Like you know, sometimes, you always ask him, okay Andrew, da, da, da, or do you want, just do it alright. Especially at night you know, tired and you know and so, but (Interview 8, p. 8, 343-348).

Inconsistency in approaches to discipline between parents resulted in several parents being at odds with each other. A lack in consistency between parents was referred to by the parents as not applying the rules or limits equally by both parents. A couple reported the conflict between them with regards to a limit set by the mother, “the park rules”, when the father did not apply the rules.

Mother7: This week, or this past week. I think, I don't know when it was

maybe a month ago when we were at the park. And there was a waterslide. And the rules of the park was not to go down the waterslide and Alex wanted to go down the waterslide and John thought that was okay. And I said, no. They couldn't go. But John still said he could go down the waterslide.

Father7: We've done it whenever I've taken him to the park, we've always done it so it was, I guess it was a scenario of him getting mixed messages because we were both there (Interview 7, p. 1-2, 49-59).

Another point of conflict was the perceived or actual lack of support from the other parent with respect to disciplining their child. Team members were not supporting each other. In the following excerpt, a father perceived a lack of support by his partner for how he was handling a discipline situation. Tension between the couple continued with respect to this episode as evidenced by the father's short response to the mother's account.

Mother6: I can think of one. It was two months ago now, the beginning of April. Anyway and it was, I guess it seemed to be a difference in opinion of sort of the same kinds of situations where I just sort of asked Don to take Curt aside and speak with him. And he took him upstairs and he was crying and when I came up, everything just sort of fell apart because he felt that I was not supporting you because I was sort of giving in to his cries. And at the same time I had come up because I felt well, I will be there and try to talk and try to be there with you kind of thing rather than, because this was just after talking to his sister about the same kind of thing and she said that it is important to have a united front. And in my mind I was thinking that I was being that but it wasn't in his mind I think. Remember that.

Father6: Well yeah, I remember (Interview 6, p. 3, 113-128).

Parents identified two methods for conflict resolution. These included ignoring the issue, and directly approaching the other parent about the issue. The most commonly reported mechanism for addressing conflict was to approach the other parent about the issue or "speaking up". Parents noted approaching the other parent either at the time of the discipline incident, immediately after the incident, or later on. The rationale identified by parents for discussing the issue later on, as this father mentioned, was to not discuss

the situation in the presence of the children.

Father6: There have been times where we have talked about it. There have also been times where I mean, Jane [spouse] can probably see the steam coming out of my ears, and I can see the steam coming out of hers sometimes. So its not going to happen in front of the kids, so we will wait till we are by ourselves. Put it on the back shelf for now, and talk about it later. I mean not to upset each other, I mean, its just more of okay I can't handle this anymore what am I going to do, so its time to step back and walk away (Interview 6, p. 17, 732-740).

Approaching the other parent either resulted in the parents agreeing to disagree or consensus. Many couples identified that they reached consensus most of the time followed by agreeing to disagree.

Father7: I would say the majority of the stuff that we do is probably consensus. There is this scenario of not necessarily agreeing at all and doing each having our own way... (Interview 7, p. 12, 493-496).

Another couple described a discipline situation in which they did not agree on how the father disciplined the daughter. Broaching the conflict later on resulted in the parents agreeing to disagree.

Mother5: Yes. Like that time Brian [spouse] discussed about spanking Susan at the store, I mean I was really quite horrified about it, because I don't think anyone had spanked her.

Father5: No.

Mother5: Not before. And I think when we talked about it, I just kind of assumed that we wouldn't spank her. And I didn't really like the idea that you spanked her, but you know, I also know that you have to deal with her and you know it would ...(Interview 5, p. 15, 635-643).

An approach identified by a few parents was to confront the "offending" parent while he/she was disciplining the child. Verbal and non-verbal communication methods were used by parents to confront the offending parent. Parents, who were in the process of disciplining their children and were interrupted verbally by the other parent, referred to

this situation as “interference”. The interruption did not result in a resolution of the conflict in any of the instances mentioned by the parents, but rather such incidents often resulted in conflict escalation.

Mother3: Like Christa was playing in the living room and I saw her doing something over a cardboard thing and I didn't agree. And I knew she had done it and I asked her right away to tell me what she had done and Matt interfered pretty much right away and said that I find it accusing. And I had never really given her a chance to be good, to sound like she was going to, to explain. So that we both didn't agree. And I just kind of ignored him and carried on the way I had. Knowingly, I probably should have stopped but I didn't. (Interview 3, p. 3, 106-123).

Another means for addressing the conflict at the time of the incident which attempts to not involve the child is through the use of nonverbal communication. This method was better received by the offending parent than verbal communication. A mother describes communicating discretely in front of their child by using eye contact and facial expressions when she and her husband did not agree at the time of the discipline incident.

Mother2: Sometimes we try to communicate telepathically or through eye signals. What are you doing? That stunned look. Like, where did that come from. We try to avoid conflict directly in front of David (Interview 2, p. 2, 66- 69).

The second approach used by parents to address conflict was to not deal with it directly, but to simply ignore it. A father revealed a situation in which he disagreed with his wife's lack of follow through with a consequence the parents had set, but the father chose to not raise it as an issue.

Father2: Well, actually there was one yesterday. And that was trying to make the point with him again that at the dinner table, if he gets down, if he excuses himself, that's it, dinner is over for him. And yesterday, he excused himself and then you had promised him he could have some pudding after supper. So then, he came back to the table and Jan had given him some pudding. Well I didn't really agree with that but it wasn't a big deal so I didn't say anything

about it. It wasn't worth fighting about with him or with between us either. (Interview 2, p. 2, 49-64).

Parents most often used this method of conflict management when they determined that the issue was not sufficiently significant to warrant further action. When parents felt that the issue was significant enough to warrant further action, the parent would raise it for discussion at another point in time as this couple described.

Mother2: Well I think with ignoring it, the only time we would do that is, if one of us doesn't happen to agree but chooses to keep our mouth shut about it. We wouldn't raise it as an issue. And then ignore it. That wouldn't happen.... Its not a big deal, that's right, that's what I mean by ignoring it. Not choosing to make it an issue.

Father2: Even if its not a big deal, probably unless I forgot about it, probably later in the day once David was out of the situation, we would talk about it again, but probably

Mother2: Yes, most of the time if I don't think it's enough of an issue to raise, then I would forget about it. Most of the time (Interview 2, p. 14, 596-615).

Parents, as other partnerships or teams, experienced conflict as a result of differences or disagreements. The parents in this study identified a variety of situations related to discipline which resulted in conflict. In addition, parents described various methods for addressing the conflict that arose while disciplining their children.

Team Leader- Who Takes the Lead? All the families in this study noted the mother as taking the lead role in disciplining preschool children. Families described several methods used by the mothers in leading the way. The methods included seeking out information regarding discipline, responding first to a discipline situation, delegating the discipline responsibility to the fathers, and initiating discussions. One family described information seeking and how the information was shared by the mother with her partner.

Mother2: All the parenting magazines, I love them.

Father2: And I get those sort of paraphrased for me....Often times, I walk into the bathroom or I will walk into the living room here and there

will be a magazine on the table open to a certain article that she thinks I should read. So, I am usually reluctant to read them. Once I start reading them they are interesting and I usually finish it, but I don't pick up the magazine as a matter of course. A lot of it is just common sense. In the parking lot today, I just don't him running out in the cars. So I know that was the right thing to do and I could have envisioned my mother or my father doing that when I was a little guy too. (Interview 2, p. 6, 241-258).

Several mothers identified themselves as taking the lead role, but they also indicated a wish to share the role more so with their husbands. This was more common in the families in which the mother was a stay at home mom. In several situations where the mother usually took the lead, but was wanting to share the responsibility for disciplining, the mothers described delegating responsibility to the father.

Mother3: Well, if something is going on and were both sitting here at the kitchen table, I usually say, whatever, Matt do something about it. You know (Interview 3, p.14, 586-587).

However, the mothers described their delegation as different than how their mothers delegated in the past. In the past, mothers would delegate responsibility for a discipline situation to the father in the form of a threat that would be carried out at a later point in time. Now, mothers delegated to the father as an active participant in the discipline situation. This mother described the difference between how she delegated or involved the father in a discipline situation in contrast to how mothers did it in the past.

Mother1: Like it's not like I, just wait till daddy gets home. You know, I do it, or he does it. (Interview 1, p. 8, 323-324).

Another method, similar to delegating, used by several mothers in taking the lead regarding discipline is instructing the fathers on what to do as described by this couple.

Mother1: There are times I see that I guess because I am around him more, I see Kevin has just sort of taken on what I do. I guess a lot of times, he has his own personality but he sort of takes my side or takes over from where I left off or you know. And we agree on it so he

- does what I've done.
 Father1: I do what she tells me.
 Mother1: No.
 Father1: The secret is out. (Interview 1, p. 6-7, 275-285).

Several mothers described initiating conversations and discussions with their husbands as well as coming up with suggestions to solve discipline issues. One family described the maternal lead role of initiating discussion like this:

- Interviewer7: Okay, how do you communicate with each other regarding disciplining your child. Like who begins the discussion. Who would do the most talking. When would you do it...
 Mother7: Oh yes, I do most of the talking and it would be when Alex goes to bed.
 Interviewer7: So you tend to do it when Alex is not around or usually at night.
 Mother7: Yes. When he is not around and when we are alone. Then I kind of bring up some issues. When I would like to see more.
 Father7: Yes that is correct. (Interview 7, p. 9-10, 398-424).

Another criterion used by families to identify who takes the lead is who would respond first to a discipline situation. In all families except one, the mother was the first person to respond to a discipline situation. In the family where the father would respond first, the parents indicated this was a result of the way in which they had divided up their parenting responsibilities. The family identified the mother was more responsible for the infant as she was breastfeeding and the father assumed more responsibility for the preschool child. In addition, the mother described the father in this family as having more experience with children than she did.

- Mother6: I think Don gets to be the heavy more than I do.
 Father6: Yes. This is our timetable right here. She chooses who acts and who doesn't. So, whoever has her is the one that is sitting back at the moment. (Interview 6, p. 11, 459-485).

The distinction between the mother's lead and the actions of the father were more dramatic in the families where the mother was not employed outside the home. In several

of the families when both parents were around, they shared the responsibility for disciplining. In contrast, those families in which the mother was an at-home mom, the mother continued to assume responsibility for disciplining children. An example is a family in which the mom was not employed outside the home where the parents described the mother as the person primarily responsible for disciplining their preschool child even if the father was present at the time of the discipline incident.

Mother7: I definitely begin.If we are both around I definitely begin. And then

Father7: Yes I would see it as about like 80/20. You do 80% of the, because I mean you are, that is pretty much the time span, it is an 80/20 split.

Interviewer7: But if you are both there, would you?

Mother7: Well,

Father7: No, I would say, that you still. (Interview 7, p. 6-7, 255-265).

In addition, observation data gathered during the interview in the form of fieldnotes supported the notion that mothers took the lead role in raising their children. Mothers were most often the persons to respond to the children if the children required assistance during the interview.

There were several instances in the interviews where the father described how he supported the mother in her lead role of disciplinarian. This was especially evident in the families where the mother was not employed outside the home. One family described the father as checking with his wife as to how to respond to a situation. A couple of fathers referred to deferring to their wives' judgment as they spent more time parenting than the fathers did.

Mother8: Well he will always check with me all the time. Like, can Andrew have chocolate? He will always ask me first.

Father8: Well I always I think consistency is important right so

Mother8: So he will always ask me. And sometimes that can be annoying because its like can't you do it on your own Ken, like I'm tired

right now, just deal with it. So you know whatever, you know, like sometimes okay food questions, yes, because I know how much crap he's eaten that day or whatever so certain things. And I'm bad too sometimes, like with wanting to eat upstairs at the table and sometimes we can eat in front of the TV. I try to tell myself I'm not doing this anymore, but you know, hey we want to read the paper. Okay have your shreddies downstairs. (Interview 8, p. 17-18, 747-761).

The role of team leader for discipline was assumed by the mother in all the families in this study. The mother engaged in a variety of activities in carrying out her role of leader including initiating discussions, seeking out information, and responding more often to a discipline situation. The amount of responsibility assumed by the leader was more dramatic in the families in which the mother was not employed outside the home.

Team Building: How they get there. Parents described building a parent team, cooperation among the couple, with regards to discipline. The who, how, what and when of team building was identified by the parents. The mother, "Team Leader", was the person who took the lead role in building the team as discussed in the section above. Two types of techniques were referred to by the parents to build their parent discipline team; sharing or passing on information, and discussion. Parents identified when they discussed discipline and factors influencing the timing of the discussion. A variety of discipline topics were discussed by the parents.

The discipline team was built by sharing information and discussion. One technique used by most of the families was sharing or passing on information with the other parent, the team member. This included techniques such as getting the other parent to read an article or discussing with the other team member what the parent learned from another source such as other people or videos. This process is discussed in more detail in the category "Team leader".

A technique used by all the families in building their discipline team was discussion among the team members. Parents identified a variety of discipline discussion topics including what discipline tool to use, what discipline tools are working, when to discipline, and who should discipline. A few parents also identified discipline topics which they did not discuss including when to discipline and who should discipline.

All except one couple described talking about what discipline tools to use in certain discipline situations. Most often the situations they discussed were discipline situations that didn't turn out positively. In other words, the parent did not handle the situation well or they did not get the resulting change in behavior from the child that they expected.

Mother3: Its kind of a badYes, for sure. Something major has gone on and I didn't like how I handled it, like usually if I had spanked Christa, I usually tell Matt that I lost my mind and I just couldn't handle it any more. And it was me (Interview 3, p. 13, 553-557).

Parents described talking about what happened in the situation and what to do about it or what they did do about it as this father identified.

Father3: At night, if it stays with us. And we talk about it and see what we can do next time (Interview 3, p. 12, 516-517).

Another parent depicts talking with her husband, checking out with each other, the appropriateness of certain discipline tools in relation to the situation.

Mother2: Yes, if I did something, where I was wondering, was that too much, I would say, do you think that was too much. Do you think I was too hard on him? Was it logical, was it a reasonable consequence for what had happened, or was it me just losing it, or reacting (Interview 2, p. 12-13, 548-453).

Two couples specified discussing positive discipline situations, when "something is working". This couple describes sharing information about a discipline technique which the mother has identified as working well with their preschool child.

- Mother8:** If I'm discovering something is working this week, and I didn't tell him, then if there's a situation crops up like...
- Father8:**Like if it was a day when he did need some discipline you know, what worked or whatever....(Interview 8, p. 16-17, 700-732).

Only a few parents identified discipline topics which they did not discuss. Two couples reported not discussing when to discipline and one couple specified not talking about who should discipline. A couple described not needing to dialogue about who should discipline their child rather feel it works well if they just respond at the point in time.

- Father2:** I can't ever recall discussing who should respond to a situation
- Mother2:** It just seems to work, as we decide on the fly and it seems to have worked really well (Interview 2, p. 13, 545-554).

