

# ‘Where do you draw the line?’

A study about how South African social workers understand their professional role when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment.

Lovisa Granath & Maria Sandström

Tutor: Kicki Oljemark



# ‘Var drar du gränsen?’

En studie om hur sydafrikanska socialarbetare förstår sin professionella roll i arbetet med vårdnadshavare som använder barnaga.

Lovisa Granath & Maria Sandström

Handledare: Kicki Oljemark



## Abstract

Globally, there is an ongoing debate whether child corporal punishment should be banned or not in the home environment. While several countries have banned it already, South Africa is currently in a process of change. Research indicates that child corporal punishment is commonly used in South Africa and that social workers opinions on child corporal punishment seems to be formed by their personal experiences, which affects their assessments. Furthermore, according to research legal reforms are not enough to change a society's attitudes and norms about child corporal punishment. There is a need of campaigns and leadership.

The aim of this study was to comprehend how eight South African social workers described that they understood their professional role, when they worked with caregivers who used child corporal punishment. The informants worked, at the time of the interviews, at different workplaces in Cape Town and had experiences in their professional role of meeting caregivers who used child corporal punishment. Social constructionism was used as the theory of science. The study uses theories by Burr, Gergen and Gergen and Foucault to analyse the impacts of language and discourse in the social workers' understandings.

The empirical material was analysed with qualitative content analysis. We found four themes where all except the first one, are divided into two sub-themes. The first theme is *'How could corporal punishment be defined?'*. Followed by *'Opinions about corporal punishment'* with the sub-themes: *'We need one standard to protect our children'* and *'Corporal punishment should be allowed if it is not abusive'*. *'The roles of the social worker'* is the third theme, divided into the two sub-themes: *'Social workers and the law'* and *'The opportunity to make a change'*. The last theme is *Challenges the social worker face*, divided into the sub-themes *'Corporal punishment rooted in a violent society'* and *'Corporal punishment in a cultural society'*.

The results of the study indicate that most of the social workers understood their role, when they worked with caregivers who use child corporal punishment, was to educate by presenting other alternatives than corporal punishment. However, when exploring definitions, opinions, challenges and abilities they sometimes had quite different understandings to one another. Child corporal punishment would be defined both as equivalent as well as separated from abuse, creating confusion to where a line should be drawn. The caregivers' rights to use corporal punishment would be compared to the children's rights to be protected from it. Laws regarding child corporal punishment was both present and nonexistent in described assessments. The social workers action space varied greatly. They expressed the need to balance different aspects in the assessment and decide where to draw the line between them. Most of the informants, understood themselves as powerful to bring about change concerning the use of child corporal punishment in the specific families. However, they highlighted the challenges with South Africa's history and general accepting of child corporal punishment.

Keywords: Corporal punishment, defence of reasonable chastisement, social constructionism, social work, South Africa

## Sammanfattning

Det pågår globalt en debatt om barnaga ska förbjudas i hemmen eller inte. Ett flertal länder har förbjudit barnaga och Sydafrika befinner sig för tillfället i en förändringsprocess. Forskning tyder på att barnaga är vanligt förekommande i Sydafrika och att socialarbetares åsikter om barnaga tycks ha sitt ursprung i deras egna erfarenheter, som i sin tur påverkar deras professionella bedömningar. Forskning visar även att juridiska reformer inte är tillräckligt för att förändra ett samhälles attityder och normer. Det finns ett behov av kampanjer och ledarskap.

Syftet med denna studie var att förstå hur åtta sydafrikanska socialarbetare beskrev att de förstod sin professionella roll när de arbetade med vårdnadshavare som använde sig av barnaga. Informanterna arbetade när intervjuerna genomfördes på olika arbetsplatser i Kapstaden och hade erfarenhet i deras professionella roll av att träffa vårdnadshavare som använde sig av barnaga. Studien utgår från socialkonstruktionism som vetenskapsteori. I studien används även teorier från Burr, Gergen och Gergen samt Foucault för att analysera språket och diskursers påverkan i socialarbetarnas förståelser

Det empiriska materialet analyserades med kvalitativ innehållsanalys. Vi fann fyra teman där de tre senare hade två underteman vardera. Det första temat är *'How could corporal punishment be defined?'*. Följt av *'Opinions about corporal punishment'* med underteman: *'We need one standard to protect our children'* och *'Corporal punishment should be allowed if it is not abusive'*. *'The roles of the social worker'* är det tredje temat, uppdelat i de två underteman: *'Social workers and the law'* och *'The opportunity to make a change'*. Det sista temat är *'Challenges the social worker face'* som delades in i underteman *'Corporal punishment rooted in a violent society'* och *'Corporal punishment in a cultural society'*.

Studiens resultat indikerar att de flesta socialarbetarna förstod sin roll i arbetet med vårdnadshavare som använde sig av barnaga, var att utbilda genom att presentera andra alternativ än barnaga. Gällande definitioner, åsikter, utmaningar och förmågor så hade de ofta olika förståelser. Barnaga definierades både som motsvarande såväl som separat från misshandel, vilket skapade förvirring gällande var gränsen borde dras däremellan. Vårdnadshavarnas rätt att använda barnaga ställdes i kontrast mot barnens rätt att bli skyddade från det. Lagar gällande barnaga var både närvarande och frånvarande i de olika svaren informanterna gav. Socialarbetarnas handlingsutrymme hade stor variation och de uttryckte hur de behövde balansera olika aspekter i mötet med vårdnadshavarna och var gränser skulle dras mellan dem. De flesta informanterna upplevde sin roll som maktfull att skapa förändring i familjerna de mötte där barnaga användes. Trots detta betonade dem utmaningarna med Sydafrikas historia och generella acceptans av barnaga.

Nyckelord: Barnaga, försvar för rimlig tuktan, socialkonstruktionism, socialt arbete, Sydafrika

## Preface

First of all, we would like to thank the social workers that participated in our study. Thank you for your time and your perspectives. To listen to your reasonings and descriptions has been invaluable to us as researchers. We have been amazed by your knowledge and compassion. This study would not have been possible without you.

Secondly, we would like to thank Linköping's university and SIDA for giving us the MFS-scholarship, thus, making it possible for us to embark on this journey.

A special thank you is also aimed to our tutor Kicki Oljemark. Your feedback and excitement in our study has been substantial for both our critical thinking as well as pushing us when it felt like we had lost our focus. Even a continent a part, we have felt secure with your support and guidance. Though many sleepless nights have been spent trying to comprehend the rules of social constructionism!

Thank you, Carol Bowers, for taking the time to meet us in Cape Town and try to explain to us about the current situation. About corporal punishment, children's rights, the South African laws and the ongoing appeal in the court case concerning reasonable chastisement. Your knowledge has been invaluable.

We also want to thank Marcus Johansson and Charlene Van Zyl for proofreading and giving light to new perspectives.

Lastly, we want to thank each other. None of this would have been possible if we had not done it together. We have completed this journey together, handling both good and bad times. Through laughter and tears, our friendship has proven to be filled with love and strong enough to push through any obstacle.

Norrköping, September 2018

Lovisa Granath and Maria Sandström

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>SAMMANFATTNING .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>PREFACE .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 AIM.....	12
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	12
1.3 SUB-QUESTIONS .....	12
1.4 DEFINITIONS .....	12
1.4.1 Corporal punishment .....	12
1.4.2 Caregivers.....	13
1.4.3 Law.....	13
<b>2.0 BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE WORLD .....	15
2.2 SOUTH AFRICA .....	15
2.3 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	16
<b>3.0 PRIOR RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH OF SOCIAL WORKERS RELATIONSHIP TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT .....	19
3.2 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT – LEGAL BANS ARE NOT ENOUGH.....	20
3.3 CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	22
3.4 DISCUSSION OF PRIOR RESEARCH IN RELATION TO OUR STUDY .....	24
<b>4.0 THEORETICAL CONNECTION.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM.....	25
4.1.1 <i>The relevance of social constructionism to our study</i> .....	25
4.1.2 <i>A reflection on social problems</i> .....	25
4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS .....	26
4.2.1 <i>Relevance of language for our study</i> .....	26
4.3 WHAT ARE DISCOURSES? .....	27
4.3.1 <i>Relevance of discourses for our study</i> .....	27
<b>5.0 METHODOLOGY AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
5.1 EMPIRICAL MATERIAL.....	29
5.2 SAMPLE .....	29
5.3 THE INTERVIEWS.....	30

5.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS.....	31
5.5 PREUNDERSTANDING .....	31
5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION.....	32
5.8 METHOD DISCUSSION.....	33
<b>6.0 RESULT AND ANALYSE.....</b>	<b>37</b>
6.1 HOW COULD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT BE DEFINED?.....	37
6.1.1 Analyse of ‘How could corporal punishment could be defined?’.....	38
6.2 OPINIONS ABOUT CORPORAL PUNISHMENT .....	39
6.2.1 We need one standard to protect our children.....	39
6.2.2 Corporal punishment should be allowed if it is not abusive.....	40
6.2.3 Analyse of ‘Opinions about corporal punishment’ .....	42
6.3 THE SOCIAL WORKERS’ ROLES .....	43
6.3.1 Social workers and the law .....	43
6.3.2 The opportunity to make a change.....	45
6.3.3 Analyse of ‘The social workers’ roles’ .....	47
6.4 CHALLENGES THE SOCIAL WORKERS FACE.....	49
6.4.1 Corporal punishment rooted in a violent society.....	49
6.4.2 Corporal punishment in a cultural society .....	51
6.4.3 Analyse of ‘Challenges the social workers face’ .....	52
<b>7.0 DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>55</b>
7.1 DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO OUR SUB-QUESTIONS .....	55
7.1.1 ‘How do the social workers define child corporal punishment in South Africa?’.....	55
7.1.2 ‘What are the social workers opinions related to the use of child corporal punishment in South Africa?’ .....	56
7.1.3 ‘How do the social workers understand their abilities and challenges, when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?’ .....	57
7.2 CONCLUSION: ‘HOW DO SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS UNDERSTAND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ROLE WHEN WORKING WITH CAREGIVERS WHO USE CHILD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA?’ .....	59
7.3 CRITICAL REFLECTION .....	60
7.4 THE STUDIES KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION .....	61
7.5 PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	62
<b>8.0 REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>63</b>



## 1.0 Introduction

Around the world there is an ongoing debate about the use of child corporal punishment in the home environment. The debate centers around if it should be understood as an acceptable form of punishment or if it is the equivalent to abuse. Our aim is to explore how social workers in South Africa understand their role, when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment. While there is a Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children (2018) there are also strong advocates for its continued use (For example see Freedom of Religion South Africa [FOR SA] 2017). 1979 Sweden was the first country to ban child corporal punishment in the home. Since then several countries have partially or completely banned child corporal punishment. Predominant research points to child corporal punishment being harmful to children. However, 90 percent of the children in the world grow up in countries where child corporal punishment is still legal (Rädda barnen n.d. a).

In a national survey from South Africa with 925 participating caregivers, it was found that 57 percent of the caregivers admitted that they used child corporal punishment (smacked with a hand) and 33 percent used severe child corporal punishment which included beatings with a belt, stick or another object (Dawes et al. 2005, pp. 12-21). In the South African constitution adopted 1996, it is stated in the bill of rights that children have the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. However, there is no specification that this would include child corporal punishment. Up until last year caregivers, who were charged with assault of hitting their children, could raise a common law defence. The defence said that if the corporal punishment used was found reasonable, the caregivers would not be found guilty. The 19th of October 2017 The South Gautang High Court ruled that the common law defence of reasonable chastisement was not consistent with the South African constitution and no longer applied in the South African law (Sonke Gender Justice 2017).

There is a concern that the removal will cause confusion in the criminal system and for professions affected by the law (Bower et al. 2015, pp.2-4). What the implications will be for professionals working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment is an unexplored subject. In the South African schools where child corporal punishment has been illegal since 1996, it is still commonly used by teachers. By some teachers it is understood as the most effective disciplinary method (Maphosa & Shumba 2010, pp. 395-396). However, research on social work in transition is deficient in South Africa (Patel, Schmid & Venter 2015, p. 459). There appears to be unclarity in the professional education for social workers in family assessment (Hochfeld 2008, p. 101). There is a risk that the assessment instead is ruled by their personal upbringing (ibid).

Research indicates that social workers opinions regarding child corporal punishment affects their likeliness to register child maltreatment and report it (Ashton 2001, p. 389). Therefore, we want to examine how South African social workers understand their role, when working with

caregivers who use child corporal punishment. To get a perspective on how they interpret and incorporate legislations regarding child corporal punishment in their work as well as their opinions regarding the subject, could bring light to unexplored fields. Social workers are one of the professions that commonly meet caregivers and families. Our hope is that this study will give insight to the role of the social workers as well as the complexity of child corporal punishment. This we hope will be of value to the current process of banning child corporal punishment in South Africa. Furthermore, we argue that the study could be useful to social workers in other countries as well. With the pace of current globalisation, families migrate between different countries, where child corporal punishment could be viewed differently. The study could hopefully give perspectives to cultural differences.

