

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF DISCIPLINE PRACTICES

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This study is dedicated to the author's husband, Jim, and daughter, Christie, who provided the author with love, support, encouragement, and understanding during the pursuit of the author's educational goals. This study is also dedicated to Ms. Esther Bacon, RN, who endured many hardships and inspired the author with her dedication and her zest for life.

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study, utilizing a grounded theory design, was conducted to explore the discipline practices parents most frequently utilize and to explore parents' perception of extreme discipline. The background information was based on three major philosophies of discipline. The measurement tool consisted of four questions about parents' perceptions of discipline practices and extreme discipline practices.

The sample consisted of eight Anglo parents of three to four year old children. Categories were developed for each of the four questions from the interviews of these eight parents. The findings suggested the parents utilize a variety of discipline practices. Routine discipline practices ranged from discussion to spanking. Extreme discipline practices for these parents were yelling, spanking, and deprivation periods. When these parents use extreme discipline practices certain conditions seem to exist; destructive behavior, child repeatedly told not to do a behavior, the parent feeling frustrated or to their level of tolerance, and specific upsetting behavior. The categories that emerged from the question "what would help you to avoid using extreme discipline practices" were as follows: "nothing," "discussion," "time," "something concrete

to work with," "gaining control of self," and "maintaining a routine." The parents did not indicate that information or education would be beneficial in helping them avoid the use of extreme discipline practices.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Discipline is an important child-rearing practice that confronts every parent and child. The need for discipline arises from the necessity to bring about a balance between what an individual wants to do, what he wants others to do, and the limitations and restrictions demanded by society or by the hazards in the physical environment (Jersild, 1968). Socialization of the child, therefore, obviously requires the imposition of controls. Without controls the skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for a satisfactory interdependent existence in a complex society could not be learned (Mussen, Conger, and Kagan, 1969).

The aim in discipline is not to curtail freedom but to give a child freedom within manageable limits and to help the child develop his own inner controls (Schaefer, 1976). However, the use of excessive control and excessive discipline can threaten the child's development of autonomy, self-confidence, and self-reliance (Mussen et al., 1969). Discipline is most beneficial when it is firm, constant, and flexible, applied only in the child's own interest in terms of his development, and only to the extent necessary to achieve its purpose. Discipline is least effective when

it is utilized to express the parent's hostility or the parent's need to control or dominate the child (Mussen et al., 1969).

Uniform discipline practices do not exist. Discipline practices range from restrictive to permissive, from reasoning to physical punishment, or from mild to extreme practices (Baumrind, 1968). Many factors influence the parents' choice of discipline practices and parents receive advice from many sources on discipline. From past research one can determine the effects of various discipline practices. However, one can not determine the types of discipline practices parents most frequently utilize. Some parents can effectively utilize reasoning or withdrawal of privileges (Baumrind, 1968). However, others resort to physical punishment or neglect and the result is often an abused child. These extreme discipline practices are not beneficial to the child since this type of discipline does not promote the child's development of autonomy and self-reliance and may result in emotional trauma (Medinnus and Johnson, 1970).

Statement of the Problem

Discipline practices vary widely. A parent's philosophy of discipline can utilize methods which range from authoritarian to permissive or a parent may use a combination of the various discipline practices. Also one

parent's perception of an extreme discipline practice may not be an extreme discipline practice to another parent. Parents who receive inadequate information about discipline may utilize extreme discipline when a less extreme practice could be as effective.

In general, nurses view being knowledgeable about the education of parents as one of their responsibilities. Nurses also feel that when information is given to parents that they are teaching. Also, providing of information and parent education are frequently viewed by nurses as a way to cope with many of the problems parents experience. At the beginning of this study, the investigator was interested in the effect education had on parents' discipline practices.

In order to provide parents with adequate information on discipline practices, one must be knowledgeable of the parents' perception of discipline and extreme discipline and the discipline practices that parents are utilizing. The problem of this investigation is to explore parents' perception of extreme discipline and to explore the discipline practices parents most frequently utilize.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine: what discipline practices do parents most frequently utilize, what are parents' perceptions of extreme discipline, what circumstances usually occur when parents utilize extreme

discipline, and what would parents perceive as helpful in avoiding an extreme discipline situation?

Significance of the Problem

Discipline is a child-rearing practice which influences the child's socialization process and is related to the child's physical and mental well being (Mussen et al., 1969). Therefore, discipline and child-rearing become the concern of health care professionals. In order to provide adequate anticipatory guidance to parents, nurses must be knowledgeable about the discipline practices that contribute most optimally to the socialization and well being of the child and to the maintenance of an adequate parent-child relationship. The nurse must be aware of the many factors that influence parents' choice of discipline practices and of the discipline practices that parents most frequently utilize. Nurses have a professional responsibility to be knowledgeable about discipline so that they can guide parents in their efforts to rear mentally and physically healthy children.

When one attempts to define this important child-rearing practice, one discovers that a uniform definition of discipline does not exist. The general misunderstanding of discipline practices and the lack of research in the area of discipline causes difficulty in the development of a framework for discipline (Medinnus and Johnson, 1970).

Measurement problems and the innumerable variables that affect discipline practices increase the difficulty in researching the concept of discipline.

Nurses must have a broad base of knowledge about discipline practices in order to be able to counsel parents more effectively about discipline practices. The aim of this study is to attempt to increase the existing knowledge base about the discipline practices that are utilized by parents and the guidance that parents perceive as helpful in their attempt to adapt optimal discipline practices. This knowledge would facilitate the provision, by nurses, of more adequate and valuable anticipatory guidance to parents. Also this knowledge could be utilized to help prevent the negative effects of extreme discipline and could be also utilized in the prevention of child abuse.

Background

The concepts reviewed in this section will provide a perspective which allows some insights into the question the investigator is interested in, discipline practices. However, these concepts do not develop into a conceptual framework or allow understanding of the problem, the data, or the concept of extreme discipline practices. The background information provides one with a perspective that deals with discipline in general.