Parents identified two factors that would influence when they would talk about disciplining their preschool child. These included the perceived severity or intensity of the issue and not wanting the children to be around when they talked. The most common criterion for selecting a time to talk about discipline was for the children to not be around which was identified by all the families except one. The families who used this principle for guiding their selection of discussion time most often talked about discipline at night when the children were in bed.

- Mother7:** Oh yes, I do most of the talking and it would be when Alex goes to bed.
- Interviewer7:** So you tend to do it when he is not around or usually at night.
- Mother7:** When he is not around and when we are alone. Then I kind of bring up some issues. When I would like to see more (Interview 7, p. 10, 412-417).

Parents also identified some other times or places when they were alone and would discuss discipline including while riding in the car, at a movie, and calling the husband at work during the day. The family who did not identify the criterion of being alone had a belief and practice of including the child in all discussions about discipline.

Another factor for determining when to talk about discipline was the intensity or

severity of the issue. These discipline issues were referred to by the parents as “serious”, “tough situations”, and “bad”. This factor of severity or intensity had two influences on the parent’s discussion of discipline. One influence was that parents made more of a point of later bringing up a discipline issue for discussion if it was severe or intense. One father described issues he and his wife would talk about later as those that “stay with us”.

- Mother8: Well as soon as Ken went out in the car you know I could look in his face and I said, I think I shouldn’t have, you know, it was bad....
- Interviewer8: So afterwards, almost immediately or sometimes late at night.
- Father8: On this occasion it was right after.
- Mother8: It was right after because we you know I could see it in his eyes. And I felt bad for yelling at him too in front of Andrew.
- Interviewer8: But if its more serious you seem to talk about it right away.
- Mother8: Yes, because you know you have done something wrong....
Interview 8, p. 15-16. 655-680).

In addition a few couples identified the first time they discussed discipline. Two couples first talked about parenting and discipline in particular prior to having children. Another couple referred to discussing discipline at the birth of their first child. In the following excerpt, a couple described discussing discipline before they began their family.

- Mother2: We talked about, before we even got pregnant, we talked about whether spanking was acceptable.
- Father2: Long before (Interview 2, p. 17, 705-708).

Another couple described conversing about the discipline practices of their parents and how they planned to discipline their children prior to having children.

- Mother8: And again, we talk about it. I mean, you know, obviously we talked about how he was raised and how I was raised and you know talked about when we have children you know what we would do. And you know how we would be as parents. And then you know, tried to touch base with each other I think (Interview 8, p. 8, 335-348).

The significance of discussing discipline varied between the couples from perceiving it as significant to being something they had not really thought about. A father described himself as not often thinking about discipline nor did the couple often talk about discipline. In addition, this father did not identify the discussion of discipline as important.

Father7: Yes, I mean I think, I never really thought of our disciplining all that often, you know.

Interviewer7: You tend to not talk about it that much.

Father7: Well, I mean it just seems inherent. It just seems that we deal with it as it comes up then its done. Yes, I guess so (Interview 7, p. 12, 531-537).

However, most of the couples felt it was important to spend time discussing discipline issues. This father described how important he thought it was for a couple to talk about discipline based on his experience.

Father2: Well as I said earlier, we have been together for a long time, we talked a lot about it before, and I think its important to talk about it. I see some of our friends and again its the same sort of life stages we are and they come up with a situation a discipline situation and there is obviously some disagreement, but because its in a group setting its not verbalized and you can tell when they get home, boy there is going to be a discussion about this. And it always sort of stuns us, like, didn't you talk about whether or not that would come up. So, I think its important to talk about it and I would, one of the questions that I would always ask anyway, was how often did you talk about it and for how long did you talk about this, did you get married, like were you married 5 or 10 years and then decide , should we have kids now and then just go ahead and do it, or did you talk a lot about having kids throughout your relationship and then it is just sort of a natural progression into that stage in your life (Interview 2, p. 16, 685-699).

Further, couples identified how often they would discuss discipline. This ranged from "not very often", to once a week and once a month. This father described talking about discipline of their preschool child once a week.

Father2: I think most of it is pretty intuitive like I said, on both of our parts. We just connect on that and we know what we expect of each other and we know what we expect of him. And I can't say that there is a lot of discussion. I mentioned we talk about it when David has gone to bed, I don't think that is a daily occurrence. I think that is probably once a week we talk about something (Interview 2, p. 15, 649-655).

A few couples who identified that it was important to talk about parenting issues, discipline in particular, stated it was difficult to find time to talk. Reasons identified by the couples for not being able to find the time to talk included their busy work or school lives and the time commitment required to directly parent their children. In the following text, parents described not being able to find the time to talk about discipline because of their busy lifestyle where the father is a full-time student and the mother is a part-time worker.

Mother6: I think it's partly that you know we aren't spending a whole lot of time just the two of us. To sort of talk freely and plan and say this is how we handle this kind of situation.

Father6: Yes, because when you are here I am usually at school or a couple of Saturdays and Sundays I'm here and you are at work (Interview 6, p. 3-4, 128-151).

Parents described the who, how, what, and when of building a discipline team in their family. The lead role of the team was identified by the parents as belonging to the mother. Parents used two methods to build their parent discipline team, the sharing or passing on information and discussion. The parent's discussions covered a variety of discipline topics including what discipline tools to use, who should discipline and what discipline are working. In addition, parents talked about the timing of their discipline discussions and factors influencing when the discussions would occur.

In the theme *Parents: The Discipline Team*, parents described how they worked together as a team to achieve the common goal of disciplining their children. A variety of

methods were identified by the parents to achieve this goal including the sharing of information and discussion among the team members. Despite working well together a team most couples identified areas of conflict and a variety of techniques to resolve the conflicts. Mothers were identified by the parents as being the team leader with respect to team work and team building. Parents identified engaging in a variety of techniques to build their parent discipline team as well as when they went about this activity.

Summary

In this chapter the discipline experiences of parents with preschool children was presented. In addition, a snap shot of the families who participated in the study was provided. The three themes and the respective categories that emerged from the data were identified and described. Excerpts from the raw data were provided to elaborate upon the description of the findings.

The first theme, *Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time*, examines the participants learning about discipline in their family of origin as well as later on when they are parents. Parents identified what they learnt, sources of the learning, and the influence this learning has on how they discipline their own children.

Parents understanding of discipline is highlighted in the second theme, *Discipline: So What About It?*. Discipline was depicted by parents as a process initiated by a child's actions, responded to by a reaction on the part of the parent which result in outcomes or changes. In addition, discipline guiding principles, styles, and tools were described. Further, factors taken into consideration by the parents when disciplining their preschool children and the discipline struggles they encountered were presented.

The third theme, *Parents: The Discipline Team*, contains the parents insight in to how

they work together to discipline their children. All families in this study described team work in the discipline process. Further, participants highlighted other particulars of the discipline team including: building their team, the team leader, and team conflict.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings in relation to the current literature. The discussion is organized according to the themes identified in the findings as found in Figure 5.1. Methodological strengths and issues are highlighted. In addition, the relationship between findings and the conceptual framework are explored. Recommendations for nursing research, education, practice and policy are noted. The final section of the chapter, reflection and reflexivity, entails insights gained into the research process and the impact on the role of the researcher.

Figure 5.1

Themes and Categories for Discussion

- I Learning about Discipline Takes a Life Time
 - Discipline: What I learned from my parents
 - Present day sources of discipline information

- II Discipline: So What About It?
 - Discipline: A process
 - The guiding principles
 - Discipline style
 - Discipline tools
 - It depends! Factors taken into consideration
 - Disciplining: It's a struggle

- III Parents: The Discipline Team
 - Team Work - What it looks like
 - Team Conflict
 - Team Building - How they get there
 - Team Leader- Who Takes the Lead?

Discussion of Research Findings

Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time

The theme, *Learning About Discipline Takes a Life Time*, describes learning about

discipline. To succeed at childrearing, parents need knowledge about raising children (Campbell, 1992). Initially learning about discipline results from childhood experiences. This is experiential knowledge arising from being disciplined by one's parents. A discussion of these experiences is presented in the section *Discipline: What I learned from my parents*. Child discipline is also learned from a variety of sources. The section *Present day sources of discipline information* situates these findings with the literature. This theme addresses the second research question in this study: What influence did socialization (e.g. parents) have on the discipline practices of the couple?

Discipline: What I learned from my parents. The family provides the main learning context for an individual's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings (Friedman, 1998). Through experiences in the family, children learn how to function and assume adult roles in society. The parents in a family have been identified as primary providers of cultural knowledge to the next generation (Friedman). It is probable to suggest that an individual's parenting beliefs and therefore their practices are shaped, at least in part, by the type of parenting he or she experiences.

Parents in this study identified that their disciplinary experience as a children had a significant impact on how they disciplined their own children. Participants noted certain parenting practices of their parents as influential including: who was responsible for disciplining and why, parent discipline styles, and discipline tools. Parents also identified the conditions that influenced their parents' discipline practices: birthorder of children in the family, societal norms, and customs. Further, a process of critical appraisal was described by the parents who modified their own disciplinary practices in response to this appraisal.

The intergenerational transmission of parenting has focused on the transmission of attitudes and beliefs as a determinant of parenting behavior (Holden, 1995).

Intergenerational transmission of parenting is defined in the literature as “the process through which purposively or unintendedly an earlier generation psychologically influences parenting attitudes and behaviors of the next generation” (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992). According to Feldman and Goldsmith (1986) intergenerational transmission of parenting is part of the socialization of the “socializer” in which the concept addresses the origin of parenting behavior and attitudes in the earlier generation.

A two-step model has been identified in the transmission of parental attitudes across generations (Goodnow, 1992). Step one of the model consists of the individual’s perceptions of parental attitudes. The second part involves the acceptance or rejection of these perceived parental attitudes. Parent’s attitudes toward discipline, particularly toward physical punishment, have received the most attention. Holden (1995) described parental attitudes as influencing parental behaviors.

Critically appraising the discipline practices of their parents was described by all participants. Participants identified two steps in their appraisal process of their parent’s discipline practices. In the first step, participants evaluated their parents’ discipline practices in relation to themselves as current parents. The second step involved determining the effectiveness of the discipline tool with their own children. This process of critically appraising parental discipline practices is consistent with the second step in Goodnow’s (1992) model of the transmission of parental attitudes across generations in which parents accept or reject the perceived parental attitudes of their parents.

According to Van Ijzendoorn (1992), little is known about the mechanism of

intergenerational transmission of parenting. However, several learning mechanisms have been proposed as the basis for the transmission of parenting. Social learning theory is often provided as a process through which the intergenerational effect is explained (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992). The link to social learning theory is generally supported through the premise that parenting practices of the next generation are influenced through the processes of modeling and reinforcement (Chriddenden, 1984; Simonton, 1983). However, researchers are uncertain as to what is actually learned. The transmission of parental beliefs across generations is thought to occur through the parenting practices as rarely do parents discuss their philosophy of parenting with their children (Simons, Beaman, Conger, & Chao, 1992).

In this study, participants identified that childhood discipline experiences influenced their present discipline practices and formed the basis for their discipline decisions. Several researchers have linked parental behaviours to beliefs about discipline (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Chyi-In, 1991; Simons et al., 1992; Straus, 1991). In a study of 451 two-parent families, the findings indicated that mother and father parenting practices was the method by which parenting beliefs were conveyed to their adolescent children (Simons et al, 1992). Similarly in this study, a mother described applying discipline practices when disciplining her child that she had experienced as a child. In addition, the father described knowing the “rightness” of his response in a discipline situation because of what he experienced as a child.

Further, parents identified conditions that they considered to have possibly influenced how their parents disciplined. These included: birthorder of children in the family, societal norms, and customs. What influence do the parent’s understanding or experience

of these conditions have on parenting their own children if any?

Several parents identified birthorder as a condition. One mother described her parents as having a more laxed parenting style with children born later. Consistent with this finding, previous research has found differences in the treatment of firstborns and latterborns by their parents. In a naturalistic observational study of families after the birth of firstborn and latterborn, it was found that parents behavior differed with a decrease in parent's responsiveness, stimulation and expression of positive affection for latter children (Belsky et al., 1984; Belsky, Taylor, & Rovine, 1984). Further, studies have reported parents to have higher expectations of firstborns to achieve which is thought to result in mothers being less supportive and tolerant as well as more controlling and demanding with their firstborns (Baskett, 1984; Ernst & Angst, 1983; Ward, Vaughn, & Robb, 1988).

Another learned parenting practice reported by participants was the lead role of disciplinarian assumed by mothers. Friedman (1998) describes roles as being defined by the societal norms which both the family and the larger society expect of the person occupying a given position. In this study, this practice of mother as lead disciplinarian was described as continuing in the next generation by all the families. In one family, it was observed that the mother was responsible for discipline and the father as having rarely disciplined. Two reasons were identified by participants as to why mothers assumed primary responsibility for discipline when they were children. These included fathers often being absent from the family for long hours and thus, they were not available to participate in the discipline process; and fathers were viewed as not engaging in discipline effectively.

A difference was noted by the fathers in the discipline role that they assumed with their children. They described themselves as taking more of an active role and working more cooperatively with their wives to discipline their preschool children compared to their fathers. Previous research does not describe the changing role of fathers as disciplinarians specifically rather childrearing in general. Therefore, the findings will be discussed in relation to the childrearing literature. This finding is consistent with the literature which describes fathers as becoming more involved with childrearing (Coltrane, 1995; Hoffman, 1984). In addition, the fathers in this study also indicated a qualitative as well as a quantitative difference in fathering. They were more involved in childcare activities and not just play activities. However, the literature indicates that even fathers in the 1990s, who engage in role-sharing, continue to be less responsible for childrearing (Coltrane, Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991). Currently, the father's role in discipline and the development of children has been increasingly recognized as significant (Lamb et al., 1987).

Working together to discipline the children was identified as occurring in their families of origin by a few parents in this study. However, parents who identified their fathers as being involved in the discipline process described the father's role as limited. Only when fathers were invited by mothers, or when mothers delegated the responsibility, did fathers participate in discipline. The common line of "wait till your father gets home" was referred to as often used by their mothers. A father described a typical "wait till your father gets home" scenario where his mother delegated the responsibility for discipline to his father for an incident that had occurred earlier in the day.

Participant's parents engaged in a much narrower range of discipline tools. Tools

identified as being used by their parents included: spanking, other forms of physical punishment, discussion, grounding, tone of voice, and warnings. Physical punishment was a common method of discipline employed by their parents. Similarly, physical punishment has been identified by most Canadian parents as a method of discipline used by their parents, and the practice is continued by most parents, approximately 75 percent (Durrant 1993; Durrant, 1994).