## 1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to comprehend how South African social workers describe that they understand their professional role when they work with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa.

## 1.2 Research question

How do South African social workers understand their professional role when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?

## 1.3 Sub-questions

- How do the social workers define child corporal punishment in South Africa?
- What are the social workers opinions related to the use of child corporal punishment in South Africa?
- How do the social workers understand their abilities and challenges, when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?

## 1.4 Definitions

### 1.4.1 Corporal punishment

Until now we have used the term ‘child corporal punishment’ to clarify that it is about children. However, ‘corporal punishment’ is the commonly used term in the field, thus we will continue using this term instead. We will also use other expressions when we make references to specific laws or authors depending on the term they use.

Corporal punishment could be defined differently. The Western Cape Provincial government where we have done our study, defines corporal punishment as such:

Any deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or physical discomfort to punish or contain him/her. This includes, but is not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, paddling or hitting a child with a hand or with an object; denying or restricting a child's use of the toilet; denying meals, drink, heat and shelter, pushing or pulling a child with force, forcing the child to do exercise. (Department of Education 2000, p. 6)

#### 1.4.2 Caregivers

We use the word caregiver to include both biological and foster parents. This is because 22 percent of children grow up without their biological parents in South Africa (Rädda barnen 2018 b).

#### 1.4.3 Law

When we use the word law this includes both the removal of the defence and other laws that regulate corporal punishment in South Africa. Organisational guidelines are also included.



## 2.0 Background

To frame our research, we will first describe the current situation of corporal punishment in the world. This will be followed by a brief description of the country South Africa and its modern history. We believe this is necessary to give a depth to the complexity and the society as well as how it affects corporal punishment. This is done by following the description of the society with a historical background as well as the history and current status of corporal punishment in South Africa.

### 2.1 Corporal punishment in the world

The convention on the rights of the child is the most ratified convention of all. Currently 196 countries have ratified it (United Nations Children's Fund n.d.). In the convention it is stated that children should be protected from:

all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (UN general Assembly 1989, article 19)

However, even though the convention has been ratified by most countries, many still allow corporal punishment. Although research has reported that corporal punishment could for example reduce cognitive development for children (Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children 2018), there are also strong advocates for the continued use (For example see FOR SA 2017). There are still arguments against the ban of corporal punishment. These are for example that the children are property of their parents (Watkinson & Rock 2016, p. 89). The parents therefore have the right to raise their children as they see fit. Another example could also be that children need a direct punishment when misbehaving that discourage them from repeating the behavior (Enotes n.d.). There is also a religious argument where some for instance will refer to the Bible, stating that corporal punishment is supported in the expression 'Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them' (Christian Action n.d.).

The first country in the world to introduce a total ban of corporal punishment was Sweden in 1979 (Rädda barnen n.d. a). Thereafter, 49 other countries have also implemented a total ban of corporal punishment (Rädda barnen n.d. c). However, 90 percent of the children in the world are growing up in countries where corporal punishment is still legal (Rädda barnen n.d. a).

### 2.2 South Africa

In 2016 South Africa had close to 56 million inhabitants (Höglund 2016 a). The country has eleven official languages, where Zulu is the biggest. Zulu is followed by Xhosa, Afrikaans and

English. English is the first language for a mere tenth of the inhabitants but is the biggest language in teaching and the most common second language (ibid).

South Africa is well known for its history with the apartheid system, which was implemented in 1948 (Höglund 2016 c). The system meant discrimination against people of colour. People were divided into four groups; Africans, Europeans, coloured and Asians (ibid). Marriage and love relationships were forbidden across the groups. The groups were kept apart in public areas like restaurants, hospitals and restrooms. Apartheid ended with the first democratic election in 1994 (Höglund 2016 b). The freedom party, African National Congress that won the election 1994 still has the governmental power of South Africa (Globalis 2016). Richer and Dawes (2008 p. 79) mean that the results of apartheid are still visible. There are inequalities for the population and many African people suffer from marginalisation and poverty (ibid). The social and economic tensions in the post-apartheid period has resulted in increasing consumption of alcohol and drugs and widespread crime with violence, robbery, rapes and murders (Höglund 2016 c). The police and legal system are struggling with insufficient resources (ibid).

Even though the negative consequences of apartheid are still visible the poverty in South Africa has decreased after the first democratic election 1994. The gross domestic product has more than doubled per person (Höglund 2016 b). South Africa's wealth of minerals forms the basis of the economy. Platinum, gold, coal and diamonds are exported (ibid). Tourism in South Africa has flourished since the first democratic election 1994. Tourists are attracted by the varied nature with mountains, beautiful coastlines, waterfalls and national parks with wild animals and cultural wealth (Höglund 2016 d).

### 2.3 Corporal punishment in South Africa

During the apartheid years corporal punishment was institutionalised in schools and in the justice system as the primary method of discipline (Richer & Dawes 2008, pp. 84-85). The South African School Act 1996 outlawed corporal punishment in schools and the 1997 Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act outlawed caning as a sentence (ibid). In the bill of rights in the constitution, which was adopted in 1996, it is stated that children have the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. This was written into the constitution after South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. The African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the child was approved in 2000 (ibid).

Even though corporal punishment has been illegal in the school systems for over two decades, learners around South Africa are still exposed to corporal punishment during their education (Statistics South Africa 2017, p. 2). In 2017 6,8 percent of learners reported that they were exposed to corporal punishment in the school. The numbers have decreased since 2009, where 16,6 percent of learners reported experiences of corporal punishment (ibid). During the creation of the Children's Act 2005, there were discussions to ban corporal punishment in the home.

However, it was rejected by the South African Law Commission since religious and cultural groups resisted it (Richer & Dawes 2008, pp. 84-85). In a national survey with 925 participating caregivers, it was found that 57 percent of the participants admitted that they used corporal punishment (smacked with a hand). 33 percent reported that they used severe corporal punishment which includes beatings with a belt, stick or another object (Dawes et al. 2005, pp. 12-21).

The South African constitution from 1996 states that children have the right to be protected from abuse, however, corporal punishment in the home environment has been allowed. Until October 2017 caregivers who were charged with assault of hitting their children, could use the common law defence of reasonable chastisement. The caregiver could use the defence to claim that the corporal punishment was reasonable. However, in October 2017 a father used the defence to appeal the judgement of being found guilty on assault of severe physical abuse of his son (Mailovich 2017). The South Gautang High Court ruled the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 that the common law defence of reasonable chastisement was not consistent with the South African constitution and no longer applied in South African law (Sonke Gender Justice 2017). The court case caused major media reactions and the civil society got involved. The children's institute, the Quake Peace Centre and Sonke Gender Justice together joined the case as amicus curiae and argued that reasonable chastisement was not consistent with the South African constitution. Sonke Gender Justice further claimed that the intention of the removal of the defence was to protect children by guiding caregivers to find other ways for discipline and to prevent the high numbers of child abuse and violence in South Africa (Sonke Gender Justice 2017). Freedom of religion SA also joined as an amicus curiae and stated that it was a religious right to use corporal punishment (FOR SA 2017; Mailovich 2017).

Bower et al. (2015, pp. 2-4) argued that the removal of the defence was not enough because it creates confusion in the criminal justice system, for the professionals working with child protection and for the population in general. They suggested that a legislative prohibition of corporal punishment by caregivers would be the best alternative because it is clear and distinctly gives children the same level of protection against violence as for adults (ibid).

After we conducted our interviews the Department of Social Development (DSD) published the Children's Third Amendment Bill on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 which proposes changes to the Children's Act. The changes include the removal of the common law defence of reasonable chastisement and thus prohibit corporal punishment in the home (Daniel 2018). They further propose that if any caregiver would physically discipline a child the caregiver must immediately be referred to an intervention program (Minister of Social Development 2018 p. 16). The DSD invited the public for comments from 19<sup>th</sup> of July until 7<sup>th</sup> of September (Daniel 2018). The Children's Third Amendment Bill will now be considered by the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2018). If the Children's Third Amendment

Bill passes these institutions with an approval it is handed to the President for assent. After it is signed by the president it becomes an Act and a law (ibid).

### **3.0 Prior Research**

In this chapter we will demonstrate the prior research we have found that is of interest to our study. We have sorted the research into separate topics. We will firstly present international research on corporal punishment and social work. After this segment, we will demonstrate research concerning laws in relation to corporal punishment. Due to there being a dearth of research regarding social workers and corporal punishment in South Africa, we will present studies concerning either corporal punishment or social work in South Africa.

The chapter will end with a discussion of the prior research in relation to our study. When we present the research, we have used the same terms as the authors, therefore it will differ between corporal and physical punishment. Some of the studies we present used the term ‘physical abuse’ and ‘domestic violence against minors’. However, in the definition as well as in their conclusions the authors would do a parallel to corporal punishment or child upbringing.

#### **3.1 International research of social workers relationship to corporal punishment**

The international research we have found and will present in this segment focuses on social workers and corporal punishment. It is indicated that social workers’ experiences and opinions about corporal punishment may affect how they perceive the seriousness when encountering corporal punishment in their professional role. It is also indicated that culture may play a part in the assessment. Furthermore, some research emphasised the need of implementing human rights principles in the social work profession.

Ashton (2001, p. 389) has done a vignette study in the US about the relationship between opinions towards corporal punishment and the perception and reporting of child maltreatment. She found among students that were likely to have a career in social work, a connection between approval of corporal punishment and a less probability to register maltreatment and report it (ibid). Ashton (2010, p. 129) later did another study in the US, where she studied if ethnicity mattered for reporting child maltreatment. According to Ashton (2010, pp. 129–130) ethnicity is connected to a person’s culture, which values and norms forms the individual. She found in her study that approval of corporal punishment differed between the ethnic groups and so did the opinion on maltreatment, but it had no effect on reporting it (ibid, pp. 138–140). In Slovenia, Pecnik and Bezensek-Lalic (2011, p. 525) did a vignette-study to see how social workers personal experiences with violence affected their professional role. The results indicated that social workers who had endured corporal punishment reacted strongly towards a child suffering from corporal punishment (ibid, p. 541). However, the social workers who had experienced multiple violence including the three categories: corporal punishment, abuse between parents and abuse from intimate partner, appeared to feel hopeless and would do nothing.

In a study which entailed surveys of professionals and public opinion in physical abuse in Singapore, Chan et al. (2002, p. 359) aimed to see if culture affected the professionals

understanding of child maltreatment. Six types of professions participated including social workers. Chan et al. (ibid, p. 372) found that there were more variations between the professions, than between the professionals and the public. Social workers were in general more accepting of caning than other professions. However, they were less accepting of abuse that left marks. Professionals' attitudes seemed to be influenced by their specific culture. They lacked a transcultural perspective as well as education on child abuse and its consequences, which could result in different interventions (ibid, p. 359). The states of those countries that have ratified the Convention on the rights of the child has according to Chan et al. (ibid, pp. 365- 366) a moral obligation to certify that professionals know about Convention's standards. The authors further recommended training that preceded culture. Cultural differences in child upbringing should be respected in relation to protecting children's rights and mandatory training could help in this aspect. The professionals needed to be aware of cultures but also be prepared to lead towards a change (ibid, p. 377).

Watkinson and Rock (2016, pp. 94-95) concluded in their case study about corporal punishment in Barbados, that social work has a critical role to play around the world to end corporal punishment against children. They found a breach between the international human rights and lived realities. The authors emphasised on the importance of implementing human rights education into the curriculum of social work education, to provide social workers with the tools to advocate for social change. In the Global definition of the social work profession and in the ethical principles, social justice and human rights are expressed to be facilitated by social work (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW] & International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW] 2004). The global agenda also emphasises on human rights and the rights of children (IASSW, International Council on Social Welfare [ICSW] & IFSW 2012). Watkinson and Rock (2016, pp. 94-95) meant that through these writings social workers around the world are obliged to support the prohibition of corporal punishment.

### 3.2 Corporal punishment – legal bans are not enough

The following research that we will present aims at creating an understanding of legal processes as well as other factors that are vital in a successful legal reform. These factors are for instance: leadership, campaigns, education, language and traditions.

Sweden was the first country in the world to ban corporal punishment by law in 1979. The country is therefore often seen as a sort of leader in the fight to ban corporal punishment (Durrant 2003 p. 147). However, there is a controversy to what impact the actual ban had. Analysing all the research and surveys he could find, Roberts (2000, p. 1027) aimed to evaluate if the public's opinion on corporal punishment changed by the law in 1979. Results indicated that the law had not affected the public's opinion. Instead he reasoned that the approval of corporal punishment had already been decreasing and the law was only a result from this (ibid, p. 1034). Therefore, to change public's opinion on corporal punishment, other methods than legal reforms was needed

(ibid). On the other hand, Durrant (2003, p. 148) argued that this was not a fair conclusion. To comprehend the effects of legal reforms, data should be examined from the start of the legal process around corporal punishment in Sweden. Durrant (ibid, pp. 148-149) reasoned the legal process gradually changed the public opinion. It started already with the ban in schools 1928. Then the penal code was removed in 1957 and the amount of people disapproving of corporal punishment increased. The law in 1979 was therefore meant as an educational one, to remove any confusion to whether it was still legal or not to use corporal punishment (ibid).