The goal of discipline is to teach the child to develop his own inner controls (Schaefer, 1976). In order to reach this goal a parent can utilize one of the three main philosophies of discipline: authoritative, permissive, or authoritarian. Parents frequently combine the three main philosophies of discipline and this may make it difficult to determine their main philosophy of discipline.

The parent who utilizes authoritarian discipline attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set of standards of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority (Baumrind, 1968). This parent values obedience as a virtue and favors forceful, punitive measures to curb self-will at points where the child's beliefs and actions are in conflict with what the parent believes is right conduct. The parent also believes in keeping the child in his place, in restricting his autonomy, and in instilling in the child the respect for work. The parent who uses authoritarian discipline highly values the preservation of order and traditional structure. Verbal give and take is not encouraged and the parent believes the child should accept the parent's word for what is right.

By contrast, the parent who utilizes authoritative discipline practices attempts to direct the child's activities in a rational issue-oriented manner. The parent

encourages verbal give and take and shares with the child the reasoning behind her philosophy (Baumrind, 1968). Both disciplined conformity and autonomous self-will are valued by the authoritative parent. Therefore, this parent exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not close the child in with restrictions. The parent who uses authoritative discipline enforces her own perspective as an adult, but recognizes the child's individual interests and special ways. This parent uses reason, power, and shaping by reinforcement and regime but does not base her decision on group consensus or the individual child's desires. However, the authoritative parent does solicit the child's objections when the child refuses to conform.

The parent who utilizes permissive discipline practices attempts to behave in a non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner toward the child's impulses, desires, and actions (Baumrind, 1968). This parent consults with the child about policy decisions and gives explanations about family rules and makes few demands for orderly behavior and household responsibility. The parent who uses permissive discipline presents herself to the child as a resource for the child to use as he wishes, not as an ideal to be emulated, and not as an active agent responsible for altering or shaping his behavior. The child is allowed to regulate his own activities as much as possible. The parent avoids the exercise of control, attempts to use reason and

manipulation, and does not encourage the child to obey externally defined standards.

The type of parental authority or discipline utilized by parents does have an effect on the behavior of preschool children (Becker, 1964). Children whose parents utilize authoritative discipline usually are self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, and content (Baumrind, 1967). The children of authoritarian parents are, relative to others, discontent, withdrawn, and distrustful (Baumrind, 1967). The children of permissive parents have been found to be the least self-reliant, explorative, and self-controlled children (Baumrind, 1967).

Extreme discipline or punishment can be an effective means of controlling children's behavior (Parke, 1969). However, the operation of punishment is a complex process. Its effects are quite varied and highly dependent on such parameters as timing, the affectional and/or status relationship between the agent and recipient of punishment, intensity, consistency, and the kind of cognitive structuring that accompanies the punishing stimulus. It is also unlikely that a socialization program based entirely on punishment would be very effective (Walters and Parke, 1967). The child needs to be taught new appropriate responses in addition to learning suppression of unacceptable forms of behavior.

An important factor that influences the utilization of extreme discipline in our society is the culturally determined permissive attitude toward the use of physical force in parent-child interactions (Gil, 1973). There appears to exist a general toleration of a measure of physical force in child-rearing and there are no clear-cut criteria concerning the point beyond which the measure becomes excessive (Alvy, 1975). Therefore, the parent is encouraged to utilize punishment, but must determine for himself beyond what point the punishment becomes extreme.

Extreme discipline to one parent may be a slap on the hand. A severe beating which results in fractures may not be extreme discipline to another parent. Since parents' perceptions of extreme discipline vary, one needs to understand a parent's perception before guidance on discipline practices can be beneficial to the parent. Also in order to provide parents with adequate information on discipline practices, one needs to have knowledge of the discipline practices that parents most frequently utilize, the situation(s) that occur when parents utilize extreme discipline, and the information on discipline that parents perceive as helpful. The focus of this study is on parents' perceptions of discipline practices and extreme discipline. Knowledge of these areas must be increased in order to prevent the negative effects of extreme discipline.

Definitions

Discipline: A child-rearing practice that is utilized to teach the child to develop his own inner controls (Schaefer, 1976; Jersild, 1968).

Discipline practice: A technique utilized by a parent to instruct the child or direct his actions so that his behavior complies to acceptable conduct or action.

Extreme discipline practice: A means of controlling children's behavior that utilizes techniques that exceed the ordinary.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The majority of the research that has been conducted on discipline was concerned with the correlation of the types of discipline with the child's personality outcomes and factors that have an effect on the type of discipline utilized; such as sex, education, and economic level. Research is lacking in the area of extreme discipline practices. However, the factors that have an effect on discipline practices will influence the type of discipline practices that parents utilize. Also these factors will have some effect on parents' utilization of extreme discipline practices. The utilization of extreme discipline practices has a negative effect on the child's development (Mussen et al., 1969). Extreme discipline practices are at the farthest end of the continuum of discipline practices and also of the consequences of discipline. This chapter will review the literature in the areas of the factors which influence discipline practices and the consequences of discipline. The review of literature will provide a perspective of discipline, in general. However, it will not provide insight into extreme discipline practices or parents' perception of discipline practices.

Factors Which Influence Discipline
Practices

Sears, Maccoby, and Levine (1957) demonstrated, in their study of 379 American mothers, that socioeconomic class does affect discipline practices. Working class mothers were more punitive toward their children with respect to toilet training, dependency, sex, and aggression training. The greater amount of punishment used by working class mothers was comprised mainly of deprivation of privileges and physical punishment. However, there was no difference in the ratings on isolation and withdrawal of love.

The research of Bronfenbrenner (1958) and Kohn (1963) supported most of Sears' findings. Their research has shown that middle class parents provide more warmth and are more likely to use isolation, reasoning, guilt-arousing appeals, or a show of disappointment in disciplining the child. Middle class parents are more likely to be permissive about demands for sex behavior, aggression to parent, attention from the child, table manners, neatness, noise, bedtime rules, and general obedience. In contrast working class parents are more likely to use ridicule, shouting, or physical punishment in disciplining the child and are generally more restrictive (Kohn, 1963).