Spanking was a tool noted commonly by the parents as being both different and similar to what their parents used. With the exception of one participant, all had experienced spanking as a child. Supporting this finding, a previous study found that 92.9% of parents had been spanked as children (Buntain-Recklefs, Kemper, Bell & Babonis, 1994). Three parents identified themselves as not using this tool despite having learned it from their parents, however, most parents who were spanked continued to use it with their children. Similarly, of the 92.9% of parents who had been spanked in the previously mentioned study 87.1% indicated they approved of spanking (Buntain-Recklefs et al., 1994). Further, research has found that parental attitudes towards harsh parenting correlated with their reports of their own parent's harsh parenting including spanking, slapping, and yelling (Simons et al., 1991).

Holden and Zambarano (1992) have also found support for the early transmission of attitudes toward spanking with a correlation between 8 year old childrens' intentions to spank and mothers' attitudes toward physical punishment. In contrast, a cross-sectional study of 97 females and their mothers by Hanson and Mullis (1986) did not find a correlation between generations with respect to physical punishment. Two other forms of physical punishment were also identified by two of the parents including "being whacked

on the head” and “slapped on the face”. To further support the intergenerational transmission of discipline beliefs Durrant (1993) found that the abolition of physical punishment was less likely to be supported by parents who had been physically disciplined than by those who had never been subjected to this discipline modality.

To further support the findings of this study, general population survey results in the United States indicate that the incidence of aggressive parenting may be decreasing (Simons et al., 1991; Straus & Gelles, 1988; Straus et al., 1980). Simons and associates (1991) findings indicate a significant decline in harsh parenting between the two generations as evidenced by a reported decrease in being slapped or hit with an object.

The frequency of the use of teaching and discussion as a discipline method by their parents was reported to vary greatly by participants. It was noted as a method used commonly by only a few parents. Most parents described their parents as rarely teaching or discussing in the process of discipline. Hanson and Mullis (1986), in their study of females and their mothers, found a correlation between generations with respect to empathetic awareness of children’s needs. Empathetic parenting has been associated with increased likelihood that parents will work cooperatively with their children through reasoning and communication (Dix, 1992). Similarly, a study found that adolescents who supported the notion that parenting quality influences child outcomes were more likely to have parents who believed that parenting has a significant impact on child development and were more likely to be supportive and involved (Simons et al., 1992).

Parents identified having many more discipline tools to use with their children than their parents did. Several parents reported discipline tools that they used with their children, which they did not experience as a child including: limiting a child’s access to

toys or other possessions, limiting TV watching, and “time-out”. Consistent with this finding, time-outs were not reported by parents when they were children in a previous study (Buntain-Ricklefs et al., 1994). Many of these discipline methods are proposed as positive alternatives to spanking including: time-out, setting limits, and natural and logical consequences (Gross & Garvey, 1997; Nelson et al., 1995). One father pointed out that his parents were quick to use physical punishment because of the limited number of alternative discipline methods available to them. A few participants identified sharing new methods and philosophies regarding discipline with their parents thereby influencing discipline techniques used by the grandparents to discipline their grandchildren.

In addition to discipline tools, participants described differences in the discipline styles between themselves and their parents. They described their parents as having a less authoritarian discipline style. It has been often argued by behavioral scientists that styles of parenting are intergenerationally transmitted (Belsky & Pensky, 1988, Simons et al., 1991, Straus et al., 1980). A mechanism by which parenting styles may be transmitted intergenerationally is parental beliefs (Simons et al., 1992). Consistent with the above finding, a historical shift has been noted in the literature regarding parent discipline styles from a position of external control, the parents control the child’s behavior, to a focus on internal control consistent with an authoritarian parenting style (Franks, 1984).

Today’s context and present day information, including the changing societal norms and customs such as non-acceptance of physical punishment and acceptance of father's participation influenced participant's appraisal of their parents’ discipline practices. As a result of this critical appraisal process, there were similarities and differences in the participant’s practices in relation to how they were parented. A father reported

purposefully choosing to be similar to his father because he determined his father had done well in disciplining him and his brothers. This process of critical appraisal in light of changing norms and customs may explain why there are only modest correlations between generations regarding parenting (Hanson & Mullis, 1986; Simons et al., 1992; Simons et al., 1991).

Critical appraisal of their own discipline experiences as children was used by participants to improve present discipline practices with their children. A criterion for disciplining differently was wanting their children to have better childhood experiences. A participant described remembering her childhood in which her mother was somewhat abusive. This participant did not want her son to have the same memories. A participant spoke about learning to discipline from her parents and the powerful influence this had on current discipline approaches in her tendency to respond in a certain way, and her struggle to discipline differently. Concurring with these findings, Simons and associates (1991) discuss the possibility that learned discipline could become a reflexive response. This reflexive parenting response is thought to be a result of the model of parenting role acquired from the previous generation. Further, it is believed that the reflexive nature of the parenting response is associated with little awareness of alternatives (Simons et al.).

In summary, this study and the literature supports the finding that parents learn about discipline from their families of origin. However, it is not the only determinant of one's parenting beliefs and behavior. Parents critically analyze this knowledge in perspective of present society norms and customs which are learned from a variety of sources.

Present day sources of discipline information. Previous studies on sources of information regarding discipline were not available. The discussion will therefore focus

on relating findings to sources of information regarding childrearing in general. Earlier research has indicated that parents of young children need and want information about childrearing (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Geboy, 1981; Koepke & Williams, 1989). In addition, one study that asked parents to identify specific childrearing topics of interest found that discipline was the issue of greatest concern (Keopke & Williams). All the participants described obtaining information from multiple sources to facilitate their ability to discipline their preschool children, with a family average of three to five sources. Similarly, Riley (1990) found an average of five childrearing advice sources in a study of 70 married, employed fathers from two-parent households. Participants reported both internal (eg. books) and external (eg. common sense) sources of information or resources with external sources more commonly used. Sources of information can be grouped into six categories in order of popularity: acquaintances, printed material, multimedia, professionals, God, and common sense.

“Acquaintances” was identified by participants as the most frequently used source of discipline information. In order of occurrence this classification included people such as other parents, family, friends, and other members of a play group. Participants knew some of these people well including family and friends, while others were just other people out in public, including strangers. In support of this finding, a Canadian random telephone survey found the major source of childrearing information for parents was their own network of friends followed by their own parents and then neighbors (Koepke & Williams, 1989). In Riley’s (1990) study of men from two parent families, the sources of advice included both kin and nonkin sources almost equally. Friends provided the largest source of nonkin childrearing advice, however, it was not noted whether this friends were

parents themselves or not (Riley). In a study of social networks of coupled mothers in the United States the content of these social relations included a topic called “child related” in which exchanges referred to information about childrearing (Cochran, Gunnarsson, Grabe & Lewis, 1990). In that study, relatives were the primary source of social networking followed by neighbors and then others (Cochran et al., 1990).

The second most common source of discipline information referred to by all the families was printed material, such as books, newspapers, and magazines. Consistent with this finding, popular literature including newspaper columns, magazines and books were a common source of information about childrearing (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Geboy, 1981; Koepke & Williams, 1989). A source mentioned in the previous research but not in the present study was pamphlets. Similar to these 1978 findings, mothers did more of the reading of the printed material than the fathers (Clarke-Stewart). She also found that parents are more likely to read a book on childrearing when their first child is young. The parents reading books in Clarke-Stewart’s study were more likely to have a higher education, but such behavior was not related to occupation. A rationale provided by Clarke-Stewart for the increased use of printed material as a source of childrearing information in the 1970’s was the rise in geographic mobility leading to young parents having less contact with extended family, therefore using printed material as an alternative source. This trend of geographic mobility has continued and grown into the 1990’s and therefore probably remains as an explanation for the use of printed material as a source of childrearing advice in this study.

Professional sources of discipline information included a parenting course and daycares. The finding of daycare personnel as a professional source of discipline

information is contrary to a previous study. Joffe (1977) found that people were reluctant to grant the status of expert to those who look after young children. Daycare providers were viewed mainly as “carers” and as not having any expertise. Childcare personnel presently, compared to 20 years ago, receive increased education and are certified thereby possibly increasing the perception of knowledge and expertise on the part of the parents. In addition, child care personnel were not identified as a source of child rearing information in other studies (Koepke & Williams, 1989; Vukelich & Kliman, 1985). This finding may be as a result of more women employed outside the home and the greater contact with child care personnel as a result.

Nurses or physicians were not mentioned by any of the families as a source of discipline information in this study. The literature presents inconsistent findings regarding the seeking of child rearing information from professionals. Nurses and physicians have been identified by parents of young children as a preferred and likely source of childrearing information and advice in several studies (Sparling & Loman, 1983; Vukelich & Kliman, 1985). Whereas, another study found that parents of young children rarely used medical professionals as sources of child rearing information (Koepke & Williams, 1989). However, when medical professionals were a source of information, health units were identified as a more common source of child rearing information than physicians (Koepke & Williams).

The nature of discipline information participants sought from these sources was also identified: learning discipline tools, principles of discipline, and how to respond to a variety of discipline situations or issues. This finding is consistent with the literature as Kersey (1990) described most parents as lacking basic knowledge about disciplinary

practices including questioning the form of discipline to use and when to employ it.

Participants in this study identified learning both what to do and what not to do about disciplining their preschool children from multiple information sources.

Information was not received at face value by participants, but was critically analyzed and the source of the information was judged prior to incorporating it into disciplinary practices. Two levels of distinction were drawn by parents in the process of critically analyzing the discipline information they acquired. These included discriminating between what they believed was a “right” or “wrong” method of discipline, and also what fit with their philosophy of discipline. This process is similar to what participants did with their own experiences as a children who were disciplined and who are now in a position to discipline their own children. Preferences were also noted by the parents regarding the sources of discipline information. These included that it should be presented in a concise format and not require a lot of time to acquire. Participants also stated they were selective because they lead busy lives and did not have time to spend reading or watching TV.

Two methods for acquiring discipline information were identified by the participants; observation and conversation. Riley (1990) in his study of fathers, as previously mentioned, found that the fathers discussed childrearing concerns with people they knew well. Similarly, in this study, discussion was a more commonly used method to gather information with people the participants knew. Gathering discipline information through observation was more commonly used when encountering strangers. Parents sought information from other people with childrearing experience. The provision of discipline information was described as being both solicited and unsolicited. Extended families

were noted as the more common source of unsolicited information based on their perceived responsibility or right to assist other family members. Several studies have recognized that stress as well as support can result from network relationships (Belle, 1982; Cochran & Henderson, 1990; Wellman, 1981).

Summary. Learning about discipline takes a life time. The findings of this study were discussed in relation to the literature according to the two categories *What I learned from my parents* and *Present day sources of discipline information*. The literature and this study support the finding that parents learn how to discipline through experiences in their family. The discipline information learned in the family of origin is then analyzed and adapted when the person becomes a parent based on common practices of society and the effectiveness with their children. Very little study has been conducted on the sources of childrearing information and the types of information gathered. No previous studies on discipline information sources or types of information sought were located. Parents in this study acquired knowledge of these common discipline practices through a variety of sources including acquaintances, printed material, multimedia, and professionals. In the literature, parental beliefs have been identified as emerging from societal interactions such as with other parents, peers, media, and social institutions (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1995).

Discipline: So What About It?

A theme identified in this study, *Discipline: So What About It?*, included participants definitions of discipline as well as guiding principles, discipline styles, and discipline tools. In addition, participants highlighted the factors they took into consideration when disciplining their preschool children and the struggle involved in disciplining. These

findings are discussed in light of the research literature.

Discipline: A process. A definition of discipline was not provided to the participants in this study, rather the responsibility for defining the concept was placed in their hands. Participants described discipline as a process involving three elements: actions or behaviors on the part of the child, actions or reactions on the part of the parent, and changes or outcomes because of the discipline intervention. Consistent with the above definition, Kagan and Gall (1998) define discipline as a system of actions or interactions, a process, between parent and child intended to create orderly behavior. Discipline as a verb refers to methods or actions used to control behavior such as instruction or training resulting in orderliness, obedience, or self-control (Kagan & Gall; The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989).

Discipline concerning children has been conceptualized and defined in a variety of ways over the years. Some participants equated discipline with the concept of punishment. Often when someone refers to discipline he or she may mean punishment, including physical punishment. At times, the terms discipline and punishment have been used synonymously (Kagan & Gall, 1998). More punitive forms of discipline have historically been the norm in the West for centuries (Kagan & Gall). It is believed that Judaeo-Christian religion has traditionally promoted authoritarian discipline: "Spare the rod, spoil the child" is an often quoted common language reference said to originate from The Bible (Carey, 1994). Some conservative Christians and Jews continue to hold to this style of discipline in the belief that punishment is the only way to teach children proper submission and obedience to parents, other adults, and ultimately God (Kagan & Gall). However, the definition of discipline is evolving.

The guiding principles. Two principles were identified by participants as guiding their approach to discipline; consistency and no hitting. It was evident that the principle of consistency was significant for the families as it was reported by all of the families and was equated to discipline by one parent. The literature has focused on inconsistency rather than consistency in discipline. Inconsistency has been divided into two primary types; intraparent and interparent. Intraparent inconsistency has been the focus of study with very little being known about the phenomena between parents, interparent (Holmes & Robins, 1988; McCord, McCord & Zola, 1959). Intraparent consistency will be dealt with in this section of the discussion and interparent will be discussed in the section on parent discipline team work.

An indiscriminate reaction to a child's behaviors on the part of the parent is referred to as intraparent inconsistency and include: no follow-through, giving in, and unpredictable changes of expectations and consequences when rules have been violated (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1995). The description of discipline consistency offered by the participants is the opposite to the literary description of inconsistent discipline. Participants identified consistency as involving two steps. The first step referred to establishing consistent rules and limits. The second step spoke of the need to follow through on the rule or limit set. Parents identified consistency as being important with respect to policies and rules set, but not as significant to their specific approaches to handling a discipline situation.

Despite the valuing of consistency as a discipline principle, some of the participants identified a lack of ability to be consistent both with respect to establishing rules and applying the rules that were set. Holmes and Robins (1988) found mothers to be more inconsistent in their discipline than fathers. No gender difference were noted in this study

with respect to consistent or inconsistent discipline. This lack of ability to be consistent appears to be related to the struggles parents experience when disciplining their children and the numerous factors they take into consideration. Both of these issues are addressed later in this discussion.

Another guiding principle identified by three of the families regarding discipline was no hitting and no spanking. This principle was consistently applied by most of the families who reported this rule. However, a few of the families who identified it as a principle were struggling to achieve the no spanking principle. This principle will be addressed in the discussion of discipline tools as spanking was also identified as a tool used by many of the families.

Discipline styles. The literature has referred to classifications of parenting disciplinary styles for almost 50 years (Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Participants recognized and described differences in their parenting styles. In addition, it was evident that there was a difference in parental styles with regard to discipline.