In relation to the effect of legal bans Lansford et al. (2017, p. 44) did a study where they compared parents' beliefs and reported use of corporal punishment in Albania, Central African Republic, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Ukraine. Four of these countries had not outlawed corporal punishment. In a couple of the countries the use of corporal punishment continued despite legal bans. Therefore, the authors (ibid, p. 11) suggested that campaigns to promote awareness of legal bans combined with educating parents in alternative methods could be of great importance. Chikoko and Makhasane (2016, pp. 6-7) argued that a legal ban itself would not necessarily result in social transformation. In their study of corporal punishment in South African schools they found that the principals did not seem to work actively to stop teachers from using corporal punishment. They argued that leadership was therefore vital. According to Maphosa and Shumba (2010, p. 387) teachers needed more resources to change their acceptance of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method. They suggested staff development where alternative disciplinary methods would be presented (ibid).

When the statutory defence of reasonable force to correct a child was removed from the crimes act in New Zealand, Lawrence and Smith (2008, p. 113) did a study with focus groups consisting of professionals, which included social workers. They found that although most professionals were vocally against any type of physical discipline, some were reluctant to openly criticise parents and preferred to offer alternatives (ibid, p. 117). Some participants had an organisational policy to outrule physical punishment. The policy would be used as a support. There was also a need for a good relationship between the professional and the client when working against physically disciplining children (ibid, p. 118). Several of the informants did not understand the removal and there was a lack of training in the topic of child discipline. The authors (ibid, p. 114) stated that changing laws and public campaigns would only be the beginning. Professionals have an influential role to change mind-sets when working with parents as well as effect initiatives run at a government level. If professionals had clear guidelines the authors stated, it was possible to change the attitudes to child upbringing (ibid, p. 122).

Saunders (2013, p. 278) analysed the impact of language, laws and traditions in United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The countries have ratified the convention of the rights of the child, however corporal punishment is still legal and there is a defence of reasonable chastisement in the common law. Reasons for not prohibiting physical punishment, Saunders (ibid, p. 280) claimed is due to children being seen as property to their parents, humans in the making as well

as that what happens in the home is regarded as a private matter. Laws could have different purposes, either being a reflection of current norms and attitudes in the society or be educational to change those current norms and attitudes (ibid, p. 280). Saunders (ibid, p. 299) concluded it is through laws, language and tradition children are treated differently, having less respect and rights than adults. In order for this to change the language used about physical punishment as well as the laws have to change. Furthermore, parents and children should get training and support (ibid). Evaluating if specific words used to describe corporal punishment would affect people's judgement in America, Brown, Holden and Ashraf (2018, p. 1) did an online vignette survey. In each vignette a synonym to corporal punishment would be used to describe a situation. Apparent in the study was that the different words affected the participants' perception of the action. Spank was ranked as the most common, effective and acceptable action, whereas beat got the opposite ranking (ibid, p. 5). The authors (ibid, pp. 6-7) reasoned that words used to describe corporal punishment could be used to legitimise parental violence but also used to decrease it. Therefore, modified words could be used to enhance the effect of legal reforms and education to prevent corporal punishment (ibid).

In a study on 186 cultural groups around the world with a diversity of language, economy, political organisation and historical time, Lansford and Dodge (2008, p. 257) found that greater use of corporal punishment was related to more violence at a societal level. If there was an increase in the use of corporal punishment children were more likely to engage in violent behaviour during adulthood. The authors (ibid, p. 267) concluded that in cultural groups, where corporal punishment was commonly used, it would be difficult to change attitudes. They suggested policies to reduce the violence at a societal level and individual. The data for the study was collected from the standard cross-cultural sample of anthropological records (ibid, pp. 261-262).

### 3.3 Corporal punishment in South Africa

In the following section we will report some of the existing research that we have found about opinions, experience and assessment of corporal punishment in South Africa. We will also present research regarding social work in South Africa, which we believe is relevant to our study.

After corporal punishment was made illegal in the school system, research has been done about teachers understanding of corporal punishment. Chikoko and Makhasane (2016, pp. 4-7) have done a case study examining dominant perspectives regarding the practice of corporal punishment and implications for school leadership in two South African high schools. They found that some teachers have been using corporal punishment even though it is illegal because of their understanding of it as African culture. A qualitative study on educators' disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South Africa was done by Maphosa and Shumba (2010, p. 387). The result indicated that educators were aware of other disciplinary methods but saw them as ineffective. After the banning of corporal punishment educators felt

disempowered to institute discipline. Teachers expressed learners had lost their respect and fear of them and that learners had more rights than the teachers (ibid). Some teachers expressed that they were exposed to corporal punishment themselves when they were children and claimed it was effective and that they grew up in a well-disciplined generation because of it (Chikoko & Makhasane 2016, pp. 5-6).

Breen, Daniels and Tomlinson (2014, pp. 135-139) have done a study examining children's experience of corporal punishment in an urban township. The study found that corporal punishment was an everyday experience for the children at home and in schools. The children were either the recipient of corporal punishment or they had witnessed corporal punishment being used in school or at home (ibid). In a study about domestic violence against minors in South Africa and Zimbabwe, it was found that the informants only defined domestic violence as spousal violence (Lee, Mdhluli & Matshidze 2017, p. 8921). The informants, social workers among others, said other forms of domestic violence were insignificant in comparison. The authors stated that since it is accepted to use corporal punishment it is generally seen as a private matter. Furthermore, they concluded that there should be improvement in the criminal justice system when addressing domestic violence against minors (ibid, p. 8923).

In a quantitative study, Pierce and Bozalek (2004, p. 817) aimed to measure how different groups ranked different types of abuse and neglect in South Africa, and if this deviated depending on their field of work. For the study they compared the groups: social workers from the Child Welfare Society, human service workers, South African Police Service Child Protection Unit and laypersons (housewives, business and university students). They had 17 different categories within abuse and neglect. Twelve of these were thought as more serious by the participants (ibid, p. 827). Physical abuse had number eleven which the authors (ibid, p. 829) meant could be because of the overall acceptance of physical discipline in South Africa. Social workers ranked some categories lower than the other groups. This the authors (ibid, p. 830) stated could be explained by social workers line of work, where they encounter different types of abuse and had a more realistic understanding. However, according to Hochfeld (2008, p. 96) the professional education for social workers was deficient in how social work with families should be done. In her qualitative study about South African social workers apprehension of family, she concluded that the informants acted from their own upbringing in the work with families, implementing stereotypical ideas. Influencing clients was a vital part of their work. Therefore Hochfeld (ibid, p. 102) urged social workers to challenge their cultural understanding of family as it could affect their judgements of how families should and should not act. With the aim to give an understanding of the difficulty in reforming child welfare in South Africa, Patel, Schmid and Venter (2015, p. 459) found that there was a lack of research in regard of social work in transition.

Gray et al. (2002, p. 99) did a comparative study of the political participation of social workers in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The authors motivated the study by stating that social

work is political at its core. It was noted that South African social workers were less keen to attend or testify at public hearings or to be politically involved than the other social workers but were more positive to activism and campaigning (ibid, p. 106). The authors (ibid, p. 107) reasoned this could be because of apartheid, where political involvement was dangerous and activism occurred underground.

### 3.4 Discussion of prior research in relation to our study

All of the research we present is done after year 2000 with some published as late as 2018. Through our extensive search we have identified a knowledge gap in research concerning corporal punishment and social workers in South Africa. Therefore, we have presented research which only centres on some of the aspects. When it comes to professionals and corporal punishment, international research is predominant. Research is done within a specific setting and time. Therefore, it could be difficult to transfer the results to other studies. However, we argue for its value as it could give a hint towards our study and similar patterns could emerge.

International research as well as general research on South African social workers suggests that there is an absence of a professional understanding to the concept of family and child upbringing. The social workers assessments appear to derive from personal opinions rather than professional ones. This is an indicator for the need of more studies within the subject as well as within the South African context. Research points to a complexity of balancing laws, opinions and cultural traditions and shows how language is a central part in this. It hints towards several factors being needed for a law to change attitudes concerning corporal punishment. It also points to how laws could be confusing and interpreted differently. This we believe is relevant for our study, as social workers have action space in their work and come in close contact with families where corporal punishment may occur. With our presented research we aim to not judge or take a standpoint, however we cannot say the research we have presented is free of judgment. We believe it is impossible for a researcher to be completely neutral in their conduct. Researchers will be affected by their own preunderstanding and aim, which will have implications for the results. This is related to our theory of science which we will present in the following chapter.

## 4.0 Theoretical connection

In this chapter we will give a theoretical base to understand aspects of social constructionism and why we have made a choice to use it as our theory of science. However, we will not go into depths of explaining social constructionism. This is due to it being a very broad perspective defined differently by various theorists (Lock & Strong 2010, p. 6; Gergen 2001, p. 121; Burr 2015, pp. 1-2). From Loseke's (2003, pp. ix-xi) social constructionistic perspective, we will also explore how social problems could be defined differently in the world. To build a theoretical base we have used analytical tools which focuses on language and discourse. These we will clarify as well as argue for their relevance to our study. To understand language, we used Burr's (2015) and Gergen and Gergen's (1997) interpretation of it. We have used theories of Foucault (1980 a; 1980 b; 1989/1969; 1990/1976; 1993/1971; 2011/1989) to understand discourse.

### 4.1 Social constructionism

Social constructionism questions the idea that we see the world for what it is, instead it focuses on interactions with the world and how it affects our understanding of it (Burr 2015, p. 3). Our ways of understanding the world is from this perspective formed by our cultural norms and the time we live in. It depends on the social and economic structures and therefore what is true is relative (Burr 2015, p. 4,9; Gergen 2001, p. 30; Lock & Strong 2010, p. 7). Human interaction and communication are central in forming our worldview. When we describe social constructionism, we separate it from social constructivism which focuses on the individual person. According to Burr (ibid, pp. 22-23) with this perspective the individual is held more accountable for its constructions instead of group constructions deriving from social interactions within context.

#### 4.1.1 The relevance of social constructionism to our study

As researches, the way we understand the world may differ from the informants understanding, because we have different experiences. We have been brought up in different countries with different prerequisites. By visiting other cultures, we could enhance our understanding of how corporal punishment could be understood and constructed in different ways. How to discipline children is a controversial topic and by using social constructionism we believe that we can approach our research question with a more nuanced understanding. There are specific ethical codes for social workers, nationally as well as globally. Related to this, it is of interest to hear how the professional social workers understands their role, when working with corporal punishment within the South African context.

#### 4.1.2 A reflection on social problems

Corporal punishment could in some parts of the world be referred to as a social problem or accepted in others as a reasonable method in child upbringing. To further comprehend this

controversy, we want to examine how social problems could be understood and differ out of what Loseke (2005, p. ix) refers to as a social constructionist perspective. This, we believe is needed to minimise prior understandings and misconceptions, as well as to open up to new perspectives.

A social problem could be seen as a construct (Loseke 2005, pp. 4-5). For a social problem to exist it needs to be viewed as wrong and cause harm, be widespread, viewed as changeable by humans and believed it should be changed (ibid, p.6). Social problems are about objective conditions and subjective definitions (ibid, pp. 7-13). Objectively something therefore could be defined as a social problem without subjectively being experienced as one. Objectively would be that it is widespread, the conditions people are affected by are also caused by them and there are indicators and statistics to substantiate it. However, what is seen as objectively true could also be seen as a social construction created by humans. Loseke (ibid, pp. 8-9) describes that it is not enough to focus on the objective conditions. Instead it will be the public worry that turns a phenomenon into a social problem. This would be understood as the subjective definition. Even though the conditions are objectively measured as a social problem, the beliefs people have about it and its consequences matters more. If people do not believe that it has negative consequences, they will not define it as a social problem though the conditions prevail (ibid).

## 4.2 Understanding of language and its implications

Language has a central place within social constructionism (Burr 2015, p. 52). The reality of the world is seen as socially constructed and formed by interactions between people in a specific time and culture. At the heart of interactions is language (ibid, pp. 9-10). It derives from our relationships and forms the way we understand and create the world as well as ourselves and has practical consequences (Burr 2015, pp. 11,72; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4). The world therefore, becomes constructed and reconstructed through social interactions and our use of language. Within a group with mutual languages, discourses will be created which forms people's way of thinking, morals and values. These discourses create a distinction between different groups, causing discrepancy (Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4).

Words could be used to justify our actions and the way of using a language could be seen as a social action as it has consequences for people affected by the interaction. Social change could be made by the usage of language and also change the way people think (Burr 2015, pp.10-11, 54).