A study by Roy (1950) illustrates that there may be a number of environmental factors in the structure of daily living that in part influence disciplinary practices. Roy

found a direct increase in the permissiveness of child-rearing attitudes as the number of rooms in the house increased.

Attempts to account for these social class differences have called attention to the higher intelligence and education of middle class parents. Also middle class parents are more exposed to current expert opinion through their reading on child-rearing (Bronfenbrenner, 1958). However, Kohn (1963) has suggested that the life conditions of socioeconomic classes and the resulting parental values may provide a more basic explanation. Working class parental values center more on conformity to external proscriptions and middle class parental values center more on self-direction. This value orientation leads middle class parents to seek and accept expert opinion on discipline practices.

Sears et al. (1957) concluded from their research that better educated mothers utilized less restrictive and more permissive discipline practices than less educated mothers. Better educated mothers also used reasoning more and tangible rewards less.

A number of studies, based on children's reports, have revealed differences in the parent-child interaction patterns based on sex (Becker, 1964). Some of the major findings are as follows. The mother is usually seen as being more loving and nurturant than the father and the

father is perceived as being stricter. Mothers are viewed by children as using more psychological control, especially with girls. In contrast, fathers are viewed as using more physical punishment, especially with boys. The father is also viewed as more fear arousing. In general, boys feel that they receive the most punishment. The opposite-sexed parent has been rated by children as more likely to grant autonomy than the same-sexed parent and the same-sexed parent has been rated as more benevolent and more frustrating (Becker, 1964).

Sears et al. (1957) found in their research that there were three main differences in discipline practices that were utilized with boys and girls. Boys received more physical punishment than girls. Girls received somewhat more praise for good behavior than boys. Also girls were more often subjected to withdrawal of love for bad behavior. Therefore, it appears that the sex of the child would influence discipline practices.

The Fels longitudinal study is the only available study that considers the effects of age of the child in relation to the mother's restrictiveness and systematically explores the consequences for the child over a thirty year period (Kagan and Moss, 1962). Early restrictiveness (birth to three years of age) appears to have far greater inhibiting power than later restrictiveness (three to ten years of age). Restrictiveness at later ages can succeed in

producing a conforming-dependent behavior; however, it is likely to generate more hostility in the child in the form of controlled hostility. Kagan and Moss (1962) found that at the later ages, the child is more likely to be aware of the unfairness of a restrictive parent and resent excessive controls. Also at the later age, the child is more capable of retaliating with aggression; however, they found that this aggression was eventually inhibited. They also concluded from the data that boys are more likely to fight against a restrictive mother successfully and that in girls restrictiveness eventually leads to a passive, dependent girl.

Chamberlin (1975) investigated maternal use of positive contact in 198 families. Positive contact was measured by asking the mother how often she played with the child and praised the child. Chamberlin (1975) found that the mother's use of positive contact was related to her educational level ($r = +.25, p < .01$), the birth order of the child ($r = -.21, p < .02$), number of children in the family ($r = -.31, p < .01$), the father's use of positive contact ($r = .21, p < .01$), and to a friendly outgoing pattern of child behavior ($r = .41, p < .001$). A significant relationship of positive contact to the mother's use of physical punishment, her protectiveness, her tendency to comply with the child's demands, or her child-rearing ideology and other attitudes did not exist.

Child-rearing experience may also affect a mother's use of authoritarian discipline. Erhardt (1975) concluded from her study of 309 white and 130 black women that women who have delivered only one child utilize a higher level of authoritarian discipline than women who have delivered more than one child. This may reflect that women who are multiparous utilize different discipline techniques because of child-rearing experience or increasing liberalization of thought regarding family life at the time.

Consequences of Discipline

The type of discipline utilized by a parent has an effect on the behavior of the child. In order to obtain a better understanding of discipline, one must review the consequences of discipline.

Barton, Dielman, and Cottell (1977) concluded from their research on the child-rearing practices of mothers that the mother's child-rearing practices questionnaire factor scores account for between four and thirteen per cent of the variance in the child's personality scores. A section of the questionnaire dealt with discipline practices. However, the effect of discipline practices on the child's personality was not analyzed separately from the other child-rearing practices. Therefore, one can not determine how much of the four to thirteen per cent effect resulted from discipline practices alone.

As part of an extensive study of nursery school children, Sears et al. (1953) examined the consequences of punitiveness of mother for aggressive behavior in the child. For boys, maternal punitiveness was positively correlated with overt aggression in school and for girls the relationship was curvilinear. Girls of both high and low punitive mothers showed less aggression in school than girls of moderately punitive mothers. Also maternal punitiveness was positively correlated with dependency in boys and negatively in girls.

Hollenberg and Sperry (1951) utilized 30 of the same subjects and the same ratings of maternal punitiveness as Sears et al. (1953) utilized. They found a direct positive relation between maternal punitiveness and aggression in doll play for both boys and girls. This may suggest that high maternal punitiveness produces as strong an aggressive reaction in girls as in boys but its expression was inhibited in the schoolroom situation.

Becker et al. (1962) utilized an adaptive form of the measurement tool used by Sears et al. (1953). They reproduced some of the findings of Sears et al. (1953). There was strong confirmation of the hypothesis that the degree of hostility of both parents and the use of physical punishment is related to aggressive behaviors in children (Becker et al., 1962). Girls who were moderately punished by mothers were the most aggressive at school. The

relations to the mother's hostility and physical punishment were approximately linear for boys at school and at home and for girls at home. On the other hand, moderate punishment by fathers resulted in boys being less aggressive at home and school. Aggression in girls at home and school were linearly related to the father's hostility and physical punishment.

Becker et al. (1962) also related personality problems in children to a parent's use of hostility and physical punishment. If the mother was hostile and punitive, the child tended to be dominant and this relationship was stronger for boys than girls. If the father was hostile, punitive, and strict, the child was rated as having more personality problems than children whose fathers were not hostile, punitive, and strict. This was most frequently true in girls when the mother set a model of submissiveness.