Numerous determinants of parent discipline style have been studied including demographic characteristics, cultural groups, parents perceived ineffectiveness, maternal affective disorders, stress and marital accord (Arnold et al. 1993; Day et al., 1994; Emery, 1982; Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995; Radke-Yarrow et al., 1985; Webster-Stratton & Spitzer, 1992). Previous parent discipline style research has resulted in mixed associations between demographic characteristics and parent discipline style including marital status, employment status, education level or salary level (Day et al., 1994; Lenton, 1990). No relationship was identified in this study between discipline styles and demographic data such as income level and education. The only identifying characteristic

which had a significance was gender. Physical punishment was more often referred to as a discipline alternative by fathers than mothers in this study. Nevertheless, if the use of physical punishment was supported by both parents then both parents, indicated using it as a method of discipline.

Contrary to this study's findings, Bronstein's (1984) study involving home observation found that fathers were not more restrictive or punitive than mothers were. Also, there was not a gender difference identified in these families with respect to the use of discussion as a method of discipline or the intent to understand the child's position on the issue. Further, a significant difference was not found between mother and fathers in their reactions to misbehavior or in their involvement in teaching/ correcting behavior by Russell and Russell (1987) and Noller (1980).

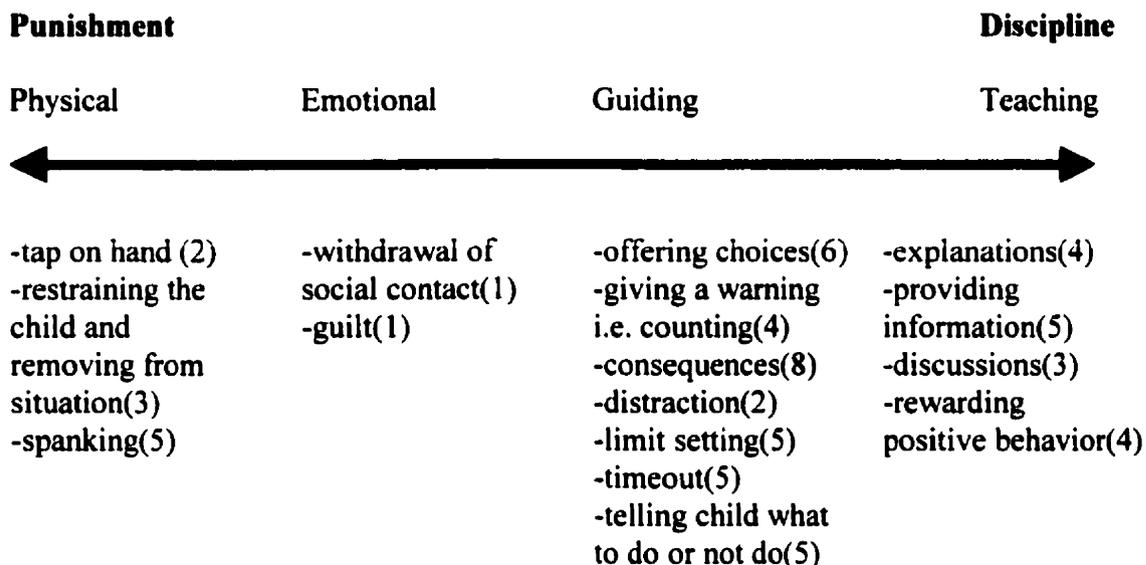
Parents identified three criteria to determine differences in parenting styles including the quickness with which they would respond, how consistent the parent was with discipline, and the amount of talking and understanding of the situation the parent engaged in with the child. An approach to determining discipline styles that is widely referred to in the literature was identified by Baumrind (1971). Baumrind (1966, 1971) identified what she labeled as three models of parental control or parenting discipline style: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. These styles vary in regards to two dimensions, warm-hostile and autonomy-control. Two of the criteria identified by the participants are consistent with Baumrind's (1971) dimension of autonomy-control: the speed of the response to a discipline situation, and the ability to apply discipline consistently. Parents who were slower to respond were described by the other parent as lax, having more patience, and being more tolerant. A parent who was described by the

parents as responding slower, exerted less control or power over the children in these discipline situations. The criterion of being consistent with regards to discipline is comparable to the dimension autonomy-control in Baumrind's model in that guidelines and rules are set and constantly applied.

The use of discussion and the amount of understanding the parent attempted when disciplining her/his child was another criterion used by several parents to describe discipline style. This criterion may be similar to the warm-hostile dimension identified by Baumrind (1971) in that the parent who is attempting to understand the child and spend time discussing could be described as warm rather than hostile.

Discipline tools. A variety of discipline tools were identified by parents when disciplining their preschool children with an average of 7.6 discipline tools per family. The purpose or intent of the discipline tool was placed along a continuum with two end points: discipline and punishment, Figure 5.2. Parents identified the purpose of discipline as to teach and guide the child. Whereas, punishment, was described as having the intent to control the child's behavior and to make the child "pay" for her/his transgressions and suffer. Some of the most common methods of discipline used in the past are now defined as unacceptable, not recommended, and even detrimental to the child by researchers and professionals (Ateah, 1997; Durrant, 1993; Gelles, 1990; Steinmetz, 1995). Further, physical punishment, including spanking is currently being defined as child abuse by some researchers (Gelles, 1990; Steinmetz, 1995). According to Forehand and McKinney (1993) there are mixed messages in today's society regarding discipline as a result of different groups recommending different approaches with children.

Figure 5.2

Continuum of Discipline tools

- () number of families identified this tool

Two parents in this study described the process of discipline as including both teaching and punishment, but with an emphasis on the teaching. Further, discipline was equated to teaching by many parents. Talking with their child and giving them explanations were some of the words parents used to describe teaching. This view of discipline is consistent with modern day popular literature. Nelson and associates (1995) state that true discipline is not about punishment and control. Discipline is a process by which young children are guided and taught, assisting them to make positive decisions about their behavior, and gradually allowing them to accept responsibility for their choices and actions (Nelson et al.).

Participants identified more discipline methods than punishment methods. Contrary to this finding, in a 1992 study, children aged 4 to 10 years identified physical punishment as the most common method of discipline used by their parents (Campbell). The other

discipline methods identified in sequence of frequency were: timeout, verbal yelling and threats, removal of privileges, and expression of disappointment by the parents (Campbell). Further, to this point, physical punishment was found to be frequently used by parents with toddlers and preschoolers (Straus, 1991). Trickett and Kuczynski (1986) found that reasoning with children was more often used as a discipline strategy by nonabusive parents. Do these confounding findings support a shift in the use of physical punishment or is it related to the population for this study, such as middle class families and older parents? Giles and associates (1995) suggest that older parents who have more education will know more about alternative and nonpunitive strategies of discipline. Further, disciplinary punitiveness has been found to decline as parents and children mature (Day, Peterson & McCracken, 1998).

The discipline tools identified in the discipline category were further categorized into teaching and guiding. If the parent imparted knowledge to the child upon which the child was free to act, the discipline strategy was referred to as teaching. Guiding involved a specific intent by the parent to direct the child's behaviour. Participants reported several tools in each of these two categories. Teaching discipline tools included: explanations, discussion, providing information and rewards for positive behavior. Tools identified in the guiding subcategory included: consequences, choices, limit setting, timeout, telling them what they can or can't do, a warning, and distraction. Giving the child a warning by counting is a discipline tool often used by parents and which several participants identified as effective to achieve the desired behavior. The tools included in the discipline category are often referred to in the popular literature as "positive discipline" strategies (Nelson et al., 1995). Similarly, warnings were found to be a mother's most often used

first response to a toddler's misbehaviour (Zahn-Waxler & Chapman, 1982).

Two subcategories were identified within the punishment category: emotional punishment and physical punishment. Physical contact with the child's body through a variety of means was involved in physical punishment including hitting or tapping. Physical punishment resulted in both physical and emotional discomfort or suffering. Physical punishment included spanking, tapping on the hand, and physically removing the child from the situation. Physically picking the child up and removing her/him from the situation was described by a few participants with the intent to control the child's behavior rather than guide or teach.

Many of the participants continue to use physical punishment despite changing societal views. This finding is consistent with the literature. Research has noted that physical punishment is most commonly used by parents on young children (Day et al., 1998; Giles-Sims, Straus & Sugarman, 1995; Socolar & Stein, 1995; The Canadian Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 1990). Kuczynski (1986) found that punishment was still the most frequently used discipline strategy for both abusive and nonabusive parents. In a study that examined parental disciplinary responses to hypothetical transgressions, abusive parents were found to use punishment more often than nonpunitive tactics such as distraction, ignoring, and explanations (Disbrow, Doerr, & Caulfield, 1977).

Punishment with the intent to induce emotional suffering with their preschool child was identified by one couple. This couple recently immigrated to Canada from the middle east. The child experienced feelings of anguish or mental distress as a result of emotional punishment. Similarly, a study in which 449 parents were surveyed found that parents

were less likely to approve of emotional punishment, 18.9%, as opposed to an 88% approval rate for physical punishment (Buntain-Rcklefs et al., 1994). This study described emotional punishment as criticism and ridicule.

Most of the time, parents described using discipline tools in combinations or sequences. Parents described moving down the continuum from discipline to punishment if the child did not respond to the initial discipline tools. Ideally explanations and the provision of information should be used to discipline a child, however, at other times the discipline situation moved along the continuum from teaching to guiding to physical punishment. Consistent with this finding, mothers have been found to use additional discipline methods if the child does not respond to the initial discipline procedure (Zahn-Waxler & Chapman, 1982). Further, love withdrawal and physical restraint, more controlling techniques, were more commonly used by mothers, when children did not comply with the first discipline method (Zahn-Waxler & Chapman).

Participants used critical analysis to evaluate the application of discipline tools in relation to their preschool children. Two criteria were applied to analyze the discipline tools including “effectiveness”, and “pros and cons”. Effectiveness of a discipline tool referred to either achieving the desired outcome or to a change in the child’s reaction. Strengths and weakness of a discipline tool were addressed in the “pro” and “cons” criterion. Most parents identified a discipline tool as effective based on achieving a desired outcome. Learning was noted as a general discipline outcome for their child by many participants.

A father critically analyzed spanking as a method of discipline using two criteria “pros” and “cons”, and effectiveness. He was uncertain about the effectiveness of

spanking, but determined there was power to it as a discipline method in respect to the minimal amount of guilt inflicted on the child as it is over with fast. This confusion as to the validity of punishment is also present in the literature (Lowenstein, 1985; Payne, 1989). Gross and Garvey (1997) support the finding as they state that spanking is considered an effective form of punishment by many parents because it is quick. Contrary to this finding, a study of Canadian's beliefs on corporal punishment found participants identified that a feeling of guilt on the part of the parent was the most common outcome of physical punishment (Durrant, 1993).

In the research literature, spanking has been associated with many negative outcomes for children. In a study of middle class families, toddlers who were spanked, compared to toddlers of mothers who did not use physical punishment, were more likely to ignore parental commands and had poorer control of impulses (Power & Chapieski, 1986). Another study also found that punishment did not to a decrease in the unwanted behavior (Fine & Hoyt, 1983).

Long-term and short-term outcomes of discipline were both specified by the study participants. Long-term outcomes of discipline identified for the child by several families included learning self control and self-discipline. These findings are consistent with previous research in which middle class parents were found to encourage and value independence, self-control, and achievement for their children (Kohn, 1977, Peterson & Rollins, 1987). In addition, developmental tasks identified as significant to a positive outcome for preschool children include autonomy and self-sufficiency (Murry Beckmann & Proctor Zentner, 1997). Campbell (1992) states that discipline provides children with the security of clearly enforced rules to help them learn self-control and social standards.

Favourable outcomes for the child at home and in other situations such as school have been noted when parents use teaching and guiding to discipline their children including self esteem, achievement, morality, cooperation with significant others, internal locus of control and independence (Baumrind, 1978, 1982; Denham et al., 1991; Dornbusch et al, 1978; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al., 1989). These outcomes are consistent with the long term outcomes identified by the participants. Those multidimensional child outcomes are often referred to as “social competence” (Peterson & Rollins, 1987). Social competence is concerned with the relative ability of the child to function effectively within long term role relationships (Peterson & Rollins). A young child is said to be socially competent when they demonstrate high levels of the above qualities.

Short term outcomes identified by the families included: specific behaviors the child would learn and alterations or change in the child’s behavior. Available research on the effects of discipline on children supports the hypothesis that discipline involving reasoning may promote more longer term changes in behavior than punishment (Kulczynski, 1983, 1984; Parke, 1969). In addition, one family noted a difference between discipline and punishment in that discipline was proactive and punishment was reactive.

It depends! Factors taken into consideration. Campbell (1992) identified a need to further study the ways parents decide on the type of discipline appropriate for the misbehavior or transgression. In this study, factors were identified by parents as being taken into consideration when deciding whether to discipline their children and what discipline action to take. They recognized that their expectations varied according to the context of discipline situations. The factors participants considered included the context

or situation, the nature of the transgression, the age of the child, and the child as a person. Similarly in the literature, the desirability of any particular child behavior has been identified as being dependent on a variety of factors including the potential harm of the behavior, societal norms, cultural or religious beliefs, the child's level of development, the context, parental stress, the child's safety, and the parent's own experiences as a child (Gross & Garvey, 1997).

These findings support a model of determinants of parenting that has been described by Belsky (1984). Belsky's model presumes that forces originating from within the broader social context in which the parent-child relationship is contained, from within the individual parent, and within the child, as directly shaping the parenting response. In addition, the model presupposes that the historical development of the parent, marital relations, social networks and nature of employment influence individual personality and general psychological well-being of parents and thereby, parental and child development.

Context was a factor that was taken into consideration by all the families when disciplining their preschool child. Considering the context is consistent with the transactional model of parental beliefs in that these beliefs are influenced by social exchanges and interactions (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1995). Ateah (1997) identified that the manner in which a parent responds to a child in a discipline situation can be affected by the particulars of the physical setting. Families in this study included the physical setting and the people involved as contextual elements. Being in a public place was identified by most families as a factor taken into consideration both when determining whether to discipline and what discipline action was appropriate. Parents described themselves as reacting more or less to a discipline situation in a public place.

In support of this finding, several studies have found that parents differ in their reactions to their children when they are being observed (Belsky, 1979; Belsky et al., 1984; Russell & Russell, 1987). In addition, several participants identified that the behaviour expected of their children was different in a public place. These differences may represent the perceived expectations of cultural norms and practices parents experience while out in public.

Another determinant identified by families regarding the physical setting was how they altered their expectations for their child's behavior based on how conducive the setting was to facilitating cooperation from their children. One family described altering their expectations in a restaurant that was not child friendly. In addition, several parents also identified that they were less likely to discipline their child in a situation in which other people were around such as friends or family.

Further, several families considered the child's behavior in relation to other family members. Participants identified themselves and other children as influencing the behavior of the preschool child, as well as influencing how they would respond to a discipline situation. One mother identified the child's behavior as a barometer of the environment around him. The consideration of context appears to contribute to parent's inferences about what can be reasonably expected of a specific child in specific situations and thereby alter their decision to discipline or what discipline method is used. Similarly, in an attribution approach, Dix and Grusec (1985) found that parents responded differently to a discipline situation when they believed that their children were not fully competent or responsible. In these situations, parents were less upset and tended to use explanations and reasoning as discipline methods (Dix & Grusec).