### 4.2.1 Relevance of language for our study

As illustrated in the previous part, words have meanings and consequences. This is why we made a choice to apply this way of thinking to our study. For instance, words like 'child' and 'caregiver' imply different rights and creates an asymmetric power relationship by its definition. The caregiver cares for the child and could legally make decisions concerning the child sometimes even without the child's consent. The child needs to be protected and cared for, thus

the child is under the caregiver's rule. This is a concept we will further explore when we apply these lenses to our result. The theories help us to examine some of the words that are used within the context. These words could in turn have implications for the social workers work with caregivers as well as how they view themselves. Furthermore, it could help us understand the informants' choice of intervention as well as their definition of corporal punishment and which consequences this might have. However, our interpretation of the language and the words' meaning could differ from the informants. Gergen and Gergen (1997) also helped us critically question ourselves as researchers and how our understanding of corporal punishment is formed by our language and culture.

### 4.3 What are discourses?

When one speaks of discourse it is often associated with Foucault (Burr 2015 p. 74; Börjesson 2003, p. 34). According to Foucault (1993/1971, p. 19) discourses exist everywhere. They could be understood to regulate our knowledge and common understanding of things and is dependent on the specific culture, history and society (Foucault 2011/1989, pp. 60-63). Different discourses highlight different aspects of a phenomenon and each discourse claims to know the truth (Foucault 1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13). Thus, the current dominating discourse eliminates other ways of understanding a phenomenon (Foucault 1993/1971, pp. 30-31). The power in one discourse becomes visible in the resistance in competing discourses (Foucault 1990/1976, p. 95). Within a discourse, power and knowledge are intertwined and always present (Foucault, 1990/1976 p. 97; 1993/1971, p. 31). The power to act in a certain way or the reason new laws are made could be seen as influenced by the existing knowledge in the society (Foucault 1990/1976, p. 95). Power forms both knowledge and discourses (Foucault, 1980 a, p. 119). Foucault (1990/1976, pp. 93-95) meant that power could be found everywhere and is always present. It is not used by specific people. Power could be understood as creating discourses which rules people (Foucault 1980 b, p. 98). However, at the same time people could through power change as well as create new discourses. Thus, power could be productive and used for change (Foucault 1980 a, p. 119).

#### 4.3.1 Relevance of discourses for our study

We have made the choice to use Foucault's theory of discourse to provide insights to how a phenomenon like corporal punishment could be understood and interpreted differently. Discourses could be understood as regulating our knowledge and understanding, thus different discourses could create different and sometimes contradicting perspectives. This could for instance illustrate how the social workers could be of different opinions about corporal punishment. It could also give an understanding to how they understand their society. Furthermore, it could assist to understand the challenges and possibilities the informants could have when they meet people belonging to other discourses than themselves.



## 5.0 Methodology and methodological considerations

This chapter aims to describe how we have completed our study and handled our preunderstanding as well as how we have reasoned about our method.

We will explain how we have collected our empirical material and sample. The interview setting will be accounted for. This will follow by a description of how the material was processed with a content analysis. Our preunderstanding and its impact to our study in relation to social constructionism will be discussed. The chapter will end with an ethical consideration and method discussion, where we will share our thoughts about the strength and weaknesses of the study.

### 5.1 Empirical material

We were interested in getting a deeper comprehension of the social workers' understanding of their role, when working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. From this view, we made a choice to use a qualitative method, which is preferable when exploring experiences (Svensson & Ahrne 2015, p. 15).

Our interview guide was semi-structured with open ended questions. A semi-structured interview guide has advantages that it focuses on different themes. That gives the informant space to develop one's thoughts and the interviewers to ask follow-up questions (Dalen 2007, p. 34-35). During the making of our interview guide we used our research question and sub-questions to create four different themes. These included: *The social worker's opinion about corporal punishment*, *Professional experiences with caregivers using corporal punishment*, *The removal of the defence* and *Social workers understanding of their role*. We started and ended the interview with questions that we thought would make the informant feel relaxed and were more general, which is recommended (Eriksson- Zetterquist & Ahrne 2015, p. 45; Dalen 2007, pp. 35-37).

### 5.2 Sample

Our goal was to perform eight interviews with South African social workers that worked with caregivers who use corporal punishment. We wanted to interview social workers of different genders, ages and with different working experience. The study was limited to the geographical area of Cape Town. For our sample we had the requirements that the informants needed to be South Africans and have at least two years of working experience to increase the chance that the social workers had been exposed to the issue. When we arrived in Cape Town we sent our information letter to different organisations (see Appendix 1). We realised that this was not the most effective method because either the organisations did not reply or they declined. Both of us had contacts in South Africa which we used to find our first two informants. After this we used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is when after an interview you ask if the informant knows of other people who might be of interest for the study (Eriksson- Zetterquist & Ahrne 2015, p. 41). For our last two interviews we used a two- step-sampling (ibid, p. 40). In order to do a two-

step-sampling we went to specific organisations and introduced ourselves and our study. At the organisations we left an information letter and at two organisations, the supervisors agreed to provide us with an informant of their choice.

The social workers that we interviewed worked both in non-government organisations (NGOs) and at the Department of social development (DSD), which is run by the South African government. All the social workers from NGOs worked at different organisations and the social workers from DSD worked in different departments. Many of the informants also had a background and experiences in different fields of social work. To protect the informants' anonymity, we have not included who works where.

<b>Department of Social Development (DSD) (Four informants)</b>	<b>Non-government organisations (NGOs) (Four informants)</b>
Child protection	Child- and youth care centre
Fostercare	Child- and youth centre for sentenced youth
Probation office	Family therapy
School social work	Parental guidance

**Figure 1** Which type of fields the informants worked in.

### 5.3 The interviews

Before arriving in Cape Town, we contacted professor Andrew Dawes due to his research about corporal punishment in South Africa. We wanted to get a perspective from a national expert. Dawes who is retired advised us to contact Carol Bower, whom is an expert on children's rights. We interviewed Bower in Cape Town with the aim to gain a better understanding of the national laws, attitudes and discussions concerning corporal punishment. We also did a test interview with a supervisor Lovisa had during her internship in Cape Town 2017. It was vital to us to get feedback from a South African social worker. This would guide us in expressing ourselves in an understandable and respectable way during our interview (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Ahrne 2015, p. 44).

The social workers that wanted to participate were informed that we were flexible with time and place. Six of the interviews were conducted at the informants' workplaces. Two informants wanted us to arrange a place. These two interviews were held at a cafe, where we had the top floor to ourselves and were left undisturbed. The social workers were informed that we estimated the interview to be one-hour long. We realised after the first interview that the more correct estimation would be up to one and a half hour. Our eight interviews were 50 minutes to 100 minutes long.

To split up the tasks during interviews is preferable according to Eriksson-Zetterquist and Ahrne (2015, pp. 49-50). During our interviews, one of us was in charge of asking the questions and the other one took notes in case our recording would not work. Both of us asked follow-up questions.

#### 5.4 Content analysis

We did a qualitative content analysis from our transcribed interviews. A content analysis is a common choice when interviews are the basis for the material (Carlsson 1991, p. 63). We followed a content analysis structure made by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). We would first read the transcriptions several times to comprehend the text as a whole. The structure of the analyse was as follows: we highlighted any sentences that could be relevant to our research question as well as sub-questions. Each question had a different colour marker. We would then compare our highlights and discuss our separate findings. We found meaning units, which we condensed and labelled with codes. The codes were sorted into categories. The sorting of codes into categories is also referred to as the manifest content, because it is formed from the visible text (ibid, p. 107). After we had decided on the categories, we sorted them into themes. Themes are known as latent context, which is when an interpretation is made to what the underlying meaning of the categories is (ibid). We reread the interviews to certify that we had not deviated from the context and that we had kept the core. When we used quotations to represent our themes, we first clarified them. This meant that we deleted expressions like ‘mhm’ and ‘ehm’. We have also reframed some words from spoken to written language. For example, we have changed ‘gonna’ to ‘going to’. The themes that arose from the content analysis are ‘*How could corporal punishment be defined?*’, ‘*Opinions about corporal punishment*’, ‘*The social workers’ roles*’ and ‘*Challenges the social workers face*’.

#### 5.5 Preunderstanding

Preunderstanding is something that could affect the study (Larsson 2005, pp. 3-4; Dalen 2007, pp. 17-18). This is because the truth is relative and that there is a perspective behind each image of the truth (Larsson 2005, pp. 3-4). One way of accounting for preunderstanding is to declare personal experiences that effects the preunderstanding connected to what is to be studied (ibid). Other ways of accounting for preunderstanding is through earlier research and to account for the chosen theory used for analyses (ibid). Earlier research and our theory for analyses have been presented and discussed in the previous two chapters. Below we will describe our preunderstanding based on personal experiences, as well as how it has likely affected our study.

Both of us grew up in Sweden after the illegalisation of corporal punishment. Therefore, we have lived in a society where we have been brought up to believe that it is not an accepted method in child upbringing.

We did our internships abroad the fall of 2017, which affected our preunderstanding about how

social work and social problems could be understood differently. While Lovisa did her internship in Cape Town, the defence of reasonable chastisement was removed from the common law (see 2.3 Corporal punishment in South Africa). This inspired our choice of subject. The removal of the defence caused reactions in media and social media which both of us started to follow. When Lovisa did her internship, she would also hear social workers' opinions and got the preunderstanding that they differ. Clients would also talk about how they used corporal punishment and it also happened that she witnessed it. From these experiences we came to think that corporal punishment was commonly used in South Africa.

Due to our preunderstanding we believe we cannot claim a neutral position as researchers. To claim this, we argue would go against our theory of science, social constructionism. The world is socially constructed by interactions as well as society (Burr 2015, pp. 2-4). There is a risk that our choice of questions in our interviews have affected the type of answers we got. Another researcher or interviews in another setting could have resulted in other answers.

## 5.6 Ethical consideration

There are many ethical aspects when doing a study like this. We will start with highlighting our ethical considerations in relation to the Swedish Research Council's four principles (Vetenskapsrådet 2002, pp. 7-14), as well as the Human Sciences Research Council's ethical codes in South Africa (HSRC 2018). We will then explore the contradiction between transparency of the study and the protection of the informants and how we handled it. This will be followed by reflections concerning our interviews being conducted in English.

The Swedish Research Council's four principles are the requirement of information, requirement of consent, the requirement of confidentiality and the requirement of use (Vetenskapsrådet 2002, pp. 7-14). In addition to these principles, the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa also have four principles. These are respect and protection, transparency, scientific and academic professionalism and accountability (HSRC 2018). When we introduced our study, we sent our information letter (See Appendix 1) which contained information about the study and that the informants would be anonymous. Before the interviews the informants were given information about the study again with a consent form to sign. They were also informed that the recordings of the interviews would be deleted after we had finished the transcriptions.

Larsson (2005, p. 9) points out the importance of ethical reflection in a scientific study. When doing research there is often an opposition between transparency of the study and the protection of informants (ibid). Since the research is done in Cape Town and specific organisations are not mentioned, the informants' anonymities could be seen as well protected in Sweden. To protect the informants' anonymities in South Africa we have made the choice not to mention what specific organisation they worked at. Neither do we use quotes indicating where the informants worked. However, we have mentioned the fields the social workers were in to show that they had

different experiences. We interviewed three men but made the choice not to mention what genders the informants had, to protect their anonymities. Two of the informants did have a relationship with each other. Due to this we considered if we should only keep one of the interviews. However, we found that they highlighted different aspects which led to the decision to keep both. Furthermore, we have deleted filler words in our used quotes that we felt were commonly used by a specific informant to protect their anonymity. It is also important to consider if the informants could be affected in a negative way by the study (Larsson 2005, p. 10). We argue that the interviewed social workers in this study do not belong to a vulnerable group and will not likely be affected in a negative way. However, due to the topic being current and sensitive as well as moving between the informants' private experiences and professional assessments, we have valued the protection of the informants' anonymity highly.

We did the interviews in English because it is the most common second language in South Africa. If someone would prefer speaking in their mother tongue, we were prepared to use an interpreter. Had the interviews been in the informants' mother tongue, it is possible it would have been easier for them to express themselves. However, with an interpreter there would also be a risk of valuable expressions disappearing in the interpretation.

## 5.8 Method discussion

The following discussion will include reflections about our sample and alternative ways of conducting the research. There will also be a discussion about how we handled our preunderstanding and its likely impact in our study. The discussion ends with how our study relates to creditability and generalisation.

Snowball sampling or chain sampling could be risky because the informants might know each other and therefore share experiences and attitudes (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Ahrne 2015, p. 41). To avoid this, we specifically asked for new informants working somewhere else. The other sampling method was two-step-sampling, where the contact first was made with the organisation and then the supervisor supplied us with informants. The risk with this method is that the supervisor might chose the informant for specific reasons. However, we believe the strength in our sample is that we have used different sampling methods to find the informants.