Generally, the research literature indicates a number of consistent consequences of restrictive and permissive approaches to discipline. Restrictiveness fosters well-controlled and socialized behavior; however, restrictiveness also tends to lead to fearful, dependent, and submissive behaviors and inhibited hostility (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1964). In contrast, permissiveness fosters outgoing, sociable, and assertive behaviors but tends to lead to less persistence and increased aggressiveness (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1964). Radke (1946) in her study of nursery

school children concluded that children with restrictive parents show inhibited and socially withdrawing behaviors. Sears (1961) provides data to support the relationship between permissiveness and overtly aggressive behavior. His permissiveness factor was positively correlated with anti-social aggression in boys but not in girls.

Baumrind (1967) studies three groups of nursery school children in order to contrast the child-rearing practices of their parents. Parents who utilized authoritative discipline had children who were the most self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, and content. In contrast, children whose parents utilized authoritarian discipline were more discontent, withdrawn, and distrustful. Children of parents who used permissive discipline practices were the least self-reliant, explorative, and self-controlled.

A study conducted by Carlsmith, Leeper, and Landauer (1974) examined the effects of apparent punitive or rewarding experimenter characteristics and anxiety-provoking or relaxed experimental settings on preschool children's obedience to adult requests. In a relaxed setting, a previously positive adult obtained more obedience and in an anxiety-provoking setting, a previously negative adult was obeyed more. They felt that these results suggested that the child's dominant motivational orientation in the

situation dramatically influences the kind of adult he obeys (Carlsmith et al., 1974).

Savitsky and Hess (1975) assessed the effects of a child's emotions on the severity of punishment suggested by adult subjects who hold nonauthoritarian or authoritarian attitudes about child-rearing. Their analysis failed to reveal that the child's emotions have an effect on the level of suggested punishment. They concluded that the child's emotions are of less importance than the adult's emotions when the severity of punishment is determined. Savitsky and Hess (1975) did find that males and authoritarians are significantly more punitive.

In summary, research generally showed that social class, sex of the parent and child, the child's age, and education level of the mother affect the discipline practices that parents utilize. Also the discipline practice that is utilized affects the child's personality and behavior. Authoritative discipline seems to result in more desirable personalities and behavior. However, research is lacking in the area of discipline practices parents most frequently utilize, extreme discipline, and knowledge or information parents perceive as helpful in changing their discipline practices. This study will attempt to add knowledge to these areas of discipline practices.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN

A grounded theory type of design was chosen to generate insight into the discipline practices that parents utilize. Grounded theory is an exploratory research design which utilizes an inductive methodology. The objective of grounded theory research is the generation of theory from data. Categories are developed from the information received from open-ended interviews.

Sample Population

The sample was Anglo primary caregivers of three to four year old children. The sample was recruited from local preschools in which children with diverse backgrounds are enrolled, i.e., American Preschools or Mary Moppet. Four parents who had education past high school and four parents who had not obtained education past high school were interviewed.

Methodology

Since the methodology of grounded theory is not clearly defined, definitions of the following terms will be given in order to provide a clearer understanding of the methodology utilized in this study.

Theoretical saturation: The criterion used for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category. Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the investigator can develop properties of the category. As the investigator sees similar instances over and over again, the investigator becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Category: A concept indicated by the data, which stands by itself, as a conceptual element of the theory. A category is more abstract than a property (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Property: A characteristic indicated by the data, which is a conceptual aspect or element of the theory and describes a category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Lower level categories: A category that is less abstract than a higher level category and the concepts in this category are fundamental and are not integrated (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Higher level categories: A category in which the conceptualizations override and integrate (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Restructuring of the interview: A change of the make-up of the interview that allows the investigator to collect data which may give new insights into the categories and further saturate the categories. Questions not

included in the original set of questions would be asked of a group of informants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The methodology of grounded theory consists of the following steps:

1. Open-ended interviews through which one gathers the data.
2. Concurrent coding and analysis is utilized to identify emerging basic categories.
3. Increasingly structured data gathering to identify properties of the categories.
4. Review of literature to receive insight into possible additional categories.
5. Collection and analysis of data until unique categories no longer appear and the categories are saturated.
6. Review of the data for refinement of categories and their properties and for hypothesis formation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The investigator utilized open-ended interviews of parents for data collection. The comparing of the parents' responses to the questions drew the attention of the investigator to the similarities and differences of their responses. Consideration of these similarities and differences leads one to generate abstract categories and their properties which will be important for a possible

explanation of the behavior under observation (discipline practices). Lower level categories emerge more rapidly than higher level categories in the early phases of data collection.

The investigator interviewed four parents and then analyzed and coded the data obtained. After these initial data were coded and analyzed, the investigator interviewed four additional parents. The focus of the sample was changed from parents who had education past high school to those who had only obtained a high school education in order to determine if level of education would have an effect on the emerging categories. The data collected from the parents who have obtained a high school education were utilized to further define the categories and their properties. As the categories developed, more specific questions could have been asked of the parents interviewed previously in order to further elaborate and define the categories. Ideally additional parents would be interviewed until theoretical saturation of the categories was reached and no new categories appear. However, this was not feasible due to the limited time the investigator had to collect the data. As the categories were defined, the investigator searched the literature for support of the categories and for suggestions for additional categories.

Measurement Tool

An interview consisting of open-ended questions was utilized to collect the data. The interview was taped and then transcribed. Four major questions were asked:

1. What are your discipline practices?
For example, what do you do when Susie/Johnny is bad?
2. What is extreme discipline? For example, when you are really upset and want to be sure you get the point across, what type of discipline do you use?
3. What situation(s) usually occurs when you utilize extreme discipline? For example, what is usually happening when you get really upset and you use the above discipline?
4. What would help when this situation(s) occurs? For example, what would help you not to resort to using this type of discipline?

More specific questions could have been asked of the informants in order to further develop and elaborate the categories.