The behavior of the child or what the child did was the second factor many participants took into consideration when disciplining their children. It determined whether discipline action should be taken and the type of discipline action used. Consistent with this finding, several studies of nonclinical populations have found that parental choice of discipline strategies were strongly determined by the nature of the child's misbehavior (Grusec & Kuczynski, 1980; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Zahn-Waxler & Chapman, 1982). Trickett and Kuczynski (1986) found that nonabusive families were more likely to consider the child's misbehavior when determining discipline strategies than abusive families. In addition, a few of the participants described taking what they believed was the personality or intentions of the child's behavior into consideration in a discipline situation. The parents described their children as being generally good, pretty agreeable and being inquisitive.

Age and developmental stage of the child, the third factor taken into consideration when disciplining their child, was identified by all the families in this study. This consideration is consistent with attribution theory which regards the parent's attributions about the causes of the child's behaviour to affect the parent's responsive behavior (Weiner, 1985). Further, this finding is well supported in the general parenting literature which has demonstrated that parental beliefs about child development influence parenting (Applegate, Burlison, & Delia, 1992; & Sigel, 1985, 1992).

Participants identified that they altered their children's expectations thereby determining whether they would discipline or not based on the age of the children. Ateah (1997) noted that developmental stages are considered by parents when they respond to their child's behavior resulting in an alteration of their expectations. Criteria for the

consideration of age in disciplining children were identified by some participants. These included the child's attention span, level of intelligence, maturity, and knowing the difference between right and wrong. These criteria appear to incorporate the attribution of competence and responsibility based on the developmental level and abilities of the child similar to the study by Dix, Ruble and Zambarano (1989). In addition, the findings of the present study concur with the findings of Dix and associates in that mothers took their children's age and abilities into account when making decisions about disciplining their children. Similar to the present findings, these beliefs were found to influence the type of discipline method the parents chose (Dix et al.).

Certain discipline rules and principles were identified by a few parents as not open change no matter what the age of the child. These were generally related to the specific guiding principles identified earlier, such as hitting. It appears that parents are less flexible with these guiding principles. This finding supports the information-processing model in which parents are viewed as cognitive beings actively processing information in regards to discipline practices (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1995). In this study, when parents have processed the information of the child's misbehavior as belonging in the guiding principle category then the discipline strategies are more defined.

Further, parents identified knowledge deficits with regards to developmental milestones and knowing what to expect of their preschool children. This finding was validated by Campbell (1992) who identified that many parents show little understanding of growth and development. "Parents who understand and integrate contemporary culture, current child development theories, and knowledge of maturation processes develop realistic childrearing practices and recognize the effect of their own child's uniqueness on

parenting” (Campbell, 1992, p. 199). This lack of knowledge made it difficult for participants to discipline their preschool children. Areas of growth and development in which parents recognized lack of knowledge and sought information included: sleeping, eating, and fighting with playmates. Knowledge is also presented in the literature as the major intellectual dimension of beliefs (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1995). Thus, a lack of developmental knowledge could result in inaccurate beliefs about children and in turn affect the discipline practices of parents.

With the fourth factor, most participants included taking into account the child as a person, when considering a discipline situation. For example, one couple talked about the inclusion of their preschool child in all discussions surrounding discipline. Characteristics of the child which were considered by the participants included how tired the child was, whether the child was ill or not, how that particular child responded to discipline, the need of the child to control the situation at times, and the feelings of the child. Several participants identified the need to consider if the child was sick or tired in a discipline situation. Consideration of these characteristics by the parent is consistent with considering the child as a person. A few parents permitted their children to set the agenda or pace of a situation.

The literature supports the finding that numerous factors are considered by parents when disciplining their children. Parental beliefs about context, child behavior and development have been found to influence parent discipline practices in both this study and the literature. The amount of mental activity required by parents to consider the above factors has been identified as difficult.

Disciplining: It's a Struggle. Disciplining their preschool child was described as difficult by all the participants. Parenting has been characterized in the literature as challenging and demanding (Crnic & Acevedo, 1995). The everyday experiences of rearing developing children and dealing with child behavior has been identified as stressful (Creasey & Jarvis, 1994; Creasey & Reese, 1996; Crnic & Booth, 1991; Crnic & Greenberg, 1990; Kendziora & O'Leary, 1993). A phrase that has been coined in the literature to refer to these everyday events that result in parenting stress is "parenting daily hassles" (Crnic & Booth, 1991; Crnic & Greenberg, 1990).

A variety of words were used by the parents in this study to describe disciplining their preschool children as a struggle including: frustrating, trying, hard, a struggle, a challenge, tough, and difficult. This terminology is consistent with the conceptualization of hassles as irritating, annoying, frustrating and distressing demands that usually characterize everyday interactions with the environment (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981). The significance of these everyday struggles or stress is the link to dysfunctional parenting behaviors (Belsky, 1984; Crnic et al., 1983; Kendziora & O'Leary, 1993). The everyday stresses appear to have a direct impact on parent's psychological well-being and parent's behavior towards their children thereby affecting their children indirectly (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990; Patterson, 1983). According to Crnic and Acevedo research in this area has only began to emerge and is especially limited in the normal populations such as the families participating in this study. Further, the everyday struggles directly related to disciplining children has not been studied.

Parents identified a variety of criteria they used to define a discipline situation as difficult. Parents in this study considered four main elements to contribute to the

discipline situation being labeled as a struggle including: the context, the discipline situation itself, the child, and the parents, Figure 5.3. Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting provides implications for the factors that might influence the parent's experience of everyday struggles. Consistent with Belsky's model and the findings of this study, the literature has identified several factors as contributing to everyday parenting hassles including characteristics of the parents as individuals, the couple, the child, and the environment.

Figure 5.3

Elements Contributing to Discipline Struggles

I The Context

- Not child friendly environment
- Other children in the family

II The Discipline Situation

- Length of time required to address a discipline situation
- Length of time issue persists
- Lack of response to discipline tools

III The Child

- Not knowing how to respond to child
- The severity of the child's behavior

IV The Parents

- Difficulty working together as a team
- Effort required to deal with a discipline situation

The element, context, is similar to what the literature describes as the environment.

The context was described by the parents as adding to the degree of difficulty involved in a discipline situation. A contextual consideration described by one family was being in a crowded, not child friendly environment, and having to "make do" with the situation.

Both parents identified having to deal with numerous discipline issues in this one situation thereby requiring them to exert a significant amount of effort. Further, from a

family systems perspective related to context, another family referred to their child's behaviour in relation to other children in the family as the struggle in discipline situations. In support of this finding, parenting stress has been found to increase with the number of children at home (Lavee, Sharlin & Katz, 1996). Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting supports these findings as the model identifies social context as either a source of stress or support to parents.

An element that was identified as contributing to everyday parenting struggles in this study that has been noted in the literature is the discipline situation. Two criteria that were used by a few of the families to identify a discipline situation as a struggle were the length of time required to address a situation and the length of time the issue persisted. Again, these criteria related to the amount of effort required by the parent to address the issue or situation. Despite being valued, the length of time required to follow through on a consequence was identified as a struggle. The length of time the discipline issue persisted was another criterion a few parents used to identify a discipline issue as a challenge. This criteria included issues that persisted for several months without resolution. One family described the issue of their child sleeping in their bed as a struggle because of the length of time it persisted.

A discipline situation was identified as a struggle by several parents because of a lack of response to the discipline tools or ineffectiveness of the discipline tool. Supporting this finding, Patterson (1980) identified that mothers in normal families experienced feelings of anger, depression, and doubt as a result of ineffective child discipline practices. One family identified a discipline situation as difficult as they were having trouble connecting with their child. The parents identified the child as having a physical illness which limited

their ability to communicate with him at times thereby requiring more of an effort on their part to communicate with the child.

The child was another element parents identified as contributing to discipline struggles. The child related to two criteria: not knowing what to do and striving to do their best to discipline their children, and the severity of the child's behaviour. In support of the present study findings, developmental stages have been found to be significant to the stress experienced by parents related to parental beliefs and the expectations they have (Crnic & Booth, 1991). Lack of knowledge appears to be related to the uncertainty with regards to the expectations they have for their children and doing the right things. Knowledge deficits were identified as leading to uncertainties and struggles in discipline situations as discussed in the section "It depends: Factors taken into consideration". Further, in this study the effort required to determine what they should expect was identified as adding stress to the role of disciplinarian. This finding gives credence to information found in a study conducted by Campbell (1992) in which parents felt that there are few guidelines for parents regarding discipline. The information available is not always expressed in a form that is usable by parents, thereby requiring even more of an effort on behalf of the parents to interpret it (Sameroff & Feil, 1985).

Child characteristics contribute to parent stress. If the child's behaviour was beyond the usual or more common behavior for that child, this led to participants defining the situation as a struggle. Consistent with this finding, extreme child behaviours have been identified as sources of parenting stress (Patterson, 1982).

The parents themselves were another element contributing to everyday discipline difficulties. An aspect that was identified as difficult was working together as a team with

regards to disciplining their preschool children. In a family in which the mother is a stay at home mom and the primary disciplinarian, the father identified it difficult to know what rules she had set up so that he could be consistent with her expectations. A study conducted by naturalistic home observation concluded that daily stresses increase differences in parents along a variety of dimensions including childrearing attitudes, leading to predictions of increased nonsupportive coparenting situations and a similar decrease in supportive parenting situations (Belsky, Crnic & Gable, 1995).

A factor, related to parents, identified by a mother, was the effort in dealing with a discipline situation in which there are two children involved and only one parent. She voiced difficulty in being able to respond to the different needs of both children at the same time and which child to respond to first. Research that supports the significance of these findings and the importance of parenting struggles is that interpersonal conflicts with a spouse or child have been identified as possibly the most distressing type of daily stress event (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989). A parent determinant of everyday stress that has been reported in the literature that was not identified in this study was the mood of the parent (Belsky, Crnic & Woodworth, 1995).

A few strategies were identified by parents to deal with the struggles they encountered in disciplining their preschool children, Figure 5.4. These included seeking information from other resources and working as a parenting team. Information seeking methods included gathering information by observing other parents and talking with the other parents about the discipline situation. In addition, parents identified gathering information in areas where they lacked knowledge as a means of addressing struggles related to discipline. Several parents identified a method that involved working as a parenting team

which they referred to as debriefing, talking with their partner at the end of the day. If a day was exceptionally challenging parents identified making even more of an effort to spend time talking with the other parent in an attempt at trying to improve their discipline practices. These findings suggest that parents might welcome information and suggestions to address the struggles they encounter when disciplining their preschool children.

Figure 5.4

Strategies for Dealing with Discipline Struggles

I Information Seeking

- Gathering information by observing other parents
- Talking with the other parents about the discipline situation

II Working as a Parenting Team

- debriefing, talking with their partner at the end of the day

A method of coping with everyday parenting stressors that has been identified in the literature and concurs with the finding of this study is social support systems. Evidence suggests that stress can be moderated by social support (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). In one study, support from friends was found to be more important in sheltering mothers from everyday parenting stress (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). While in another study, emotional support from a spouse or partner was very important (Crnic et al., 1983). The importance of social support in minimizing the everyday stressors of parents is apparent. However, the significance of support from different sources is unclear.

Parenting struggles are significant for parents and their children. Research has linked parenting stress with more coercive parenting behaviors and disruptions in problem solving abilities (Patterson, 1983). Further, this alteration in parental response is thought to cause increases in negative child behaviors which have been associated with parenting

stress (Creasey & Reese, 1996).

Parents in this study identified elements that contribute to parental stress related to discipline. Many of these elements are consistent with those found in the literature related to determinants of everyday parenting stressors. Further, parents noted several methods to manage the struggles they encountered including seeking information and support from their spouse. The literature supports the importance of social support but is unclear as to the best sources of social support for everyday parenting stresses.

Summary. Parent discipline is a complex concept with a variety of uses and definitions. The parent's definition of discipline as a process involving actions on the part of the child and parent resulting in outcomes or changes is consistent with current literature. Parents in this study support the literature as to the confusion between the terminology of discipline and punishment. Parents identified two principles guiding their discipline process; consistency and no hitting. Parents reported using a variety of discipline tools, sometimes in combinations. The daily struggles parents encounter in disciplining their preschool children were described provided further insight to the already existing literature on everyday parenting hassles.

Parents: The Discipline Team

Parental interaction regarding disciplining their preschool children was described by all the participants as a team working together. Parents spoke of cooperating with each other for the common purpose of disciplining their preschool children. The word "team" was used by several parents to describe how they interacted as a couple to discipline their children. The emphasis of research regarding interaction between parents has been on the marital relationship. However, several studies have indicated that specific aspects of

marital relationships and marital interaction. such as childrearing disagreements, are more significant to child outcomes (Belsky, Woodworth & Crnic, 1996; Jourlies et al, 1991). Participants described several aspects of their discipline teamwork which are used to organize this discussion, Figure 5.5. The discussion in this section will address three of the research questions posed earlier including: How do husbands and wives perceive their discipline roles in the family?; What communication patterns do couples use regarding discipline?; and How do couples make decisions regarding discipline of their preschool age child?.

Figure 5.5

Parents: The Discipline Team

Team Work - What it looks like
 Team Conflict
 Team Building - How they get there
 Team Leader- Who Takes the Lead?

Earlier research in the area of parent interaction and child discipline is limited.

Research on the interaction between parents has previously focused on childrearing parental agreement using quantitative methods (Block et al., 1981; Deal et al., 1989). The understanding gained from these studies regarding the interaction process between the parents with regards to discipline is limited as the processes involved in or informing the discipline decisions or roles of the parents were not studied.

Teamwork. Role sharing is a term that is used by the literature to describe teamwork.

“Role sharing refers to the participation of two or more people in the same roles even though they hold different positions” (Friedman, 1998, p. 293). Parents identified methods they used to share the role of disciplinarian or how they worked together as a team during a discipline situation. These methods include effective communication,

dealing with the discipline situation together or by supporting the other parent while they are dealing with the situation. Similar to the above finding, several facets of the marital relationship were found to affect parenting competence including cognitive support or agreement on child rearing, emotional support, and physical support or sharing actual child care (Dickie, 1987).

Role-sharing was common in the past and is regaining popularity as a result of the increase in two-income families (Anderson, 1996). Friedman (1998) states that role-sharing occurs frequently in today's families. Smith and Reid (1985) define a role sharing marriage as both partners having equal claim to the roles in the family. According to their study, there is a greater threat to a role-sharing marriage when children are younger because of the increased demands, such as time and responsibilities, required of the couple to raise young children (Smith and Reid).