We aimed at fulfilling heterogeneity in the homogeneous group. By interviewing eight diverse social workers we believe we achieved that. This is preferable according to Trots (2012, p. 137). Even though our requirement was two years of experience, one of the informants had only worked one and a half year but had valuable experience with the subject. As the informants had different workplaces there was a variety in their answers. The variety in their answers could have been more easily manageable if the informants worked at the same place and if we had used focus groups. However, since we interviewed a limited number of social workers we wanted to reduce the risk of them having similar opinions because of working in close proximity to one

another. For this reason, we made the choice to only interview one social worker from each department or organisation.

As mentioned in our preunderstanding, we grew up in Sweden without corporal punishment which has affected us. From early stages of the study we realised that we needed to be aware of this and not judge the informants, if they would have a different perspective on corporal punishment than us. We also realised that it was a more complex subject than we previously thought. One way to handle this situation was to let the interviews take longer time if needed. The interviews could be up to 100 minutes long. The time restriction was trivial to the importance of listening to the South African social workers' understandings and thoughts. By discussing our interview guide with the social worker in our test interview, we aimed to decrease the impact from our own socially constructed worldview. We would also ask the informants if there was something they would like to add at the end of the interviews.

In our analysis we have focused on the language. This has been done from our understanding of the words, which could be different from the meaning the informants had. Due to limitations in the study, we could not go into the depths of the words from different types of understanding. Therefore, we have done a generalised interpretation of the meaning of the words.

One way of achieving credibility in a study is to be transparent (Svensson & Ahrne 2015, pp. 24-25). We have accounted for our studies strength and weaknesses, how we have conducted our research and we have reflected on other possibilities in conducting the study. Triangulation could also be used to make a study credible. This is done by for example using different methods or empirical material through the research. This way the researcher could find a more objective truth (ibid). We have not been able to do a triangulation, although it could have increased the studies credibility. Feedback from the field could also increase the studies credibility. The informants' feedback could contribute with further data to the studies result (ibid). We have made the choice not to involve the informants in this, since our time in Cape Town was limited. However, all informants with an interest in our study are welcome to take part of it when it is completed.

Generalisability is when the study can represent something beyond the setting where the research was conducted (Svensson & Ahrne 2015, pp. 26-27). At the same time, interviews need to be understood in the context where they were performed (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Ahrne 2015, p. 54). This is relevant for our research, where the social workers' role appeared to be partly affected by the South African society and history. Therefore, it is difficult for our study to claim generalisability. Our study only contains eight interviews, which we mean is not representative enough to talk about generalisation. However, we believe we achieved some fullness in our material, which according to Eriksson-Zetterquist and Ahrne (2015, p. 54), is when similar responses return multiple times. If our study had contained more interviews it is possible that we

could have claimed some generalisation. Despite this, we argue that our study, to some extent, illustrates and confirms previous research regarding social workers and corporal punishment.



## 6.0 Result and analyse

Our study aimed at exploring how social workers in South Africa understood their role when they worked with caregivers who used corporal punishment. This chapter will consist of four themes that rose from the content analysis and with which we have the ambition to answer our research question. These themes will be *How could corporal punishment be defined?*, *Opinions about corporal punishment*, *The roles of the social worker* and *Challenges the social worker face*. All themes except the first one, are divided into sub-themes which together aim to give a better understanding of the different perspectives within the specific theme. After each theme an analyse will follow. Although our first theme is in comparison smaller than the others, we argue that it is needed in order to be able to answer our research question. How the informants defined corporal punishment permeate the result and could have implications for how they understood their role. The definition will also include the difference between corporal punishment and abuse.

### 6.1 How could corporal punishment be defined?

The definition is an important part of our study because it explains how the social workers understood the term corporal punishment. As defined in the introduction (see 1.4.1 Corporal Punishment) corporal punishment could be understood as when physical force is used against a child to either punish or contain her or him. The social workers in our study described their definitions in a similar way:

Corporal punishment refers to when a child is misbehaving and a child is doing something that is not appropriate in a social setting or according to an adult is not appropriate. The adult who is in that moment there then produces a punishment in the form of a physical punishment. To help the child either discover that this was wrong that they did and to help them and, or maybe also as a preventative strategy to allow them not to make the same mistake again because otherwise this will happen again. (Informant 6)

Corporal punishment was also described as different types of actions and at different levels of physically hurting the child. While several of the informants defined corporal punishment being used when the child had misbehaved, some described it differently:

Corporal punishment now it's the way we understand, or I understand within the context of South Africa, is this whole of, where a child gets beaten. For whatever reason. (Informant 3)

From our side corporal punishment is punishment. Anything that would harm the child, physically, emotionally, cognitively. That is corporal punishment. (Informant 7)

*Informant 3* described how the child did not need to misbehave in order to be exposed to corporal punishment. Both *Informant 7 and 8* described corporal punishment as not only physically hurtful, which *Informant 7* definition represents. This was also the organisations joint definition. Our other informants did not have an organisational definition on corporal punishment.

All of the social workers said that it could be hard to determine whether it was corporal punishment or abuse. Some would make a difference if the child got marks or if the intention was to hurt instead of disciplining the child. According to *Informant 2* corporal punishment was hidings on the bum and everything else was abuse. The quote below describes what corporal punishment could mean to different people:

You can have a parent who says ‘I’m going to hit my child twenty times with a cricket bat, because that’s my right as a parent to do so because I need to punish him’. And say that you get another parent who is going say that ‘I put my child over my knee and I will hit him with my hand’. We have another child, another situation, where the parent says ‘I’m going to throw my child to the ground and kick him repeatedly because he needs to learn’. Where do you draw the line? (Informant 4)

#### 6.1.1 Analyse of ‘How could corporal punishment could be defined?’

The term corporal punishment could be described as an action where one uses physical force to punish or contain a child. By having a word for a specific type of violence, corporal punishment becomes separated from abuse (Saunders 2013, pp. 285-286; Brown, Holden & Ashraf 2018, p. 1). Though physical force is used in both actions, the purpose is understood differently. According to Gergen and Gergen (1997, p. 4) and Burr (2015, pp. 10-11) the words we use, have meanings which has practical consequences and affect our thoughts. Therefore, the word corporal punishment has consequences as it could give the caregiver the right to use psychical force on the child, without it being termed as abuse. Many of the informants would compare corporal punishment to abuse and make a difference between the two focusing on the purpose behind the action. However, they still found it difficult to determine when asked where the line would be drawn between corporal punishment and abuse.

*Informant 4* brought up how the term had different meanings for different people. This could be understood as people belonging to different groups where they have different discourses (Foucault 1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13). In each discourse corporal punishment could have a different meaning. In the same way the informant reasoned that caregivers would have their own definition of corporal punishment. This would then justify their actions of corporal punishment, explaining that they needed to punish the child, or the child needed to learn. We also noticed how *Informant 7*, who had an organisational definition of corporal punishment, had a more elaborate way of explaining corporal punishment. Since the informants diversely differed, this could indicate that the informants would have different ways of understanding corporal punishment, based on the different discourses they belonged to, work vice as well as personally.

## 6.2 Opinions about corporal punishment

During our analysis we identified how the social workers had different opinions of how they understood corporal punishment. Some of the informants described it as abusive whereas others would say it could be effective. We have therefore divided our theme into two sub-themes, where we aim to explore the different opinions the social workers had. The sub-themes are *We need one standard to protect our children* and *Corporal punishment should be allowed if it is not abusive*. We argue that the opinions are of importance to explore because they could affect the social workers understanding of their role. It is therefore one of our sub-questions with purpose to help us answer our research question.

### 6.2.1 We need one standard to protect our children

In the following sub-theme we will describe the social workers' opinions regarding that they wanted corporal punishment to be illegal. The majority of the informants did not agree with corporal punishment and thought it should be illegal. Some of them said that it was worrying that many social workers were pro corporal punishment. Most of the informants talked about how there were better ways of disciplining children and that children needed to be protected from violence. It was described how violence was common in South Africa and that making corporal punishment illegal could be one way of taking away the violence in the society. They also talked about how violence tends to lead to more violence and that it therefore needed to stop:

I don't even feel that there should be a line between corporal punishment and child abuse at this stage. Our country is so violentised, I don't know if that's the right word, but violence is so integrated in our society that using violence in your home environment to help discipline a child and to help prepare them for life. I feel that it's not a good method [...] Corporal punishment and violence is not always synonyms, but I still feel that corporal punishment is almost like the gateway drug to more violence. (Informant 6)

Some also talked about how there could be two levels when it came to corporal punishment, where one was not as abusive as the other. They talked about the importance of understanding corporal punishment as abuse since it was difficult to determine where the line should be drawn:

I think there are two levels of corporal punishment [...] you have your family that would use it, giving the child a few smacks on the bum. Really believing they are not doing anything wrong. And then you have another side where it really is incredibly abusive and harsh [...] It's all corporal punishment [...] But unfortunately there has to be one standard. (Informant 1)

We have to draw the line somewhere and we have to draw the line at the foundation and it's taken a long time for South Africa to do this [...] We need to change our society and if we're serious about changing our society, we got to change the way we work with kids. So yeah, most corporal punishment, in fact all corporal punishment is child abuse. (Informant 4)

The informants said that this made it difficult for them to know what level was referred to when people spoke about corporal punishment. Some reasoned that corporal punishment could be an excuse for caregivers to hurt the child and that the line between corporal punishment and abuse got vague if the caregiver was angry.

Some of the informants did not agree with corporal punishment but explained that some forms of corporal punishment were not necessarily abusive, but neither was it effective:

I myself don't agree with any kind of corporal punishment. There's definitely a very fine line between corporal punishment and abuse [...] I don't think getting a slap on the hand is abusive, but I don't think it's effective either. (Informant 1)

*Informant 6* described being exposed to corporal punishment once and feeling humiliated afterwards and that the informant would have preferred the caregiver to discipline by talking instead of using corporal punishment. The quote below gives an indication to an abusive upbringing with too much corporal punishment:

It's personally. I don't believe in beating because, I was beaten nearly every single day, so I know what it is to get that beating every, nearly every single day [...] I've seen too much abuse [...] To beat a child, or give him a hiding, no, personally I don't believe in that. (Informant 3)

According to *Informant 7* caregivers could say that they were not negatively affected by corporal punishment. However, when they explored problems the clients had in their adult lives it often derived from corporal punishment.

Two of the informants said that it was paradoxical that corporal punishment was allowed when it was forbidden for adults to use violence against each other. Referring to the constitution *Informant 7* described how it was meant to protect everyone from violence. It did not have an age restriction to it and therefore corporal punishment should not be legal. The informants also talked about how corporal punishment taught children to handle problems by hurting others. According to the following informant, corporal punishment was not an effective way in teaching children how to handle conflicts:

I don't believe in beating any child. Because with them I say to this child: is this the way that you can solve things? Is this the way, that you can stop doing things by, if I beat you, you have to stop, whatever you do wrong, so if I beat you, then he will stop, and is that the message I want to say to a child. I would rather speak to a child, and say to him, what do you think? (Informant 3)

### 6.2.2 Corporal punishment should be allowed if it is not abusive

We will in this sub-theme describe the social workers' opinions regarding that corporal punishment should be allowed, if it is not abusive. All of the informants were against severe

corporal punishment. *Informant 2* and *Informant 5* reasoned that corporal punishment should be allowed but that intervention was needed if caregivers became abusive. Though only two of the social workers explicitly stated that they thought corporal punishment should be allowed, several of the informants brought up how many of their colleagues believed this as well. One of the informants described a recent workshop on corporal punishment with professionals where most of the social workers were pro corporal punishment.