The factors which seem to influence discipline practices in general are education level of the parent, income level or socioeconomic class, sex of the parent and the child, age of the child, number of siblings, and father present or absent. Therefore, demographic data were collected. The demographic data that were collected included educational level of the parent, income level or socioeconomic class, sex of the parent, sex of the child, age of the child, number of siblings, and father present or absent.

Findings Related to the
Measurement Tool

All of the parents responded to the four questions utilized to collect the data with appropriate responses and appeared to understand the questions. Occasionally, the investigator did have to repeat or qualify the question in order to remind the parent of the objective of the question. The measurement tool, therefore, appeared to be appropriate for obtaining the desired data.

Additional questions were not added for this study due to the time constraint and low sample size. However, it was becoming apparent that additional questions needed to be formulated because parents were bringing up ideas not covered by the original set of questions. The first four parents interviewed brought up the idea that the child should not be spanked when the parent is angry. Also some of the parents brought up the idea that the child's reaction to the discipline practice had some influence on the discipline practice that they utilized. Additional questions would have allowed the investigator to further elaborate the categories.

Grounded theory research allows one a great deal of freedom with the measurement tool. As the data are collected and analyzed and the categories begin to emerge, one can add or delete questions in order to obtain the data needed to elaborate the categories. This freedom probably

aided the investigator in avoiding problems with the measurement tool.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are handled differently in grounded theory. The relevance and validity of the categories need not be a special operation in which a theoretically relevant relation between two variables is sacrificed from the substance of the analysis itself to prove the validity of the argument (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The investigator must ask questions which are consistent and valid and reliable in order to generate relevant categories.

Test-retest reliability could be obtained to determine the stability of the measurement instrument, in this case the interviewer. To determine this type of reliability, one would set aside a copy of a section of the data and at a later time the investigator would again construct categories from these data. These categories would be compared with the original categories to determine if the same general categories had been developed. However, test-retest reliability is not feasible due to the time constraints.

Consensus validity was obtained. The investigator had one colleague develop categories from a section of the interviews. These categories were then compared with the categories that the investigator previously developed for that section of the interviews. This colleague was

knowledgeable in the discipline of pediatric nursing and child growth and development.

The categories that the colleague developed from the interviews highly agreed with those developed by the investigator. However, the investigator did group and refine categories more frequently than the colleague. The colleague listed behavior modification as a category for the discipline practices question and this was not a category that the investigator developed. All of the other categories developed by the colleague for this question were the same as those developed by the investigator. For the question on extreme discipline practices the investigator and the colleague developed similar categories. No additional categories were developed by the colleague. Two additional categories were developed for the question on the situation that usually occurs when extreme discipline is used; non-specific upsetting behavior and something detrimental to the child. All other categories for this question were similar to those developed by the investigator. All categories for the question about what would help you avoid using extreme discipline were similar except for the category STEP program which the colleague developed.

Statistical Analysis

The data were coded and analyzed as they were collected and emerging categories were identified. After the

categories were defined the investigator analyzed the data by determining the frequencies and percentages of the occurrence of the categories and their properties.

Limitations of the Study

Discipline can be a topic which parents find threatening and/or difficult to discuss. Therefore, parents may tell you what they feel are socially acceptable discipline practices and may not tell you what their discipline practices really are. One can only obtain from the parent the information that they are willing to provide. This can be a major limitation of this type of study. The data presented in this study must be evaluated and interpreted with this limitation in mind.

Another limitation of this study was that the small sample size, $N = 8$, limited the ability to generalize and generate theory. Also all the categories and their properties were not saturated.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The data collected during this study are presented and analyzed in this chapter. The characteristics of the sample, data results, and discussion of the data will be discussed.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample was composed of eight parents of children three to four years of age. The parents were contacted at local preschools. All of the parents were Anglo and were the primary caretaker of the child.

Four parents who had education past high school and four parents who had not obtained education past high school were interviewed (see Table 1). These two groups of parents were interviewed in order to determine if level of education would have an effect on the emerging categories. The parents with a high school education were less verbal as a group and utilized less variety in their discipline practices than the parents who had obtained education past high school.

A yearly income of \$5,000 to \$10,000 was earned by three of the families or 37.5%. Two of the families, 25.0%, had a yearly income of \$10,000 to \$15,000 and three families, 37.5%, were the the \$15,000 to \$20,000 bracket (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Grouped by Education Level, Income Level, Sex of Parent and Child, Age of Child, Number of Siblings, and Father Present or Absent in Per Cent of Total. (N = 8)

Variable	Per Cent
<u>Education Level</u>	
> 12 years	50.0
12 years	50.0
<u>Income Level</u>	
\$5,000 to \$10,000	37.5
\$10,000 to \$15,000	25.0
\$15,000 to \$20,000	37.5
<u>Sex of the Parent</u>	
Female	87.5
Male	12.5
<u>Sex of the Child</u>	
Female	62.5
Male	37.5
<u>Age of the Child</u>	
Three years	25.0
Four years	75.0
<u>Number of Siblings</u>	
None	37.5
One	37.5
Two	25.0
<u>Father Present or Absent</u>	
Present	62.5
Absent	37.5

Seven of the eight parents, 87.5%, interviewed were female and one, 12.5%, was male. Five of the children, 62.5%, were female and three, 37.5%, were male (see Table 1). The father was present in five of the families, 62.5%, and was not present in three of the families, 37.5% (see Table 1).

Six of the children were four years old, 75%, and two were three years old, 25.0% (see Table 1). Three of the children, 37.5%, had no siblings; three, 37.5%, had one sibling; and two, 25.0%, had two siblings (see Table 1).

Data Results

The categories which emerged from the data will be presented in this section. Categories were developed for each of the four questions which comprised the measurement tool. The major areas covered are discipline practices, extreme discipline practices, the situation(s) which occurred when extreme discipline practices were utilized, and the parents' perception of what would help them not to resort to using extreme discipline practices.