Consistent with the findings of this study, the process of communicating between the couple is seen as contributing significantly to marital interaction and role sharing (Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Heinicke, 1995). Marital communication is described as "the overt and covert patterns of communication in which partners exchange information and expectations in order to share tasks, convey feelings, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and show their caring." (Heinicke, 1995, p. 279). Three types of communication are described in the literature: verbal, nonverbal and metacommunication (Horowitz, 1995). Similarly, couples in this study described using verbal and nonverbal communication to communicate effectively about discipline. A variety of nonverbal communication methods were identified by the participants as useful when communicating about discipline, especially in front of the children, including tone of voice, eye contact, and

touch. All participants demonstrated agreement, cooperation, and support during the interviews through the use of cooperative language by using inclusive words such as “we” and “our”.

Marital relationships, or teams, have been classified according to the type of relationship. Three types of relationships have been identified: complimentary, symmetrical, and parallel (Friedman, 1998). Contrasting behavior is demonstrated by partners in a complimentary relationship. A symmetrical relationship is built on equality; partners exhibit equality in the mutual exchange of messages and actions (Friedman). Spouses in a symmetrical relationship have equal rights to participate in decision making, to criticize the other person’s behavior and to take action. In a parallel type of marital relationship partners easily alternate between symmetrical and complimentary relationships in response to varying situations. A parallel relationship is seen as the most mature and healthy due to greater flexibility and growth enhancement of the individuals. All couples in this study demonstrated behaviors more consistent with parallel relationships in relation to discipline, however, some more than others.

Actions described by parents as supportive or cooperative included either doing or not doing something. Several couples identified cooperating during a discipline situation through inaction in which one parent stood back and did not interfere with the other parent who was handling the situation. Another example of this type of action is the delegation of discipline responsibilities to fathers by the mothers. These actions are consistent with the description of a complimentary relationship in that one person leads and the other follows. In discipline situations this type of relationship was more common in families where the mother was not employed outside the home. Another means of

complimentary cooperation during disciplining was the “tag team” approach. In a “tag team” approach, one parent takes over where the other parent left off, but not necessarily continuing in the same discipline vein used by the other parent.

A new area of study related to parents working together is “coparenting”. Coparenting has been defined as “ the manner in which mothers and fathers support and/or undermine one another’s parenting efforts (Gable, Belsky & Crinic, 1995, p. 609). Two studies have been reported in the literature. A naturalistic study of 69 two parent families of young children found significant evidence of support and agreement between the two parents regarding child rearing (Gable et al., 1995). Further, supportive coparenting interactions occurred much more frequently than nonsupportive. In this study supportive coparenting was more often expressed as one parent elaborating on the other parent’s childrearing thereby complementing their efforts (Gable et al., 1995).

In another study of coparenting of 57 two parent families with early school age children parental interdependence was found to include both similarity and complimentary interaction (Russell & Russell, 1994). In this study, similarity referred to agreement between the parents and complimentary including differences between parents. Couples were found to differ in their amount of similarity and complementarity across four domains of parenting including: parent child rearing values, parent-child involvement, self-reported relationship with the child, and observed interactions with the child (Russell & Russell). Further, various forms of interdependence were found with no single pattern identified.

Equality in the parent partnership with regards to disciplining children was more common in families in which both parents worked outside the home. These families were

more likely to describe dealing with discipline situation together. In addition, these parents described more flexibility in responding to discipline situations consistent with parallel relationships. Who responded to the discipline situation in these families took into consideration criteria such as who was physically closest to the child and varied significantly depending on the situation.

Participants identified factors that contributed to being able to cooperate and work together in disciplining their preschool children. A factor recognized as critical by some parents is a common set of beliefs and values. Beliefs have been identified in the literature as performing a variety of functions including: enabling adults to make predictions, organize their world in a psychologically consistent manner, discover similarities, and form relationships between new and old experiences (Kelly, 1955). This sharing of fundamental values or beliefs was noted as influencing a variety of components of the discipline process such as their definition of discipline, their expectations of the child, and type of discipline applied to a situation. Goodnow and Collins (1990) identified that parental beliefs facilitate the setting of parental priorities, and provide a means of evaluating successful parenting. Specific to discipline, beliefs can serve as the basis for parental teaching and behaviour management (McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Sigel, 1995).

Parents described shared fundamental values or beliefs as influencing a variety of components of the discipline process including their expectations of the child and type of discipline applied to a situation. This finding supports previous research in which childrearing has been identified as goal driven or goal regulated (Dix, 19991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Similar to previous research parents in this study noted the common

beliefs or goals as influencing their childrearing regarding the processing of information and the courses of action chosen.

The final component of the belief complex is parental values. Parental values refer to what parents would like to see personified in their children (Kohn, 1969). Most of the participants in this study placed more emphasis on the need to have similar fundamental values with respect to discipline than to have to approach a discipline situation the same. However, parents noted that it was preferred to have congruence both with discipline philosophies and discipline styles. Minuchin (1985) identified that differences between parents regarding parental values creates the potential for conflict. In addition, couples described cooperation in the form of responding to a discipline situation with a similar response or style.

Parents described a comfort level or understanding in knowing how the other person would respond even though the response could be different. A mother described her husband as taking longer to respond to a discipline situation but knowing that he would in the end respond to the same situations as her.

The concept of role taking may explain a means by which these parents work together to discipline their children. In role taking, people learn their roles through interacting with other roles such as mothers with fathers (Turner, 1970). Parents compliment or reciprocate the role of the other parent. The amount of harmony and congruency in interpersonal relationships is thought to be explained by the principle of complementarity (Speigel, 1957). Parents described cooperation between the team members as a means of complimenting or reciprocating a parents disciplinary role.

Role-enactment is a concept that refers to the actual behaviors a person engages in

while performing a position in society (Friedman, 1998). Expectations of behavior are associated with the enactment of roles. Participants described a variety of behaviors disciplinarians enact in their role as well as the behaviours of the discipline team leader.

The perceived benefits of working together as a team, the support provided by a partner, in disciplining their children were identified by two families. Benefits or outcomes of working together as a team reported by parents included more patience in dealing with discipline situations and better relationships between parents and children. The importance of the support of a partner, the other parent, and a positive marital relationship have been identified as significant to parenting competence (Belsky, 1984; Colletta & Gregg, 1981; Crnic et al., 1983). Based on these research findings Belsky concluded that the marital relationship is likely to have the greatest impact on potential parent competence rather than the social network and support gained at work. Further, he is of the opinion that the marital relationship can positively and negatively influence parental functioning (Belsky).

Belsky (1984) predicted that the quality of the marital relationship directly influences parent-child interactions in that parents who have satisfying and supportive marital relationships will have more energy to respond sensitively to their children. Also, according to Belsky, marital relations directly influence parent's psychological well-being, thereby indirectly influencing parent-child interactions. Research has found a positive relationship between marital quality and parents' psychological well-being (Wandersman, 1980). The findings of this study support the previous research and Belsky's theory.

Team building: How they get there. Families with preschool children are considered to be in the third stage of family development. Parents in this stage are attempting to juggle their parental responsibilities along with continuing their own personal development (Friedman, 1998). Included in the parental responsibilities is the achievement by the couple of mutually acceptable means for addressing the tasks required for raising children, including discipline. Building a healthy parent team is crucial to healthy development of the family. Satir (1983) describes parents as the ‘architects of the family,’ designing and directing family development.

All the participants described building a parent discipline team including: the who, how, what, and when, a finding that has not been noted before. The parents identified building their discipline team by sharing information and discussion. Both of these methods of team building involve the use of communication. Communication is the process of exchanging desires, feelings, information, needs, and opinions (McCubbin & Dahl, 1985). Parents’ discussions covered a variety of discipline topics including what discipline tools to use, who should discipline and what discipline methods are working. Studies on couple communication have identified content that included both emotional information and factual information (Snell, Miller, & Belk, 1988; Wills, Weiss & Patterson, 1974)

The passing on of information included techniques such as getting the other parent to read an article or discussing with the other team member what the parent learned from another source such as other people or videos. In addition, parents identified when they discussed discipline and factors influencing the timing of the discussion. Communication in the family consists of a symbolic exchange which results in the creation and sharing of

meanings (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). The passing on of information and discussion were used by the couples to establish a shared set of meaning regarding discipline.

The activities parents engaged in to build a parent discipline team facilitated the sharing of the discipline role between the parents by building consensus. Deal and associates (1989) found that ability to create a new, shared reality that both partners accepted and saw as given was present in those parents identified as being successful in rearing their children. A parent in Steinmetz's (1977) study identified the value of consistent parenting when she indicated that her and her husband spoke about child discipline frequently before making a decision so that they displayed a united front or intraparent consistency. Parents in this study specified discussing negative discipline situations and positive discipline situations, when "something is working".

Previous research on when parents discuss discipline or childrearing or what variables would influence the timing of communication is not available. Family communication changes over time with the evolution of the family life cycle. The addition of children to the family and the development of language by the children affect the communication patterns of the family (Hoffer, 1996). A communication pattern that was identified by parents in this study as being affected by the presence of children was when they would talk about disciplining their preschool child. Friedman (1998) identified the immediate context in which the interaction takes place as influencing family communication patterns. Most of the families indicated not wanting the children to be around when they talked about discipline. A common time for these families to discuss discipline was at night when the children were in bed. The family who did not identify the criterion of being alone had a belief and practice of including the child in all discussions about

discipline. Further, “debriefing” at the end of the day has been previously identified as a preferred time for couples to communicate (Vangelisti & Banski, 1993).

Another factor for determining when to talk about discipline was the intensity or severity of the issue. This factor of severity or intensity had two influences on the parents discussion of discipline. One influence was that parents made more of a point of later bringing up a discipline issue for discussion if it was severe or intense. One father described issues he and his wife would talk about later as those that “stay with us”.

In addition a few couples identified the first time they discussed discipline. Two couples first talked about parenting and discipline in particular prior to having children. Another couple referred to discussing discipline at the birth of their first child. In the following excerpt, a couple described discussing discipline before they began their family. Another couple described conversing about the discipline practices of their parents and how they planned to discipline their children prior to having children. Studies have found that couples who experience more marital satisfaction spend more time talking regardless of the topic (Kirchler, 1989) and spend more time “debriefing” one another about the events of the day (Vangelisti & Banski, 1993).

The significance of discussing discipline varied between the couples from perceiving it as significant to being something they had not really thought about. A father described himself as not often thinking about discipline nor did the couple often talk about discipline. In addition, this father did not identify the discussion of discipline as important. However, most of the couples felt it was important to spend time discussing discipline issues. Gender differences regarding the significance of communication to relationships may explain this finding. A previous study has indicated that women place a

higher value on communication in marital relationships than men (Vangelisti & Banski, 1993).

Further, couples identified how often they would discuss discipline. This ranged from “not very often”, to once a week and once a month. A few couples who identified that it was important to talk about parenting issues, discipline in particular, stated it was difficult to find time to talk. Reasons identified by the couples for not being able to find the time to talk included their busy work or school lives and the time commitment required to directly parent their children. Consistent with this finding, couples have been found to identify the importance of marital communication while voicing that the amount of time spent together to interact is dwindling (Duck & Pond, 1989).

Team Leader- Who Takes the Lead? Several differences have been noted between the roles of mothers and fathers with their children including quantity, quality and style (Belsky, 1979; Belsky et al., 1984; Russell, 1978; Russell & Russell, 1987). A differing degree of responsibility for management of family tasks has also been reported with mothers assuming more of this role. In addition, this responsibility has been found to vary with the age of the children. Mothers have been identified as the primary caregiver for the preschool years and fathers assuming more responsibility with older children (Power & Parke, 1982; Russell & Russell, 1987, Thompson & Walker, 1991). Even in the 1990’s and in the case of families where husbands and wives share roles, fathers are less likely to engage in the management of the household and child care (Coltrane, 1995).

One of the eight basic roles in the husband-father and the wife-mother social positions identified by Nye and Gecas (1976) is the child-socialization role, disciplinarian. The mother was identified by all the families in this study as taking the lead role in

disciplining preschool children. The discipline of children was in the domain of fathers in the 16th and 17th centuries (Forehand & McKinney, 1993). Mothers took over the responsibility for disciplining children in the 19th century as the fathers left the home to find employment. Currently, the father's role in discipline and the development of children has been increasingly recognized as significant. This strengthening of the father's participation in childrearing has been necessitated by mothers being employed outside the home and the need to share more of the responsibilities around the home (Lamb et al., 1987).

A finding that is consistent with the literature is the sharing of responsibility for discipline between mother's and fathers with mothers assuming the lead. In the families where the mother was a stay-at-home mom, compared to mothers who were employed, she assumed even more of the responsibility for discipline. Further, in those families in which the mother was an at-home mom, the mother continued to assume responsibility for disciplining children even when the father was present during the discipline situation. The responsibility for disciplining was shared in several of the families when both parents were around. The sharing of responsibility for disciplining was more common in families in which both parents were employed outside the home. Although both parents administered discipline, Humenick and Bugen (1987) found mothers generally spent more time with children and acted as the primary disciplinarian.

In this study, mothers who usually took the lead described involving the fathers in the role of disciplinarian, role sharing, by delegating responsibility to the father. However, the mothers described their delegation as different than how their mothers delegated in the past. In the past, mothers would delegate responsibility for a discipline situation to the

father in the form of a threat that would be carried out at a later point in time, providing the necessary backup to ensure child compliance. Now, mothers delegated to the father as an active participant in the discipline situation. Another method, similar to delegating, used by several mothers in taking the lead regarding discipline is instructing the fathers on what to do as described by this couple. The literature supports this finding as it describes fathers as becoming more involved with childrearing (Coltrane, 1995; Hoffman, 1984). However, there is no research specific to the evolution of the disciplinarian role of fathers.

A role is described as a more or less consistent set of behaviors that are culturally defined and expected of the person occupying the given position (Friedman, 1998). Families described several behaviors mothers used to enact the role of disciplinarian team leader. The behaviors included seeking out information regarding discipline, responding first to a discipline situation, delegating the discipline responsibility to the fathers, and initiating discussions. Roles in a family are viewed as reciprocal, in that the roles played by each family member are related directly to roles played by others in the family (Duvall, 1977). The mother was the first person to respond to a discipline situation in all families except one. A shift in the sharing of the parenting role was identified as the reason in this family for the father taking on the responsibility for discipline. The mother was identified by the family as more responsible for the infant as she was breastfeeding resulting in the father assuming more responsibility for the preschool child. In addition, the mother described the father in this family as having more experience with children than she did.

In the other families where the mother played the lead role of disciplinarian, the father needed to reciprocate. This was evident in the families interviewed as there were several

instances where the father described how he supported the mother in her lead role of disciplinarian. According to role theory, this father could be perceived as validating the lead role of the mother as disciplinarian (Turner, 1970). This support and delegation of the disciplinarian role to the mother by the father was more evident in the families where the mother was not employed outside the home. In support of this finding, LaRossa (1986) found that fathers tend to see themselves as cast in a supporting role where they play with the child and provide assistance to the primary parent, the mother. Further, this finding is consistent with Humenick and Bugen's (1987) results in which fathers relied on mothers to discipline the children because they spent less time at home and had less interaction with family members.