Everyone except *Informant 5* described corporal punishment as common both in their professional work with clients and in their private life and in the society in general. *Informant 5* instead said that it should be more common. Corporal punishment was sometimes needed when raising children to become good adults. A parent should be able to use corporal punishment if they believed that it was necessary:

As a parent you are allowed to parent your child as you see fit. You are aware of the fact that there's a fine line between abuse and discipline and you can't tell that no parent is aware of that line, you know that there is a line and if you're trying to tell me that within my own home, that I'm not allowed to discipline my child as I see fit [...] you don't live in my house and every circumstances and context is different.  
(Informant 5)

Corporal punishment was described as sometimes needed to assert a dominant role as a parent:

I believe in asserting your dominant role in a parent-child relationship and knowing, not necessarily saying that your child must fear you, but they should know that there are boundaries, there are things they can and cannot do [...] I just feel that sometimes hitting your child it's necessary, but again, I'm saying there's a fine line between discipline and abuse and as long as people understand it and know where that line is, then by all means that's fine. (Informant 5)

Both *Informant 2* and *5* explained that they were exposed to corporal punishment when they were children, and that it was not so bad and was given correctly. They emphasised on the caregivers right to choose whether to use corporal punishment or not. *Informant 2* reasoned that being hit on the bum as a child was not abusive but beyond that, it became abuse. Corporal punishment should only be allowed in the home environment and used as a last resort. In the quote the informant problematised that corporal punishment needed to be used with a lot of control:

I think it should be allowed, look, no, I think it shouldn't be at all allowed outside of the house in the first place, I think that's one of the biggest mistakes that was ever made, to allow teachers and policemen and other people to beat children and adults. You know corporal punishment was a normal punishment for an adult at some point [...] the child needs to know that you still love it, him, her, the child shouldn't feel like they're being abused. And I think also that it should be limited with certain ages. No point in beating a 1-year old, but also once your child reaches a certain age it's not necessarily going to have a point anymore. But I think it should be a last resort. But it's

difficult. Maybe if I had my own children, I'd feel different, but I don't think you can say, put a blanket no on it, that it shouldn't happen. But yeah, there is a lot of control that needs to go with any kind of discipline. (Informant 2)

### 6.2.3 Analyse of 'Opinions about corporal punishment'

The difference in opinions about whether corporal punishment should be legal or not could be understood by the informants belonging to different discourses about whose rights are superior. Is it the caregivers right to discipline as they deem fit or is it the children's right to be protected from any type of violence that is superior? Foucault (1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13) described how people belong to different discourses and therefore, could have different understanding of what is true and right. These discourses regulate our knowledge (Foucault 2011/1989, pp. 60-63). Power and resistance become visible when different discourses collide (Foucault 1990/1976, p. 95). In this example the right of a caregiver or child could be different depending on the discourse the informant belonged to and which discourse was superior to the other. Some of the informants said that a social worker should not approve of corporal punishment. This could be interpreted as an understanding that social workers should belong to the same discourse, where the rights of the child are superior. The social workers' knowledge could be used to work against corporal punishment. However, this was not the understanding all informants shared. The social workers that approved of corporal punishment seemed to base their knowledge upon their own personal experiences. Corporal punishment was then understood as a good method, sometimes even needed to raise good children and it should be the caregiver's decision whether to use it or not. This could be interpreted as prioritising the rights of the caregivers to decide on discipline methods above the rights of the child to be protected from violence. Thus, one discourse became superior to the other.

Two informants brought up how it was paradoxical using violence to punish children when one would not use it on an adult. This brings us back to what implications the words caregiver, adult and child may have, as the words we use have practical consequences as they affect our thoughts (Burr 2015, pp. 10-11; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4). The informants talked about the perceived right of the caregiver to choose discipline method. It was either a right or problematised how it was perceived that way. This we argue could add to the power play between caregivers and children. Caregivers could be understood as exerting their rights when using corporal punishment to discipline and children should then not object. Thus, the rights of the caregiver become stronger than those of the child, the power is asymmetrical. Between adults however there is a different discourse than that between caregiver and child. Violence occurring between adults would in general not be accepted nor seen as necessary. However, corporal punishment inflicted by a caregiver towards a child could be perceived as reasonable.

This could also be the reason why some informants stated that although all forms of corporal punishment were not necessarily harmful or the equivalence to abuse, all children needed to be

protected. The informants described how the line between corporal punishment and abuse got crossed and corporal punishment could hide abusive behaviour. In an emotional state the caregiver could more easily lose control. Corporal punishment therefore needed to be illegal due to the fine line to abuse.

There was a controversy whether corporal punishment only should be allowed in the home or abolished from it. It was problematised what message was sent to children by using corporal punishment in a violent society. Several of the informants in our study would connect their opinions about corporal punishment to their own experiences of it.

Thus, the social workers' opinions on corporal punishment appeared to derive from their own personal relationship to it, their work-related experiences and violence in the society. These would then intertwine with each other. This indicates that when working with corporal punishment in families some of the social workers would act from their own experiences of it and their opinions would originate from these. This is conformably with Hochfeld (2008, p. 96) study. She found that the professional social work education in South Africa was not clear how work with families should be done and that the social workers acted from their own upbringing when working in families. Though their study was done with teachers as informants Chikoko and Makhasane (2016, pp. 5-6) noticed that there was a relationship between one's childhood and opinion about corporal punishment. The teacher who saw corporal punishment as effective in their upbringing would also be positive to corporal punishment and use it in their professional role.

### 6.3 The social workers' roles

In our interviews we would explore how the social workers talked about how the laws regarding corporal punishment effected their role. They would also talk about how their role was to educate and make a change and emphasised on the relationship with the caregiver. We believe these aspects are often intertwined with each other and the two sub-themes *Social workers and the law* and *The opportunity to make a change* rose. The combination of these two sub-themes, we believe is essential to answer how the social workers perceive their abilities, when working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. This is a part of our sub-question about how the social workers understand their abilities and challenges, working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. How they perceive their challenges will be presented after the analyse. This further helps us answer our research question.

#### 6.3.1 Social workers and the law

In this sub-theme we will present how the social workers understood and worked with the laws regarding corporal punishment.

We found that few of the social workers knew about the court case that outlawed reasonable chastisement the 19th of October 2017 (Sonke Gender Justice 2017). One of the informants described how their office celebrated the news and brought it up with their clients as well. Few of the social workers had policies of how to deal with corporal punishment. These were the social workers who worked in alternative care and with counselling. In South Africa corporal punishment in alternate care was made illegal in 1996. The social worker working with foster parents explained that during mandatory parenting classes, they would discuss that it is illegal to use corporal punishment. One of the social workers working at a child – and youth centre, described how the social workers educated the children on their rights to not be exposed to corporal punishment. The social workers who worked in other fields had different ways of understanding their roles and the law.

One informant explained how their supervisor encouraged them not to lay a criminal charge against a caregiver who used corporal punishment or abuse as it would lead to the social worker needing to testify in court. Another informant said that although it was a social worker's duty to get involved when witnessing illegal activity, they also needed to be aware of the risks in doing so, it could even be life-threatening.

Several of the informants talked about how informing about the law without judging was a part of their job. Some of them said the removal of the defence made it juridical easier. They could now tell the caregivers with support from the removal of the defence, that all forms of corporal punishment are illegal. The law could be used as a threat with consequences if the caregiver would not stop using corporal punishment:

I think for me it's very important that they understand that it has to stop. And that if it doesn't stop that there will be certain consequences. Because the safety of the child has to be a priority [...] There is no grey area. It's wrong, it's illegal, it's not allowed.  
(Informant 1)

Some described the law as a framework in their work with caregivers. *Informant 7* would state in a first meeting with a client how corporal punishment was illegal and that the social worker had to report it if it continued. However, if there was a continuous decrease in the use of corporal punishment the informant would not report it since it takes time for it to cease completely. According to *Informant 3* the law would stop caregivers from using corporal punishment as they did not want to do anything illegal. In relation to the law *Informant 2* described how it needed to be balanced with the social worker's opinion and the caregiver's culture:

There's always a bit of paradox, where you have your personal views, you have the law, you have other cultures and you need to balance all those things [...] You have to be very careful where you draw that line to interfere. So, I think you would, as a professional, I might not agree with your practice but now are you doing more harm than good? Now if I see a parent who would spank a child and have the child understand while-, why they are being spanked, regardless of my view, I would not

then go and open a criminal charge against that parent [...] I can't put it only in black and white. (Informant 2)

Furthermore, the informant explained that it could vary from case to case, how seriously the corporal punishment should be taken. The decision always depended on the specific case and the social worker assigned to it. However, the informant hoped they would still reach the same conclusion. How the law would be practically implicated was something both *Informant 1* and *Informant 6* wondered. They were concerned about how it would be possible to manage and monitor.

Some said that it would take time before it would be possible to see any effects of the removal, as people still believed it to be a right. *Informant 5* would encourage the use of corporal punishment when meeting caregivers. The removal of reasonable chastisement had not affected the informant's work:

I would ask them, but have you ever hit that child? Have you ever, it sounds terrible, have you ever secured your dominance in the relationship [...] I'm not saying abuse the child, I'm saying give the child a little smack on the bum and be like come on it's not cool dude and a lot of them are like 'no, we didn't know we could do that. Our child will go to the police station'. (Informant 5)

One informant said that removing the child instantly if the caregiver used corporal punishment was a part of the social worker's role. On the contrary another informant explained that a child would only be removed when all other alternatives had been exhausted. By then the family would already be prepared for the removal as they would have tried to solve the situation together. The caregivers would understand there were no options left.

### 6.3.2 The opportunity to make a change

In the following sub-theme, we will describe how the social workers talked about their role as educators and agents of change. Several of the informants said that their role was to educate the caregivers in other discipline methods than corporal punishment. Some of the informants talked about how the caregivers needed education to understand their children, the developmental stages and that corporal punishment could be hurtful. Furthermore, it was important to build on the relationship between the caregiver and the child as well as education in alternative methods or positive parenting. The following quote illustrates the role of being an educator:

I think the main thing would be to act as an educator. I think as a social worker you have so many roles, but I think just being able to informing people, look this is not allowed and not just say but you shouldn't do it, but tell them why that is, and why you think it's not a good thing and you need to also then present them with alternatives. You can't tell a parent they shouldn't do this and then just leave them, you need to sit with them and discuss options and also explain to them other options that might work. (Informant 2)

The relationship between the caregiver and the social worker was described as a tool that could be used to make a change without judging. Several of the informants talked about how they would sit down and discuss options with the families, where they would have the same goal to do what is best for the child. *Informant 7* described how strengthening the caregiver's self-esteem in that they were good caregivers, was an important method in building a good working relationship. However, building a good relationship also takes time. The quote below in regard to the opportunity a good relationship creates:

It's a wonderful opportunity that we have, to try and get them to view things differently, and I think you do that by being supportive and by acknowledging their frustrations and giving them the impression that is not me against you, but that we need to work together in the best interest of your child or your children. So I definitely do see it as an opportunity to influence and I think in many ways, we are able to do that. (Informant 1)

According to *Informant 8* caregivers would not take the social worker seriously when questioning the use of corporal punishment. Many of the informants further described how it was difficult to reach caregivers who wanted to use corporal punishment and saw it as their right. Although it was difficult to reach and change someone's views about corporal punishment, many of them said it was possible. However, instructing a caregiver what to do would not work. Instead the social worker should give alternatives to corporal punishment in conversation with the caregiver. About the social worker's role as an agent of change:

So as a social worker, empowerment, agent of change, that is our role. We need to provide them with more options and help them discover which one will work for them and sometimes it's a process, it's not something you can go to the shop and buy, so you need to have patience with them as well, because changing your view about something that you have internalised is very hard. (Informant 6)

Furthermore, the informant said that by presenting alternatives, caregivers might choose not to use corporal punishment. They would realise themselves that it was not the best alternative. These alternatives needed to be presented in an attractive way. The social workers gave example of different ways they communicated alternatives, it could be in conversation with the caregivers, during workshops or parenting courses they either conducted themselves or referred to. *Informant 4* described how talking to people in the community in general about corporal punishment could make a difference. Social workers should be salesmen who are selling other discipline methods than corporal punishment. The informants would describe how they could provide the caregivers with tools, but it was the caregiver choice to use them.

*Informant 6* reasoned that the caregivers needed to feel in power for a change to take place and to be able to make their own decision. The social worker also needed to be aware of the asymmetrical power in the relationship and not abuse it by deciding what is best instead of the

caregiver. Although changing the views about corporal punishment was not *Informant 5's* goal, a social worker should work from the family's perspective:

If I come to a family and they can clearly show that this either works for them, what doesn't work for them, then I'm going to work with it. My intention is not trying to change your whole way of thinking or doing or something like that. It is try to give you an alternative, essentially that is what we do as social workers. We try to provide interventions and also alternative ways of thinking and doing things. (Informant 5)

However, encouraging caregivers to use corporal punishment was also a part of the informant's job, when it was necessary. If the caregivers were of different opinion, the informant would assist the family in finding other methods.

### 6.3.3 Analyse of 'The social workers' roles'

The social workers described their role and the way they worked with the law differently. According to Burr (2015, pp. 10-11) our language and the words we use are a type of social action. There are consequences for the people affected by the interaction. Furthermore, the words could be used to justify our actions. Some of the informants talked about how stating that corporal punishment was illegal would help them in their work. Illegal then having the meaning that something was not allowed, it would be going against the law. Going against the law and doing an illegal action would then have consequences, maybe even going to jail. This would also help them when someone tried to legitimise their actions as they described how illegal would overrule those justifications.

The informants' different interpretations of the law could be an effect of different guidelines, where the informants working with children and foster care had clearer instructions and regulated in law how to deal with corporal punishment. There was also uncertainty how the removal of the defence would work. Durrant (2003, pp. 169-170) argued that the law affects people's attitudes, thus the law could be used to change opinions over time. Laws are a form of language with specific meanings and consequences (Burr 2015, pp. 10-11, 55) and opinions originate from language, which as a social construction is changeable by humans (Burr 2015, p. 58; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 5). To remove the defence of reasonable chastisement from the common law does not mean that corporal punishment would be understood as illegal, as it is still not stated explicitly in the law, which both Durrant (2003, p. 149) and Bower et al. (2015, pp. 2-4) brought up in their articles. This misunderstanding we argue, is within the language where corporal punishment is separated from abuse.