Discipline Practices

A variety of discipline practices were utilized by these parents. The major categories which emerged were spanking, spanking with reasoning, natural consequences, discussion/talking, depriving the child, and removing from the situation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Categories and Properties of Discipline Practices

Category	Frequency and Percentage	Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage	Properties of Category and Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage
Spanking	62.5 (5)			Parts of body:	
				Back of leg	12.5 (1)
				Buttocks	50.0 (4)
				Who spans:	
				Father	12.5 (1)
				Type of object used:	
				Hand	50.0 (4)
				Metal pancake turner	12.5 (1)
				Intensity of spanking:	
				Swat	62.5 (5)
Spanking with reasoning				Spanking for specific reason:	
				Tantrums	12.5 (1)
				Hurting Self	12.5 (1)
Natural consequences	25.0 (2)			Reason for spanking discussed	37.5 (3)
				Reason for spanking not discussed	25.0 (2)

Table 2.--Continued

Category	Frequency and Percentage	Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage	Properties of Category and Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage
Discussion/ talking	37.5 (3)			Discussed stopping the behavior with the child	12.5 (1)
				Discussed the behavior with the child	12.5 (1)
Depriving the child	75.0 (6)	of privileges	12.5 (1)		
		of attention/ affection	12.5 (1)		
		by grounding	12.5 (1)		
		by isolation	37.5 (3)	corner room--child's	12.5 (1) 25.0 (2)
		by time out	12.5 (1)		
Removing from situation	25.0 (2)	Remove the child	25.0 (2)		
		Remove whatever is causing problem	12.5 (1)		

Key: () = number of cases out of 8.

Spanking was a discipline practice utilized by five of the eight parents (see Table 2). The parts of the body where the spanking was given were the back of the leg or the buttocks. One mother stated that the parent who spanked the child was the father. The father spanked the child when he came home because "with me being around most of the time the child tends not to listen to me." The objects used to spank the child were either the hand (four parents) or a metal pancake turner (one parent). The intensity of the spanking was described as a "swat." Two parents stated that they spanked only in specific instances. One child was spanked for temper tantrums and another was spanked for hurting herself.

Spanking with reasoning was another category of discipline practiced (see Table 2). Three of the parents discussed the reason for the spanking with the child after the spanking and two did not discuss the reason for the spanking with the child.

Natural consequences was a discipline practice utilized by two of the parents (see Table 2). These two parents had read Dreikurs' (1964) book, Children the Challenge, and were attempting to use natural consequences. According to Dreikurs (1964) natural consequences is allowing a child to experience the consequences of his acts. For example, a child is responsible for taking his lunch to school and he forgets his lunch. Then the child would go

hungry and the parents would ignore his complaints. The child in this example would be experiencing a natural consequence of his action. The two parents who were utilizing natural consequences were also utilizing other discipline practices. One mother stated that "it's difficult to always do it like that (natural consequences)."

Discussion or talking was another category of discipline practices utilized by three of the eight parents (see Table 2). One parent discussed stopping the behavior with the child and another parent discussed the behavior with the child.

Depriving the child was a category of discipline practices utilized by six of the eight parents (see Table 2). The subcategories were depriving the child of privileges and attention or affection and depriving the child by using grounding, isolation, or a time out.

Removing from the situation was a discipline practice category which was used by two of the parents (see Table 2). The subcategory of this category was remove the child or remove whatever is causing a problem. Removing from the situation was the main discipline practice for one of the parents.

Extreme Discipline Practices

Yelling was a category of extreme discipline practices that emerged from the data (see Table 3). Three

Table 3. Categories and Properties of Extreme Discipline Practices

Category	Frequency and Percentage	Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage	Properties of Category and Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage
Yelling	37.5 (3)				
Spanking	75.0 (6)			Reason spanked: Child does something harmful	12.5 (1)
				Has tantrums	12.5 (1)
Depriving	37.5 (3)	Removal of privileges	37.5 (3)	Treats	12.5 (1)
				Toys	12.5 (1)
				Play with others	12.5 (1)

Key: () = number of cases out of 8.

of the eight parents described yelling as an extreme discipline practice. Properties for this category did not emerge from the data.

Spanking was a category of extreme discipline practices for six of the eight parents (see Table 3). The property of this category was the reason the child was spanked; either the child does something harmful or has tantrums. All of these parents described a spanking as hitting the child on the lower part of the body, either buttocks or legs. Most of these six parents felt that a spanking impressed on the child that his behavior was not acceptable behavior. However, one parent stated "it's (spanking) usually unfortunately not well placed. I usually do it in a fit of temper and then it is not beneficial."

Another category of extreme discipline practices was depriving (see Table 3). The subcategory of this category was removal of privileges: treats, toys, or play with others.

Situation(s) Occurring when Extreme Discipline was Utilized

Destructive behavior of the child was a category of extreme discipline situations (see Table 4). Two of the parents stated that destructive behavior of the child resulted in their use of extreme discipline practices. The subcategories of destructive behavior of the child were destroys objects, hurts self, and hurts others.

Table 4. Categories and Properties of Situation(s) Occurring when Extreme Discipline was Utilized

Category	Frequency and Percentage	Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage	Properties of Category and Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage
Destructive behavior of the child	25.0 (2)	Destroys objects	12.5 (1)		
		Hurts self	25.0 (2)		
		Hurts others	12.5 (1)		
Persistent behavior of the child	37.5 (3)			Child is extremely stubborn	12.5 (1)
				Child will not comply when other methods tried	12.5 (1)
Upsetting behavior of the child	50.0 (4)	Detrimental acts	25.0 (2)		
		Misbehavior	12.5 (1)		
		Outright defiance	12.5 (1)		
Parent frustrated beyond level of tolerance	75.0 (6)			Tired	12.5 (1)
				Off schedule	12.5 (1)
				Irritated	12.5 (1)
				Mad	12.5 (1)

Key: () = number of cases out of 8.

Another category of extreme discipline situations was persistent behavior of the child (see Table 4). The properties of this category were the child is extremely stubborn and the child will not comply when other methods are tried. Three of the parents stated that persistent behavior of the child caused them to utilize extreme discipline. One parent utilized extreme discipline "when something happens over and over again or it seems like it happens so often and we've tried several different approaches."