Team Conflict. Differences or disagreements between parents with respect to discipline issues were described by most study participants. Similarly, disciplining children has been found as a major source of marital conflict (Steinmetz, 1977). Parents, just as in most teams and partnerships, had different opinions or points of view on "handling" a situation. Conflict between parents with respect to the discipline role is referred to as intra-role conflict. Intra-role conflict occurs when two or more people lack agreement concerning their expectations for the enactment of a particular role (Chassin et al., 1985).

According to Friedman (1998), conflict and decision making are activities that can be observed in the daily activities of the family. Despite conflict and decision making being an everyday occurrence in family life, poor child development outcomes have been related to increased intraparental conflict (Block et al., 1986; Long et al., 1987). The literature has focused on marital conflict in general and not specifically conflict between

parents regarding discipline. Wilson and Gottman (1995) state that marital conflict must be considered in order to understand the processes that link the marital and parent-child subsystems.

In this study, disagreements which resulted in conflict included how the parent approached or what method they used to address a discipline situation, lack of follow through on the part of a parent, and the lack of consistency between the parents. In addition, a perceived or actual lack of support from the other parent either emotionally or physically was identified by participants as bringing about conflict.

A difference in their discipline styles or opinion on how to manage a discipline situation was noted as a common cause of conflict by participants. Specifically, participants identified inconsistency in approaches to discipline between parents as resulting in conflict. Two parents acting at odds or conflicting with each other regarding discipline across time is referred to in the literature as intraparent inconsistency (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1995). Very little being known about the phenomena of discipline consistency between parents. Inconsistency which may result in intraparent conflict include: discipline policies, the regulating of rule infractions, and the determination of consequences for breaking rules (Chamberlain & Patterson). Intraparent inconsistency was described by the participants as not applying the rules or limits equally by both parents. Parental childrearing conflict has been suggested to lead to inconsistent parenting which then may result in child behavior problems (Jouriles et al., 1991). In addition, both marital conflict and child behavior problems have been associated with inconsistent childrearing (Block et al., 1981; Patterson & Stouthamer, 1984; Stoneman et al., 1989).

Deal and associates (1989) conducted a study that examined the relationship between parental agreement on child-rearing and parental, marital, family, and child characteristics in 136 intact families with a preschool age child. The use of a convenience sampling likely over represented higher functioning families, as was the case with the present study. The study found that couples who possessed higher parental agreement had family and marital relationships commonly attributed to healthy families as measured by several tools including questionnaires and Q-sorts (Deal et al. ,1989).

In a study of 57 intact families Steinmetz (1977) researched sources of intrafamilial conflict and methods used to resolve these conflicts. Similar to the findings of this study, she noted that the lack of support by parents of the discipline implemented by the other parent was a frequent source of conflict between spouses. A consistent finding from the present study was the conflict that resulted from a perceived or actual lack of support from the other parent with respect to disciplining their child. Frequent conflict between spouses may reduce the availability of an important source of support in childrearing; one's partner. The observation of triadic interactions among mothers, fathers and their infants has given valuable information about how this system of support works. Belsky and Volling (1987) found when studying infants and their parents that high levels of positive behaviors between parents such as sharing pleasure, showing affection, and complimenting each other was associated with positive and responsive parenting behaviors.

Several studies of families with young children have found that women are dissatisfied with the amount of parenting and domestic involvement of men (Cowan & Cowan, 1987, 1988; Dickie, 1987; Sutor, 1991). The issue that lead to the most conflict and

disagreement between partners in Cowan and Cowan's (1988) study was "who does what" in the partnership. Similarly, Lavee and associates (1996) found that traditional household divisions of labor resulted in women experiencing decreased levels of marital satisfaction. Consistent with these findings, several families where the mothers identified themselves as taking the lead disciplinarian role, the mothers also indicated a wish to share the role more with their husbands. This was more common in the families in which the mother was a stay-at-home mom.

In contrast, several studies have indicated that dual-worker couples reported decreased marital satisfaction than nondual-worker couples, especially those with young children (Orden & Bradburn, 1969; Staines, Pleck, Shepard & O'Connor, 1978). Similarly, a study was conducted investigating the role perceptions, self-role congruence, and marital satisfaction of 83 dual-income couples with preschool children by Chassin and associates (1985). The researchers found evidence of intra-role conflict, in which the men and women perceived significant differences in the roles of parent and spouse. The researchers state that this intra-role conflict could result in interaction difficulties between men and women when they interact within these roles (Chassin et al.). This study also revealed that mothers discounted the father role contributions which may be a reason for the decreased involvement of fathers in childrearing.

A vital task of family interaction is conflict resolution and spouses need to learn how to have constructive conflicts (Friedman, 1998). Healthy, functional families are noted to have more open areas of communication (Satir, 1972). However, many functional couples have been identified as not telling one another everything for a variety of reasons (McCubbin & Dahl, 1985). Steinmetz (1977) noted four methods of conflict resolution

used by families in her study of family violence including: avoidance, discussion, verbal aggression and physical aggression. Two methods for conflict resolution, consistent with the findings, were identified by the parents including ignoring the issue, and directly approaching the other parent about the issue.

The most commonly reported mechanism for addressing conflict in this study was to approach the other parent about the issue or “speaking up”. Similarly, most participants in the Steinmetz (1977) study noted that discussion was the ideal method to resolve conflicts, although this was not an ideal that was reached by many. Participants noted approaching the other parent either at the time of the discipline incident, immediately after the incident, or later on. The rationale identified by parents for discussing the issue later on was to not discuss the situation in the presence of the children.

Three decision making processes are described in the literature including: consensus, accommodation, and de-facto decision making. In North America, decision making by consensus is considered healthy. Open discussion and negotiations are used by family members to achieve agreement in consensus decision making (Klein & White, 1996). Consistent with the literature, participants identified that the decision making that resulted from approaching the other parent and discussing the conflict most often concluded with the parents achieving consensus regarding disciplining. The second most common decision achieved by the parents was agreeing to disagree with each other.

An approach identified by a few participants was to confront the “offending” parent while he/she was disciplining the child. Verbal and non-verbal communication methods were used by parents to confront the offending parent. This approach to resolve conflict, especially the verbal communication, appears to be consistent with the aggressive mode

identified in the Steinmetz (1977) study on the perception of the offending parent. The descriptions provided by the parents, who were in the process of disciplining their children and were interrupted verbally by the other parent, referred to this situation as “interference”. The interruption did not result in a resolution of the conflict in any of the instances mentioned by the parents, but rather such incidents often resulted in conflict escalation. Approaching a parent while disciplining a child resulted in a dysfunctional communication process for several reasons on the part of both the sender and receiver of the communication (Friedman, 1998). The parent approaching the other parent may have ineffectively communicated with their partner such as by making assumptions, making judgments, or expressed feelings unclearly (Friedman). On the other hand, the receiver of the message may have been experiencing communication difficulties including failing to listen, responding offensively and negatively and failing to explore the sender’s message. Another means for addressing the conflict at the time of the incident which attempts to not involve the child is through the use of nonverbal communication. This method was better received by the offending parent than verbal communication.

The reason provided by most parents in this study for choosing to ignore the discipline issue was that they determined the issue to not be sufficiently significant to warrant further action. Supporting this finding are the reasons identified by McCubbin and Dahl (1985) for couples to not discuss everything including fear that it would be detrimental to the relationship, harm the partner’s feelings, and create more stress for the person or between the people. However, avoiding conflict has been found to not be a very productive mode of resolving marital conflict (Steinmetz, 1977).

Summary. The mother-father dyad, team, carries out many of the family functions

including the disciplining of children. Parents in this study describe themselves as a discipline team. Parents described the enactment of roles, support, and communication as methods they used to function as a team, to build their team, and to resolve conflict. Mothers were identified as the discipline team leaders. Most of these findings are consistent with the marital relationship and marital interaction literature. However, new insights were identified in respect to the functioning of a discipline team, how to build a discipline team and methods of conflict resolution used by parent discipline teams.

Methodological Observations

This section discusses the issues surrounding the methodology and research design. Both strengths and issues related to the study's methodology are discussed.

A strength of the methodology was the rich, descriptive data generated by the interview process. This data set was created by conducting interviews with both parents present, facilitating interaction between the parents resulted in the researcher being able to observe interactions.

An issue identified was the difficulty in recruiting participants for this study. The data collection phase of the project took seven months and included the distribution of approximately 400 invitations to participate to result in eight families participating. A variety of reasons are identified for the recruiting difficulties experienced. One reason identified by the researcher and validated by parents was the challenge of meeting with both parents at the same time. When arranging interviews it took a significant amount of discussion to find a time that was suitable for both parents considering work and family obligations. Initially, my invitations to participant indicated a specific day of the week to meet, Sunday, which may have not been conducive to facilitating participation of the

population I was wanting to study. When I removed the recommendation of a specific day from my invitations the number of participants interested in participating increased. Further, in support of this as a reason, I found that when I offered to be very flexible in the time I was willing to meet most parents identified the preferred time to be a week night after the children went to bed. I conducted most of my interviews after 9:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Another potential reason for recruitment difficulties was the reluctance of fathers to be interviewed with the mothers regarding the disciplinarian role in families that were dominated by mothers. A few mothers I spoke to casually, who were in the target population, identified an unwillingness on behalf of their husbands to be interviewed about such a topic. A possible reason for fathers being reluctant to participate may be that they do not perceive themselves as significantly involved in the disciplining of their preschool children and therefore are uncomfortable in discussing the topic. Another reason maybe that the mothers perceive the fathers as not being willing to participate due to the mothers assuming responsibility for disciplining their children.

A final reason for the experience of recruitment difficulties could have been the sensitive nature of the topic, discipline. Discipline is a sensitive topic in today's society because of it's link with child abuse. This may have limited some parents from being willing to participate (Durrant, 1993). In future projects with similar populations methods of recruitment that maybe helpful include placing an advertisement in newspapers and offering an honorarium to participants.

A consideration that should be noted in this research project and in relation to the literature is the focus has been on middle-income families. This leads to a question as to

whether these results would be different for low-income families.

Relationship of the Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The Family Interactional Theory (FIT) within the context of the Family Developmental Theory (FDT) was chosen as the conceptual framework for this study. FDT was helpful in providing background related specifically to families with preschool children. Both of these theories are categorized as Family Social Science Theories which focus on well families rather than pathological or dysfunctional families, and this was consistent with the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the unit of interest of the family interactional theory is the family. It perceives the family unit as consisting of interacting personalities and examines interactional family dynamics, including communication processes, roles, decision making and problem solving, and socialization patterns.

The premises of FIT informed the literature review, method and questions generated to address this research project. The FIT provided a framework from which to explore the interaction between parents regarding the discipline of their preschool children. Interaction between parents is a means by which they carry out their functions in the family such as disciplining children. It was meaningful to understand and interpret the discipline roles in the family, the communication between parents regarding discipline and decision making. Further, FIT and the importance of socialization guided the study to explore the intergenerational transmission of discipline practices and beliefs. The focus on the processes within the family was a primary strength of this theory providing insight into the process of discipline. In summary, FIT was a benefit as a conceptual framework to study the interaction between parents regarding discipline of preschool children. FIT and an interactional approach have been identified as most relevant to family nursing

(Friedman, 1998).

A criticism of FIT is that it did not provide me with an understanding of the context in which the family finds itself as it's focus is on the family unit. Consideration of the context in which the family finds itself would help to identify those factors in the larger system, beyond the family system, which may be influencing the family interaction regarding discipline. The larger system or context in family interaction may consider the environment, community, history, and culture. In this study, parents identified larger systems as influencing their discipline process and the interaction between them regarding discipline. Regarding the discipline process, parents described taking a variety of factors into consideration when disciplining their preschool children such as the environment and other people being present. Further, parental interaction and discipline roles were identified by the parents as being influenced by their experience in their family of origin. "Every system is part of a larger system referred to as environment and continually interacts with it's environment." (Casey, 1996, p. 51). All of these have a potential to influence the internal family interaction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for nursing research, education, and practice.

Nursing Research

Recommendations for research include expanding on this research to determine if these findings apply to other families with varying demographic characteristics such as lower economic status, differing cultures, and differing social backgrounds. In addition,

future research could explore if the discipline used by parents or how parents interact with regards to disciplining their preschool children varies with the length of marriage or maturity of the parental relationship.

A research topic that needs further study is parental consensus regarding child discipline. Studies on this topic may focus on the strengths within a family in which there is consensus and means of promoting consensus between parents. Further, a study of the association between marital conflict and conflict regarding disciplining children could assist professionals in working with these families. To examine the methods used by parents to build their discipline team or to deal with conflict through an observational component in which parents are observed actually discussing discipline issues may glean further knowledge. Finally, to enhance recruitment and participation of both parents in a family it is important to be flexible as the timing of the research interviews.

Nursing Education

The results from this study have implications for nursing education. Disciplining their children is a significant contribution made by parents in raising their children. Community health nursing courses have the opportunity to include child discipline as a component of the curricula. Nursing students and graduates need to gain an appreciation for the array of factors that may influence a couples discipline practices including socialization in family of origin, other present day influences, and culture. Education regarding family theory and specifically family nursing theory should form the basis for this knowledge. Educators can assist in this process by exploring these factors and emphasizing the importance of tailoring nursing interventions to each family. In addition, it is important to educate nurses to be aware of parents of preschool children needs for

discipline information and how they could work with the couple to provide for these learning opportunities.

Nursing Practice

As health care providers, nurses need to address the social and emotional development of children (Ford, Massey, & Hyde, 1986). The role of parents is to foster the development of their children. Nurses in the community setting have an opportunity to work with families regarding discipline. In this study, there was opportunity for community health nurses to play a significant role in meeting the informational needs of parents regarding disciplining of their preschool children. However, community health nurses were not identified as a source of discipline information or of developmental milestone knowledge by these parents. Nurses need to seize this opportunity to work with families who are rearing young children.

In working with these families, nurses need to assess the processes parents use in building their parent discipline team such as who is the team leader and methods of decision making used by the couple. In addition, when providing the information on discipline to parents nurses need to provide this information in an a method that is preferred by parents and in a condensed format as they lead busy lives.

Further, nurses in the community may assist parents who are experiencing struggles and stress by connecting parents with other parents in the community. The nurse may refer the parent to an existing parent support group or facilitate the formation of such a group.

In summary, the findings of this study have implications for nursing research, education and practice.

Reflection and Reflexivity

Reflection

Throughout this research project I reflected on my thoughts and feelings. In addition, fieldnotes were kept while the interviews were being conducted and analyzed to facilitate reflection on the research process and on my part of researcher in the process. Rubinstein (1991) describes reflection as a process whereby the researcher contemplates the fieldwork experience to form specific self-images.