The different ways of expressing how to work with the law and other aspects could be seen as action space where the social worker needed to balance these, sometimes contradicting aspects. Some emphasised that the law was strong and should guide the assessment. Others would weigh the law, personal opinions and the caregivers' opinions more equal. One informant would in contrast ignore the removal of the defence and encourage corporal punishment. Many informants

emphasised on the specific situation, that the assessment always differed due to this. Also, consideration of the social workers' safety and the duty to get involved in illegal activity stood in conflict to each other. In summary, it is likely that the assessment could differ depending on the specific case but also the assigned social worker and that specific social worker's opinions. This could be explained by a person belonging to different discourses. The discourses according to Foucault (1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13) affects our opinions as they create truths and actions. Discourses could contradict each other with different truths and actions (Foucault, 1993/1971 pp. 30-31; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4). Thus, a power struggle and resistance occur between and within the discourses (Foucault 1990/1976, p. 95).

Which words the social workers used when they described themselves in relation to the caregivers who use corporal punishment may have certain implications, due to words having practical consequences for our actions and thoughts (Burr 2015, pp. 10-11; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4). The informants described themselves as educators, which could be understood as them seeing themselves as carriers of knowledge. They carry the knowledge of alternative discipline methods. Educators exist in relation to others that need education and could be seen as having the responsibility to teach others. Educators we argue could also be understood as a power play, as the social workers are the ones with the knowledge. This could be further explained by Foucault's description of how power and knowledge are intertwined (Foucault, 1990/1976 p. 97; 1993/1971, p. 31). Where the social workers' knowledge could be powerful in the way that they could affect how the caregivers understood discipline. However, the informants described how they could not decide for the caregivers, indicating that there was a limit to their power of changing understandings through their knowledge. According to Foucault (1990/1976, pp. 93-95), power can be found everywhere. The caregivers and the societies resistance to stop corporal punishment could be understood as a form of knowledge in their discourse. Their knowledge would then state corporal punishment as being a good method in relation to their experiences.

The informants also described themselves as being agents of change. This indicates an active role where the social workers got involved and intervened with the families to bring about change. The role of the social worker thus changes through the words to describe them, which could have different outcomes when interacting with families. Gergen and Gergen (1997, p. 5) and Burr (2015, p. 58) stated that through language and interactions we can reconstruct our world and reality. Thus, by using certain words the understanding of the social worker and their interaction with the world could be reconstructed. Some described themselves as salesmen, which could indicate that they had to convince caregivers to change their ways by presenting the alternatives in an attractive way.

Some problematised the power-play between the social worker and the caregiver. The social worker had a powerful situation, where some would use the law as a threat and others would emphasise that the caregivers needed to believe in the reasons to stop using corporal punishment. The ideal power was however a balanced one, which could be created by building a good

relationship with the caregiver. Gergen and Gergen (1997, p. 5) argued that it was through communication and interaction the world as we know it got reconstructed giving people new options and alternative action. This could also explain what *Informant 4* meant by describing the relationship as a tool to make a change. More elaborate *Informant 6* described that through interaction with the caregivers, they could together discover alternatives to corporal punishment the caregivers previously did not know existed. Thus, together expanding their worldview and the caregiver could decide what to do based on new knowledge and empowerment.

## 6.4 Challenges the social workers face

We have made a choice to divide this theme into two sub-themes, which together give a deeper understanding to the challenges we could identify the social workers faced. This is the second part of our sub-question about how the social workers understand their abilities and challenges, working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. The sub-themes are *Corporal punishment rooted in a violent society* and *Corporal punishment in a cultural society*. We argue that a vital part of the challenges the informants described will also affect their role, when working with caregivers using corporal punishment. The sub-themes highlight together the different aspects the informants described in order to understand the use of corporal punishment in the home environment. These aspects will help us to answer our research question. As the informants have divided views on the use of corporal punishment as well as its negative or positive effects, we aim to describe the different challenges they face from their individual perspective.

### 6.4.1 Corporal punishment rooted in a violent society

We live in an exceptionally violent society. We live in a society where by a couple of square miles, a couple of square kilometers, we have 430 murders in the year, that's huge, I mean if you think about it. It's massive. (Informant 4)

Nearly all of the informants talked about the severe violence within South Africa and how this had an effect on the children as well as the use of corporal punishment. They reasoned that corporal punishment had been rooted in society for generations and because of this, it was still widely practiced and accepted. Some informants described that other parenting methods than corporal punishment took time and required patience, which resulted in many caregivers giving up. Several of the social workers said that most caregivers did not want to harm their children and tried to raise them to become good people. The informants further said that discipline methods in the country were grounded in corporal punishment and people brought up on corporal punishment would likely continue using it. *Informant 1* described how history repeated itself when it came to corporal punishment and how other methods of discipline was not considered:

We have a history of it, for a very long time, if I think of when I grew up, corporal punishment was all that there was. I think unless you had a parent who maybe was a psychologist or a social worker, other methods would not be considered. So in a way I

think parents repeat how they have grown up. This is what they know and they do not know anything else and so this is how they raise their children and then those children raise their children like this. (Informant 1)

Several described how corporal punishment was a part of the education system and although it is now illegal, it is still widely used. One of the informants explained how up until 1994 corporal punishment was used as a sort of therapy method in the child and youth care facilities. The informant described how it back then existed a culture of not listening to children. *Informant 3* said some people wanted to reinstate corporal punishment in schools as they believed it prevented the escalating crimes in the society. Due to the ban in schools, *Informant 5* reasoned children were getting ill-mannered. In contrast *Informant 6* said that because of the violence being so integrated in the society there was a need to eliminate it from the safer social settings like homes and schools. The violence in the society, especially in the poorer communities, made it difficult for caregivers to learn other methods than corporal punishment. Children were so exposed to violence in the society that according to *Informant 2*, it was hard to know if corporal punishment made children more violent. Several other informants also brought up the different types of violence children were exposed to and *Informant 3* described the paradox children experienced when corporal punishment was deemed bad, yet violence was everywhere:

If you live within the Cape flats<sup>1</sup>, gunshots every single day, so what is going on in a child's mind? What is going on? On the one hand we say corporal punishment is of, and on the other hand, there's gunshots, there's fighting, there is blood shed on our streets every day. So, it's really two conflicting images because on the one hand they try to create a society, where we need to understand each other, but on the other hand, there is killing every day and so the children watch killing every day. (Informant 3)

Several of the informants talked about how gangsterism was a big problem in South Africa and that children had gangsters as role models. According to *Informant 3* caregivers would use corporal punishment to try and keep their children away from the gangsters. *Informant 5* reasoned that due to the lack of corporal punishment children would have gangsters as role models. Children would mirror themselves after whoever had a dominant and strong role in their lives.

Because of the history of corporal punishment and the violent society South Africa is today, many of the informants thought that corporal punishment would still be a part of the society in the next ten years. According to *Informant 7*, it would decrease but take generations to change.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Cape Flats are areas in the outskirts of Cape Town where people of colour were forced to move during apartheid. Many people in the areas are still living under harsh conditions. (South Africa Venues 2018).

#### 6.4.2 Corporal punishment in a cultural society

Culture can be understood in different ways. When we use the term ‘culture’ we have made the choice to also include religion and segregationally/racial issues within the word. All the informants brought up culture and the ways culture could affect their work. Many brought it up as a challenge. Some of the informants described what they perceived as culturally different values and views of corporal punishment. Several brought up how people believe it is their right as caregivers, to discipline their children as they please, with or without corporal punishment. The use of corporal punishment would then sometimes be justified by the caregivers as a part of their culture. *Informant 7* described how apartheid left many scars. People had suffered and been subjected to different kinds of violence, which was important to acknowledge because it still affected them. It affected their choices in life, how and where they lived as well as how they disciplined their children. Culture and religion needed to be acknowledged as well. They were a barrier when it came to the view of child upbringing, both with professionals and parents:

When we speak about view of children, that is also where culture is a barrier [...] so some parents and professionals still views religion and some parents will justify saying but my religion allows me to hit [...] we are encouraging eye-contact, we are saying look at your child when you talk to them [...] but in some cultures if a child looks at an adult straight in the eye it's disrespectful [...] other barrier would be that, the cultures believe that children should be seen and not heard, children do not sit in adult company, some cultures even, the thing of, if the parents are not married, then daddy cannot be involved, whereas we are encouraging father involvement no matter what, so in that regard culture is still a barrier. Not just for corporal punishment, culture is a barrier for towards positive parenting, but specifically corporal punishment as well. (Informant 7)

*Informant 3* described how cultural differences often caused disagreements among colleagues. When handling specific cases whether something should be determined as child abuse or not, *Informant 2* reasoned that some colleagues would choose not to intervene, if they saw the action as culturally accepted. However, the informant hoped that most times they would come to the same conclusion, even though they were of different understandings. Some of the other informants talked about how culture could be a challenge when working with caregivers. It could be more difficult to work with someone from another culture than their own and the client could respond negatively to it. The following quote illustrates this as well as how corporal punishment is sometimes justified by culture:

How they can punish their children and then just say ‘ach, but it's in my culture’. So, they would beat a child bloody and say, ‘well, it's in my culture and who are you now to come and question me’ and we have some racial issues, so if you are going to have a coloured or white English-speaking social worker speaking to a Zulu man, he's going to have an issue with that. (Informant 2)

Although social workers interference within the family might come off as a threat towards the culture, *Informant 6* said that religious influences within the community could help. As long as

they were also of the understanding that the family needed external support. This could ease the social workers presence. However, *Informant 4* said that both religion and culture were used as an excuse for corporal punishment and that it existed in most cultures and religions:

Many of the churches are very in favor of corporal punishment, particularly, the evangelical churches [...] and the bible says beat your children. Which it actually does not say but still that's their opinion. Within black African culture, there's also belief that you should physically punish. and then I'm particularly involved in the Islamic culture as well and that also, there's people in Islam who say it says you must beat your child, no it does not say you must beat your child anywhere but it's religious people initially use their religion as a justification to punish. (Informant 4)

A couple of the informants said that corporal punishment existed in all cultures and *Informant 1* said that when it was culturally accepted, it would also not be questioned within the culture. One informant reasoned that corporal punishment was easier to hide in the white culture where most families were wealthier. However, *Informant 5* reasoned that there would racially be a difference in opinion regarding corporal punishment and did a parallel to how it was related to socioeconomically status:

Also racially, there's going to be a difference of opinion, because coloured people might hit their children and not see any problem with it, and 'you can't tell me I can't hit my child', but white people might feel like 'no I'm not going to hit my child' and black people may find 'I will, half kill my child because they did something wrong'. So racially and the socioeconomic level are always going to be difference of opinions [...] mainly black and coloured people are seen as poor and white people are seen as rich. Or coloured people are seen as middleclass and black people are seen as poor. (Informant 5)

#### 6.4.3 Analyse of 'Challenges the social workers face'

The informants described how corporal punishment was rooted in the South African society, which could indicate corporal punishment being an accepted part of the South African discourse. Foucault (1990/1976, p. 95) described how the knowledge in a discourse was very powerful. Since corporal punishment was described as commonly used, integrated in the society and used by many, this could be seen as a form of the discourse's knowledge. Some social workers talked about how some people in the society thought corporal punishment should be legal in schools again, because this would result in more well-behaved children and youth. One informant described how when growing up corporal punishment was all there was unless the parents were social workers or psychologists. This could indicate that social workers belong to a different discourse or according to the informant should belong to a different discourse where the knowledge base is different.

The violence in the society was described as an obstacle to getting rid of corporal punishment. Loseke (2005, p. 9) wrote that a social problem is only established when the public worries. What

the informants described about the violence in the society indicate that the public worried more about that specific violence and less of the violence within the home. *Informant 3* described how caregivers used violence to prevent children from getting involved with gangsterism. Seemingly the informants described how gangsterism and violence in the society were social problems, which explained the use of corporal punishment. Therefore, corporal punishment seemed trivial in comparison.

The world could be understood from cultural values, time, and social and economic structures (Burr 2015, pp. 3-4, 9). The informants talked about a South Africa with a history of colonialisation, apartheid, corporal punishment in the legal system as well as the influence of different cultures and economical structures. All of these factors play a part in how the world is understood and the understanding of how the world should be, thus effecting how corporal punishment is understood.

Language could also be used to justify actions (ibid, pp. 10-11). We could identify how the term culture was used in different ways to from our view justify different actions. The informants described how culture was used by caregivers to justify their use of corporal punishment, stating 'but it is in my culture' or 'it is my right as a parent'. Furthermore, we could identify how the social workers used culture to describe difficulty in reaching a client, labelling culture as a barrier. Using culture to describe conflict may also have the effect of creating an expectancy that culturally we will not have the same values. With this expectancy it could be difficult to work with a client of a different culture. Gergen and Gergen (1997, p. 4) described how certain groups' discourses create different ways of living, ruling out others and creating barriers between groups. *Informant 4* talked about how all types of religion and cultures promoted corporal punishment within South Africa which could be understood as the informant stating that it was a nationwide problem and not rooted in specific cultures or religions.