Upsetting behavior of the child was a category of extreme discipline situations (see Table 4). The sub-categories of this category were detrimental acts, misbehavior, and outright defiance. Four of the parents described the category of upsetting behavior of the child as the stimulus for them to use an extreme discipline practice.

Another category of extreme discipline situations was parent frustrated beyond level of tolerance (see Table 4). This category was the motivating factor for six parents' utilization of extreme discipline practices. The properties of this category were tired, off schedule, irritated, and mad. One parent expressed the concepts of this category well when he said, "usually when that (extreme discipline) happens he (the child) has done

something that irritated you to the point that your nerves are hurting."

Parents' Perception of What Would Help

The categories that emerged from the question, What would help you to avoid using extreme discipline, were: nothing, discussion, time, something concrete to work with, gain control of self, and maintenance of a routine (see Table 5).

Nothing was a category of parents' perception of what would help (see Table 5). Properties for this category did not emerge from the data. Two parents felt that the extreme discipline practices that they were utilizing were effective and necessary. Therefore, they felt that nothing would change their discipline practices. Both of these parents utilized withdrawal of privileges and/or isolation as extreme discipline practices.

Discussion was also a category of what would help that emerged from the data (see Table 5). This category is characterized by the properties talk with someone and talk with child. Two of the parents perceived that discussion would help them avoid utilizing extreme discipline practices.

Time was another category of the concept what would help (see Table 5). Time to think, to understand where the child is, to talk with the child before the situation occurs

Table 5. Categories and Properties of Parents' Perception of What Would Help

Category	Frequency and Percentage	Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage	Properties of Category and Subcategory	Frequency and Percentage
Nothing	25.0 (2)				
Discussion	25.0 (2)			Talk with someone	12.5 (1)
				Talk with child	12.5 (1)
Time	37.5 (3)			To think	12.5 (1)
				To understand where child is	12.5 (1)
				To talk with child before occurs	12.5 (1)
				To not be rushed	12.5 (1)
Something concrete to work with	12.5 (1)				
Gain control of self	37.5 (3)	Calming down	12.5 (1)		
		Having patience	12.5 (1)		
		Expressing anger	12.5 (1)		
Maintenance of a routine	12.5 (1)				

Key: () = number of cases out of 8.

and to not be rushed were the properties of the time category. Three of the parents perceived the time category to be helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline practices.

Another category of what would help was something concrete to work with (see Table 5). Properties for this category were not identified. One parent felt that "having something concrete to work with so that you know that what you were doing was working for others" would be helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline.

Gain control of self was a category of what would help that was discussed by three parents (see Table 5). The subcategories of this category were calming down, having patience, and expressing anger.

Maintenance of a routine was a category of what would help (see Table 5). This category was discussed by one parent. Properties of this category did not emerge from the data.

Discussion of Data

Discipline practices of the eight parents varied widely and the majority of the parents, 87.5%, utilized more than one discipline practice. The parents did not utilize authoritarian discipline practices. Their discipline practices appear to fall along the continuum between authoritative and permissive discipline practices. Also

these parents did not report that they were utilizing the discipline practices that lie along the extreme end of the discipline practices continuum. Their discipline practices ranged from spanking to discussion/talking.

However, one can not conclude from these data that all parents who have similar characteristics do not utilize more extreme discipline practices than was reported by these parents. The small sample size does reduce one's ability to generalize from the data. However, the emerging categories and their properties which were identified can be utilized as a starting point for further research and as a basis for providing parents with appropriate anticipatory guidance.

The parents, as a group, did not indicate that specific information or knowledge would aid them in avoiding the use of their extreme discipline practices. Only two parents perceived discussion as helpful. One parent did perceive "something concrete to work with so that you knew that what you were doing was working for others" as helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline practices. The majority of the parents indicated that time to understand the child's actions, time to gain control of themselves, and/or time to re-evaluate the situation would help them avoid the utilization of extreme discipline practices. This has implications for nurses who work with parents.

Some of the categories were saturated better than other categories. The categories, subcategories, and properties developed for the question about the discipline practices used by the parents achieved the greatest degree of saturation. The categories and properties which emerged from the data collected on extreme discipline practices, the situation that occurs when extreme discipline is used and what would help parents avoid using extreme discipline practices were not as saturated as the discipline practices categories.

The review of the literature revealed that past research generally showed social class, sex of parent and child, the child's age, and education level of the mother affecting the discipline practices that parents utilize. The findings of this study revealed that the parents with more than a high school education and those with only high school education utilized similar types of discipline. However, the parents who had obtained high school education only did use less variety in their discipline practices. However, one can not generalize from these data due to the small sample size.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to contribute knowledge regarding the discipline practices parents most frequently utilize, parents' perceptions of extreme discipline, and parents' perception of what is helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline practices. Due to the lack of a uniform definition of discipline and the lack of research in the area of discipline, the investigator chose to explore the parents' perception of discipline practices and extreme discipline practices. This knowledge could facilitate the provision of more adequate and valuable anticipatory guidance to parents.

The three main philosophies of discipline--authoritative, permission, or authoritarian--were utilized as background information. Parents frequently combine the three main philosophies of discipline and this may make it difficult to determine their main philosophy. The type of discipline utilized by parents does have an effect on the behavior of preschool children (Becker, 1964). Extreme discipline or punishment can be an effective means of controlling behavior; however, the operation of punishment

is a complex process (Parke, 1969). A parent must determine for himself when to utilize extreme discipline and beyond what point the punishment becomes extreme.

The review of literature revealed that the majority of the research which has been conducted on discipline was concerned with the correlation of the types of discipline with the child's personality outcomes and factors; as sex, education, and economic level; which affect the type of discipline utilized. Research is lacking in the area of extreme discipline practices. However, the areas reviewed in the Review of Literature will have an effect on the discipline practices that parents utilize and will have some effect on parents' utilization of extreme discipline practices.