When I looked back on the fieldwork experience two main self-images and the attached feelings came into focus. One image is of the novice researcher and the other of the competent practitioner. As the novice researcher I experienced many feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt: why was it so difficult to recruit participants for this study, am I asking the right questions in the right way, and am I really listening to what the parents have to say? As the experience progressed and I read the transcripts from the earlier interviews I gained self-confidence as an interviewer. The self-doubt and uncertainty related to recruitment was alleviated by talking with my thesis committee and other masters degree students who provided helpful suggestions and listened to my struggle.

The image of competent practitioner was one that challenged my role as researcher at times during the fieldwork experience. Swanson (1986) identified that it can be problematic for the beginning nurse researcher conducting qualitative research to separate the two roles of nurse and researcher. A few of the families I interviewed were struggling with the disciplining of their preschool child and identified areas of concern which could have resulted in the researcher intervening within the research context; an ethical dilemma. Lipson (1994) identified the dilemma not by whether to intervene, but what

should be done and how can it be done responsibly. I was aware of this potential conflict prior to beginning this experience and had prepared a means for addressing it. During these interviews I reminded myself as to the role I was in and the concern for conflict. Parents who requested information regarding parenting discipline or identified knowledge deficits were provided with contact information and referred to a community resource. In addition, all parents who participated in the study were given two pamphlets on discipline and children. The preparation for the anticipated dilemma was invaluable to maintaining my role as researcher in this project. I was aware that it is so easy for human beings to slip into a role that is more comfortable, that of practitioner for me, from the novice role of researcher.

Reflexivity

According to Porter (1993), reflexivity assumes the realization that researchers are part of the social world that they study. As a part of this social world I reflected on and attempted to understand my own beliefs and values about parent discipline. The first step I took to reflect upon my beliefs and values was to keep a journal of my feelings and thoughts through out the research process. Secondly, at numerous points during the interview and data analysis phases of the research process I reflected upon my beliefs and values to clarify those held by the participants and those that were mine. A belief or value that I reflected upon often during this research project was the use of spanking as a means of discipline. Many of the participants used this method to discipline their preschool children. This belief or value is not consistent with my beliefs or values either as a nurse or parent.

This process of reflexivity contributes to the confirmability of the research project. The

participant's own words, quotes from transcripts, were used in writing up the findings to verify my interpretations of the data, thereby facilitating the reader's ability to determine if the analysis reflects the participant's reality. The use of the participants own words assures that the study findings are grounded in the data themselves (Sandelowski, 1986).

Summary

In this chapter the finding of this research study were discussed in relation to: (a) the current literature on this topic, (b) methodological strengths and issues, (c) the conceptual framework (d) recommendations for nursing research, education, practice and policy; and (e) reflection on the researcher role in this project.

Parents in this study described the process of disciplining their preschool children. They shared what they learnt from their parents regarding discipline and how they modify this knowledge with present day sources of discipline information. Insight into their understanding of discipline was gained as well as the challenges they face in disciplining their developing children. Further, parents described working together as a parent discipline team with all the effort, benefits, and conflict associated this team work.

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Appendix A

Nursing Research with Persons and Families

Unit of Interest	Focus of Attention	Level of Data
I. Individual/family member	1. Individual 2. Family member 3. Individual/family member (person) 4. Family as context	a. Individual b. Relational c. Transactional
II. Individual/family subgroup	1. Individual 2. Family member 3. Individual/family member (person) 4. Relationship 5. Subgroup as system 6. Family as context	a. Individual b. Relational c. Transactional
III. Family group	1. Family as group 2. Individual as context	a. Individual b. Relational c. Transactional
IV. Individual/family system	1. Individual 2. Family member 3. Individual/family member (person) 4. Relationship 5. Individual/family system	a. Individual b. Relational c. Transactional

Source: Robinson, C. A. (1995). Unifying distinctions for nursing research with persons and families. Journal of Family Nursing, 1(1), 8-29.

Appendix B**Letter Requesting Access to Daycare**

October 15, 1998

Daycare Director
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Dear*****,

I am a registered nurse and graduate student in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba. I am investigating the interaction between parents and how they discipline their preschool child. The purpose of this letter is to determine the feasibility of recruiting dual parent families with a preschool child from your daycare.

It would be helpful to know if there are any policies in your daycare regarding the conduct of research. This research proposal will be reviewed by the Ethical Review Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, prior to implementation of the study.

Participants will sign a consent form and all procedures for the protection of human subjects will be followed. I will be conducting one in-depth semi-structured interview with each family unit (i.e. parents).

I am requesting to meet with you to discuss specific questions you might have and provide any further information you may require. The data collection is targeted for the late fall and winter of 1998/1999. Thank-you for your time and consideration. I will be calling for an appointment and I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Donna Vielhaber B.N., R.N.
Graduate Student
University of Manitoba

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate An Exploration of Parent Interaction and Child Discipline

My name is Donna Vielhaber, I am a registered nurse, parent, and graduate student in the Masters of Nursing Program at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. I am inviting you to take part in a study to discuss interactions between parents regarding discipline of a preschool child.

The study is entitled, "An Ethnographic Study of Parent Interaction and Child Discipline". The purpose of the study is to look at the interaction between mothers and fathers regarding discipline of their preschool child. We know that parenting style and marital interaction are related to child behavior, however, the interaction between parents with regards to discipline has not been studied. I would like to explore the interaction between parents regarding discipline.

I would like to talk to both mother and father together at the same time about their interaction regarding child discipline. I would need to interview both parents once and would require about one hour of your time. The interview can be conducted in your home and your children may be present during the interview. During the interview you will be asked to answer some questions and complete a small questionnaire. I would need to tape record the interview, which will later be typed word for word for the purposes of the study. You are being invited to participate because you are a family made up of a mother, father, and oldest child between the ages of 3 and 5 years old.

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in the study. If you decide to participate you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Whether you participate or not, will have no impact on your child's daycare situation. The daycare provider will not know whether you have decided to participate or not. Your confidentiality will be maintained during the study. The information gathered will only be shared with my research committee and your identity will not be made known to anyone. The results of the study will be printed in a final report and may be published but no names will not be used, nor will your identity be made known.

If you think you might be interested in participating or want to know more about the study, please phone me at the number provided below and leave a message on the answering machine. If you have any questions you may contact my study advisor Dr. David Gregory, Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba, at 474-9201.

Please call:
Donna Vielhaber

Sincerely,

Donna M. Vielhaber, RN, BN

Appendix D

Phone Explanation of Study to Participants

My name is Donna Vielhaber. I am a registered nurse and graduate student in the Masters of Nursing Program at the University of Manitoba. As part of my program, I am conducting a study to explore the interaction between parents regarding child discipline. Understanding the interactions between parents regarding discipline may assist nurses to work with parents to improve their discipline.

You have been asked to take part in this study because you have a family made up of a mother, father and oldest child between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. I would like to hear your thoughts about parent interaction regarding child discipline.

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part, I would ask you some questions for about one hour in your home on a Sunday evening about parent interaction regarding discipline. Everything you tell me will be private and your name will not be used at anytime. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and if you decide not to take part in the study you are free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to take part in the study the daycare will not know.

Are you and your partner willing to participate in the study?

What would be a convenient Sunday and time to meet, I need to have both parents present for the interview?

Thank-you for considering to participate in the study.

Appendix E

An Exploration of Parent Interaction and Child Discipline Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study entitled, "An Ethnographic Study of Parent Interaction and Child Discipline". The purpose of the study is to look at the interaction between mothers and fathers regarding discipline of their preschool child. We know that parenting style and marital interaction are related to child behavior, however, the interaction between parents with regards to discipline has not been studied. I would like to explore the interaction between parents regarding discipline.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you meet the following criteria: a) two parent families - the family is intact with both parents living at home, b) parents of oldest child between the ages of 3 and 5 years old, and c) in the St. Vital Community. During this interview you will be asked to answer some questions and complete a small questionnaire, which would take about one hour. With your permission, I would like to tape record our interview, which will later be typed word for word for the purposes of the study. I need to have both mother and father present for the meeting so that I can explore the interaction between the parents.

Your name will not be on any of the forms to ensure your confidentiality, all information will be numbered. The information gathered will only be shared with my research committee and your identity will not be made known to anyone. The results of the study will be printed in a final report and may be published but again, your name will not be used, nor will your identity be made known.

There are no direct benefits to you, except the knowledge that your participation will provide understanding to the issue which will help mothers and fathers like yourself in the future. There are no direct risks involved in participating in the study. You may experience some inconvenience in having to be interviewed for one hour and answering some of the questions may lead to some disagreement between you and your partner.

There is one situation during which the confidentiality would be breached if you consent to participate in this study. This situation would be the disclosure to me any information related to abuse of a child, as child abuse is reportable by law.

The study has received approval from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Nursing Ethical Review Committee. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide to not take part, answer certain questions, refuse to answer any question, have the interview tape recorded, or drop out of the study at any time. Your decision to take part or drop out will not affect the services you receive. If you agree to take part in this study, please complete the consent below.

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact myself or any member of my thesis committee: Dr. David Gregory (Chair), Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba, at 474-9201; Dr. Pamela Hawranik, Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba, at 474-6716; or Dr. Caroline Piotrowski, Department of Family Studies, University of Manitoba, 474-9033.

I consent to take part in this study as explained. I understand that my rights as an individual will be protected. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may drop out of the study at any time. Refusing to take part in or drop out of the study will not affect any services I am receiving any time.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Sincerely,

Donna M. Vielhaber. RN, BN

Request for a Summary of the Study Results

Please indicate if you wish to receive a summary of the study results. If yes please provide your name and full address. A copy will be mailed to you when the study is complete.

Yes: _____

No: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS:

Appendix F

Interview Guide

Greeting:

My name is Donna Vielhaber, I am a registered nurse and a graduate student in the Master of Nursing Program at the University of Manitoba. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. You have a copy of the explanation of the study which I am conducting, but in addition I would like to take a few moments to review the process and to have you sign a consent form which indicates you are voluntarily participating in the study.

Introduction:

The purpose of the research study is to explore the interaction within a couple regarding child discipline in terms of: (a) the socialization of parenting discipline style, (b) their perceived discipline roles, (c) communication patterns regarding discipline, and (d) decision making regarding discipline.

Directions to Couple:

Following my interview with you, I will be asking you to complete a short Questionnaire which takes about 5 minutes to provide me with some background information. You do not have to put your name on the questionnaire. The interview will take about one hour in total during which I will be exploring your interaction regarding discipline through some questions. All information that you give me will be kept strictly confidential and only seen by my research committee. With your permission, I would like to tape record our interview, which will later be transcribed for the purposes of the study.

You will only be identified by a number, your name will not appear anywhere in the study. At anytime during the interview you can ask to stop the tape or to stop the interview. You are free to refuse to answer any questions at anytime.

Please answer the questions according to how you feel about the issue and according to your personal experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Either of you may answer any of the questions. If I hear from only one of you and the other doesn't answer, I'll assume that you're in agreement. So, if you don't agree, please let me know.

Do you have any questions at this time?

Interview Questions:

1a) Describe a discipline situation which happened over the weekend, in which both parents were involved, either immediately or later on where there was support and agreement between the two parents.

- Probes - what happened just before or during- perceived cause
- where did it happen- location
 - who was involved
 - when did it happen- time of day

1b) Describe a discipline situation which happened over the weekend, in which both parents were involved, either immediately or later on where there was a lack of support and disagreement between the two parents.

- Probes - what happened just before or during- perceived cause
- where did it happen- location
 - who was involved
 - when did it happen- time of day

2) Describe a really challenging discipline experience which happened over the weekend in which both parents were involved, either immediately or later on. One in which the parents had difficulty.

- Probes - what happened just before or during- perceived cause
- where did it happen- location
 - who was involved
 - when did it happen- time of day

3) When I say the word “discipline”, what are some thoughts that come to your mind?

- Probes - similar or different to punishment
- discipline methods
 - purpose of discipline
 - results of discipline

4) How should misbehavior ideally be handled? What do parents need to consider when disciplining their preschool children?

- Probes - type of misbehavior
- amount of misbehavior
 - purpose of discipline
 - results of discipline

5) Where do you get information about disciplining your child?

- Probes - parents
- grandparents
 - family
 - friends
 - co-workers
 - professionals- PHN, doctor, daycare

- reading

6) Tell me about the part/role you play in disciplining your preschool child in your home.

Probes - who's responsible for discipline

- who usually responds first
- does someone begin and another person follow-up

7) Would you say there is a difference between the role either of you play regarding discipline?

Probes - who disciplines most often

- who deals with certain situations

8) Tell me how your parents disciplined you as a child.

Probes - different from how parents discipline now

- different from how they discipline now

9) Do you discipline your child any differently than how your parents disciplined either of you?

Probes - do you discipline similar to the way your parents disciplined you?

- do you discipline opposite to the way your parents disciplined you?

10) How do you communicate with each other regarding disciplining your child.

Probes - who begins the discussion

- who does most of the talking

11) What are some of the kinds of decisions both of you make regarding discipline?

Probes - what type of discipline should be used

- what discipline
- who should discipline
- when to discipline

12) Tell me about how decisions are made between you regarding discipline.

Probes - by total agreement, consensus

- by agree to disagree but have a decision, accommodation
- ignore the situation, decision occurs through inaction

13) Do either of you have any other thoughts about the interaction between you with regards to child discipline?

Conclusion:

14) Is there anything important that I have missed in respect to parent interaction regarding discipline?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. It is greatly appreciated.

15) Do you have any questions before we conclude?

**May I contact you again in a few weeks to clarify information regarding this interview?
Thank you, it has been a pleasure to have this opportunity to talk with both of you.**

Appendix G

Demographic Data Form

Identification Number: _____ Date Form Completed: ____/____/____
Day Month Year

Please complete the following personal information questions. The questions are important to the study and will contribute valuable information.

A) Your age: _____ years

B) Your gender (please circle one): Male Female

C) Your highest level of education completed (please circle one);

Elementary through high school:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13

Vocational school or community college: 1 2 3 4

University: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

D) Occupation: _____

E) Please indicate the number of hours worked per week at place of employment:

_____ hours

F) Please indicate the average number of hours per week you spend parenting (caring for your child): _____ hours

G) Religious affiliation (please check one):

___ Christian

___ Islam

___ Hindu

___ Sikh

___ Other: _____

___ No religious affiliation

H) Do you actually practice your religion? Yes _____ NO _____

I) Your family's combined annual income (please check one):

___ Below \$10,000

___ \$10,000 to \$19,999

___ \$20,000 to \$29,999

___ \$30,000 to \$39,999

___ \$40,000 to \$49,999

___ \$50,000 to \$59,999

___ \$60,000 to \$69,999

___ Above \$70,000

J) Number of children in family: _____

K) Age of child as of last birthday: _____

L) Sex of child (please circle one): Male Female