A grounded theory type of design was utilized to generate insight into the discipline practices that parents utilize. Categories were developed from the information received from open-ended interviews of parents' discipline practices. The population sample consisted of eight Anglo parents of three to four year old children. The parents were recruited from local preschools.

The measurement tool was an open-ended interview which consisted of four questions. The questions were used to collect data on parents' discipline practices, extreme discipline practices, the situation which occurs when extreme discipline is used, and parents' perception of

what would help them not to resort to using extreme discipline. Data on educational level of the parent, income level or socioeconomic class, sex of the parent, sex and age of the child, number of siblings, and father present or absent was also collected. After the emerging categories were defined, the data were analyzed by determining the frequencies and percentages of the occurrence of the categories and their properties.

It was found that the discipline practices of the eight parents varied widely. The categories which emerged were spanking, natural consequences, discussion/talking, spanking with reasoning, depriving child, and removing from situation. The majority of the parents utilized more than one discipline practice.

The categories of extreme discipline that evolved from the data were yelling, spanking, and depriving. These parents described spanking as hitting the child on the lower part of the body, either buttocks or legs. Destructive behavior of the child, persistent behavior of the child, the parent feeling frustrated beyond their level of tolerance, and specific upsetting behavior were the categories that emerged from the data on the situation(s) at the time of the use of extreme discipline practices.

The categories that emerged from the question what would help you to avoid using extreme discipline practices were nothing, discussion, time, something concrete to work

with, gain control of self, and maintenance of a routine. The parents did not indicate that information or education would be beneficial in helping them avoid the use of extreme discipline practices. The majority of the parents indicated that time to understand the child's behavior, to gain control of themselves, or time to re-evaluate the situation would be helpful. The information gained from these data could have implications for nursing.

Conclusions

It was concluded that the measurement tool, the four questions, was appropriate for obtaining the desired data. The parents did begin to bring up ideas that were not covered or explored by the questions. Therefore, it became apparent that additional questions could have been asked in order to further elaborate the categories.

The eight parents interviewed utilized a wide variety of discipline practices. Also seven of the eight parents utilized more than one discipline practice. Their discipline practices ranged from discussion/talking to spanking.

The major conclusion was that these parents, as a group, did not perceive that specific information or education would be beneficial in helping them avoid the use of extreme discipline practices. The parents perceived time to gain control of themselves, to re-evaluate the

situation or to understand their child's behavior would be helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline practices.

Implications for Nursing

In order to effectively counsel parents on discipline practices nurses must be knowledgeable about the discipline practices that parents utilize. Nurses must also be aware of what parents perceive as helpful in their attempt to avoid utilization of extreme discipline practices. This increased awareness may aid the nurse in effecting changes in discipline practices and will provide her with improved understanding of discipline.

This study points out that the providing of information on discipline may not be perceived by parents as helpful. It may be that time to talk, to understand their own and the child's behavior and to gain control of oneself is what parents perceive as helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline practices. Therefore, nurses who provide guidance on discipline practices should reconsider their assumption that education is the only method one should utilize to help parents in avoiding the use of extreme discipline. It appears that one should attempt to determine what parents perceive as helpful before giving advice on discipline practices.

The lack of research in the area of discipline causes difficulty in the development of a framework for

discipline and in the development of theory (Medinnus and Johnson, 1970). This study could provide a stimulus for the development of theory that is grounded in data. Also the findings of this study point out that aspects of present theories may not be totally correct and could be used to encourage re-evaluation of the existing theories and concepts about discipline practices. The emerging categories and their implications for nursing may also be useful in nursing education.

Recommendations

Further research on parents' perceptions of discipline practices and extreme discipline practices needs to be conducted. A larger sample size needs to be used in order to elaborate the categories and generate theory. Also, to further elaborate the categories, additional questions would need to be asked. Additional questions would evolve as more parents are interviewed.

Due to the findings of what parents perceive as helpful in avoiding the use of extreme discipline, it is also recommended that the methods utilized to educate parents about discipline be re-evaluated. Professionals may be providing parents with more information than they desire and not enough time for discussion. Research on the effects of a discussion group, which allows the parents to decide the topics of discussion and the professional gives

input only when asked, on parents' discipline practices and extreme discipline practices would aid professionals in re-evaluating the techniques used in counseling parents on discipline.

APPENDIX A

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

Title: Parents' Perception of Discipline Practices

I understand that Patsy S. McGeorge, a graduate student at The University of Arizona, is conducting a research study about parents' perception of discipline practices and the discipline practices that parents most frequently use. I am being asked to take part in this project because I am a parent of a three to four year old Anglo child. The information will be collected through an interview which will take approximately one hour. I understand that if more information is needed an additional one hour interview may be necessary. The interview will be conducted at a location convenient for me that allows privacy. I understand that the interview will be tape recorded.

The interview will consist of a series of four basic questions about my discipline practices. Additional questions will be asked if further information is needed. Also some demographic data about myself will be collected. I understand that my response is voluntary, that I can refuse to answer any questions and that I can ask to stop the interview at any time without ill will. I understand that I can ask the interviewer any questions that I have concerning the information requested from me.

I understand that there will be no costs, except one or two hours of my time; benefits; or risks to me from my participation in this study. The results of this study could improve the understanding of discipline practices and would therefore benefit parents in the future.

In order to insure confidentiality, I will not be identified by name. The only identification used on the data will be a number. The information gained will be presented by group response rather than by individual response.

I have read the above "Subject Consent." The nature, demands, risks and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions

and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without ill will.

"I also understand that this consent form will be filed in an area designated by the Human Subjects Committee with access restricted to the principal investigator or authorized representatives of the particular department."

Subject's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness' Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Questions

1. What are your discipline practices? For example, what do you do when Susie/Johnny is bad?
2. What is extreme discipline? For example, when you are really upset and want to be sure you get the point across, what type of discipline do you use?
3. What situation(s) usually occur when you utilize extreme discipline? For example, what is usually happening when you get really upset and you use the above discipline?
4. What would help when this situation(s) occurs? For example, what would help you not to resort to using this type of discipline?

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