Some of the informants also used culture as a synonym to socioeconomic status, indicating that perhaps it was not the culture that was the reason behind the acceptance of corporal punishment, but instead it was the socioeconomic status. With the history South Africa has, this could be understood as culturally there was a class difference since during apartheid only a certain group was allowed proper education and resources. According to Richer and Dawes (2008, p. 79) the results of apartheid are still visible.



## 7.0 Discussion

In this chapter we aim to problematise and discuss the findings from our study in relation to our research question and sub-questions. We will first answer our sub-questions that will ultimately lead up to the research question. Discussions of our result and analysis as well as how it relates to prior research will be done. The answer to our research question will serve as our conclusion. This will be followed with a critical reflection, the study's knowledge contribution and our suggestions for further research.

As a theory of science, we have used social constructionism (Burr 2015; Gergen 2001; Lock & Strong 2010). This has helped us as researchers while doing a study in another country than our own. By using this perspective, we have been able to question our own role, preunderstanding and understanding of reality and the world. This has led us to understand that the world is complex and the way we view social problems are contextual.

### 7.1 Discussion in relation to our sub-questions

The aim of our study has been to comprehend how South African social workers understand their professional role when working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. In order to do this, we had three sub-questions. These were '*How do the South African social workers define child corporal punishment?*', '*What are the South African social workers opinions on the use of child corporal punishment in South Africa?*' and '*How do the South African social workers understand their abilities and challenges working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?*'. These sub-questions will guide our following discussion.

#### 7.1.1 'How do the social workers define child corporal punishment in South Africa?'

Our analyses of the definition showed that the term corporal punishment could be understood in many different ways. Some understood it as when a child gets physically punished for doing something wrong while others described it as equal to child abuse. Several of the informants would describe how there was a fine line between the two. Lee, Mdhluli and Matshidze (2017, p. 8921) found in their study that domestic violence against minors was an unknown topic in South Africa. This could be one of the reasons to why corporal punishment is not clearly defined. The informants would also sometimes contradict themselves in their definitions. This indicates that corporal punishment is difficult to define in relation to where the line should be drawn from abuse. According to Pierce and Bozalek (2004, p. 829) social workers ranked lower than other groups on severity of different types of abuse. This the authors reasoned was probably due to the social workers having a more nuanced view on different types of abuse.

Two of the informants described corporal punishment both by physical and psychological means. The other informants would only describe the physical part. This gives a further indication that corporal punishment could be understood and defined very differently. The meaning of the term

varies, which in turn could have practical implications (Burr 2015, pp. 10-11; Gergen & Gergen 2017, p. 4). In their study, Brown, Holden and Ashra (2018, p. 6) found that synonyms to corporal punishment caused contradicting reactions. This could problematise social workers assessments when working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. What does it mean when a caregiver say they use corporal punishment? Is it a slap on the bum or is it something more?

### 7.1.2 ‘What are the social workers opinions related to the use of child corporal punishment in South Africa?’

Our study shows that the participating social workers differed in their opinions of corporal punishment. They would also describe how their colleagues would differ. Some of them had the opinion that corporal punishment could be used if it was under controlled circumstances. Others would have an opposite opinion and wanted it to be abolished. The opinions were often related to their own experience of corporal punishment. The ones that did support it described how they did not suffer from it and saw it as having a positive impact on their upbringing. Whereas others who were against it would describe how it had been humiliating or a traumatic experience. Thus, the informants appeared to belong to different discourses, which affected their opinions. According to Foucault (1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13; 2011/1989, pp. 60-63) the discourse a person belong to, determines one's knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon, which could stand in direct contrast to another discourse. Discourses are formed by culture, history and society. Pecnik and Bezensek-Lalic (2011, p. 541) found that social workers who had themselves been subjected to corporal punishment would in general react more strongly than others towards it. The informants against corporal punishment would mention how violence could result in more violence and that there were better methods.

By definition the relationship between a caregiver and a child could be seen as asymmetric. The caregiver cares for the child. However, there seemed to be a discrepancy in who's rights were the superior: The caregivers right to discipline as they deemed fit or the children's right to be protected from violence? The difference in opinion here, could be due to different discourses colliding causing discrepancy (Gergen & Gergen 1997, p.4). Children are sometimes viewed as property to their parents and humans in the making (Saunders 2013, p. 280). This could further contribute to why some of the social workers appeared to have opposite opinions to the others. For some of the social workers, it appeared as though corporal punishment could be acceptable, but the risk that it would escalate to abuse or be used as a justification for abuse was too high. Therefore, all corporal punishment needed to be abolished. Some would describe this in relation to their work experiences and what extremities of violence they had seen defined as corporal punishment. This indicates that the term corporal punishment entailed several meanings, which could contradict one another and have consequences for the child. According to Burr (2015, pp. 10-11) as well as Gergen and Gergen (1997, p. 4), different meanings of words could have

implications as they affect ones thinking. Thus, several factors affected the social workers opinions, however, which factor was the strongest would differ.

Chan et al. (2002, pp. 365-366) argued that it was the moral duty of the state to educate professionals on the Convention on the rights of the child. There was a worry that professionals lacked a transcultural perspective on child upbringing and that their personal opinions would instead affect their assessments (Chan et al. 2002, p. 359). Some informants in our study stated that social workers in their professional role should be against corporal punishment. This indicates an idea that social workers should belong to the same discourse. This would be due to discourses effect on people's understanding of what is true and right (Foucault 1989/1969, p. 49; 1993/1971, p. 13). Watkinson and Rock (2016, pp. 94-95) argued that social workers should by supporting human rights, advocate for a ban of corporal punishment. This they meant would as well be expected by the global definition of the social work profession.

### 7.1.3 'How do the social workers understand their abilities and challenges, when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?'

Many of the social workers described that they could make a difference within the specific families they met. This is consistent with Lawrence and Smith's (2008, p. 122) findings that professionals have an influential role to change mind-sets. Some informants in our study also described how they could make a difference at a meso level, talking to people in the community and through workshops and parenting classes. They described how they could use the relationship as a tool and the law as a way of informing or as a threat. With a good relationship, they could educate caregivers in different child upbringing methods. Educating parents in alternative methods could be vital to stop the use of corporal punishment (Lansford et al. 2017, p. 44).

When a social worker and a caregiver have different opinions on the use of corporal punishment it could be due to deviating discourses. According to Foucault (1990/1976, p. 95), when discourses collide, power and resistance between them appears. When one discourse becomes stronger than another, it can overrule the other, thus, changing someone's understanding of a phenomenon (Foucault 1980 a, p. 119). This is essentially a use of power, which could be used for change.

However, the social workers differences in opinion regarding their ability to make a change also raised an obstacle. It seems likely that the caregiver would get different assessment depending on the social worker, if only some reasons they could make a change. There is a risk that professionals handle cases differently due to their own view on child upbringing (Chan et al. 2002, p. 363). Lawrence and Smith (2008, p. 122) stated that professionals need to have clear guidelines in order to make it possible to change attitudes about corporal punishment.

We noticed that the organisations' guidelines were based on the target groups the social workers worked with. The social workers who worked in youth facilities and with foster parents and parental guidance would have guidelines, whereas the others would not have any. The social workers with guidelines described different routines such as workshops to educate children and foster parents about children's rights. Discourse could be understood as regulating knowledge of a phenomenon and is affected by society, history and culture, which gives power to act in certain ways (Foucault, 1990/1976, p. 95; 2011/1989, pp. 60-63). Thus, the guidelines could be understood as deriving from the knowledge within a discourse, which could influence the power to act in a certain way concerning children's rights. Therefore, we argue that clearer guidelines are needed regarding corporal punishment for all social workers and organisations, since this is an issue most South African social workers face. This could contribute to a more just assessment.

One of the biggest factors the social workers raised as a challenge was the violence in the society. They described how corporal punishment was connected to the violence in the society and understood as an acceptable method. Which of the two they found triggered the other differed in their understanding of it. According to Landsford and Dodge's (2008, p. 257) study there is a connection between an increase of use of corporal punishment and a more likeliness for the exposed children to engage in violent behaviour during adulthood. However, some of the participants in our study seemed to be of the opinion that there were more important issues of violence than that of corporal punishment. This is similar to Lee, Mdhluli and Matshidze (2017, p. 8921) findings that spousal violence was described as a form of violence that needed to be dealt with, whereas corporal punishment was insignificant in comparison. Caregivers would use violence in order to protect children and keep them away from bad role models and gangsterism. That children experienced violence on a daily basis outside and within the home consists with Breen, Daniels and Tomlinson (2014, pp. 135-139) findings. Violence was a part of the children's everyday life. The social workers in our study appeared to be sometimes powerless to the context of the violent society. According to Pecnik and Bezensek-Lalic (2011, pp. 540-541) study on social workers in Slovenia, the social workers own relationship to violence could affect their feelings and actions towards corporal punishment. In the study, those effected to multiple violence would feel powerless and not intervene.

Another issue that was raised were cultural differences which was described as a barrier. The informants talked about how working with a caregiver from another culture could be challenging, since the caregiver might not respect the social worker. There was also a risk that social workers would not interfere if the corporal punishment was understood as culturally acceptable. Some social workers said that it was more accepted in the African culture. Chikoko and Makhasane (2016, pp. 4-7) found that as they saw it as African culture, teachers would continue using corporal punishment after the illegalisation in schools. Other informants reasoned that corporal punishment existed in all cultures but was more visible in the African one. As a result of apartheid this is one group that is more socially vulnerable (Richer & Dawes 2008, p.79). The

social workers would through culture relate an acceptance of corporal punishment to a socioeconomic status. However, Hochfeld (2008, p. 102) argued that social workers in South Africa should question their own cultural understanding and that this could get in the way of their assessment due to prejudice. Furthermore, the author reasoned that social workers seemed to create stereotypical ideas within the family constellation (ibid). Chan et al. (2002, p. 363) argued that while professionals should respect cultural differences, children needed to be protected. According to Saunders (2013, p. 299) traditions combined with language and laws affect the attitudes and norms of physical punishment. In order to change the acceptance of corporal punishment, all these aspects needed to be changed.

## 7.2 Conclusion: ‘How do South African social workers understand their professional role when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment in South Africa?’

Our sub-questions have guided us in our discussions, these have ultimately led us to our conclusion which is formed by our research question. The result of the study’s research question indicates that the way the social workers understood their professional role was foremost complex. There were several factors that played a part. Therefore, the use of corporal punishment and the social workers’ role in it cannot be painted in black and white.

Our findings indicate that the social workers understood their role as to do what they reasoned was best for the child together with the family in the specific situation. They talked about the action space in the meeting, where they needed to balance different aspects, and decide where to draw the line between them. However, the assessment the social workers described seemed to derive from their own opinions about corporal punishment. These opinions appeared to be based on their own experiences. Most emphasised that corporal punishment should be illegal since it was difficult as a social worker to know where to draw the line between corporal punishment and abuse. The term was difficult to interpret and it could refer to different forms of corporal punishment where it could be severe. Some also understood corporal punishment and their role to work with psychological abuse, which they included in the term corporal punishment. Thus, the word had different meanings, which could have practical consequences (Burr 2015, pp. 11, 72; Gergen & Gergen 1997, p. 4).

Organisational guidelines seemed to affect how the social workers understood their role, since the informants with guidelines focused more on children’s rights. These social workers would either work at organisations with children or foster parents, where corporal punishment has been illegal since the constitution was adopted 1996, or they would work with counselling and parental guidance. Those who did not work in these fields but would still encounter caregivers and children seemed to have a greater action space for interpretation. However, this is only our reflections based on what we could gather from the informants’ responses, when we asked about the law and organisations guidelines and not from the actual workplaces.

Most of the social workers understood their role as they should intervene, if corporal punishment was used within a family. The best way to do this was through a good relationship between the social worker and the caregiver. Some would use the law as a threat and forcing the corporal punishment to stop. Only few of the social workers knew about the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement. It seemed like it had had minor effects in their work and in their workplaces. Two of the informants did not understand their role to work against corporal punishment and one of them understood the role as to encourage corporal punishment. All social workers understood that their role was to interfere when severe corporal punishment was used. However, the role was made further difficult by the violence in the society as well as its historical impact on corporal punishment. To be able to make a change they needed to educate the caregivers about positive parenting and child development. We experienced that the informants were unanimous that it was not possible to abolish corporal punishment without giving alternatives. The social workers described that they could provide the caregiver with tools to stop corporal punishment, but it had to be the caregiver's choice to stop. In this way we believe that they empowered the caregivers. Few of the informants could also be interpreted to understand their role as to also make a change at a meso level, where talking about corporal punishment and educating in the community could affect opinions.

The informants would do what they reasoned was for the families best, where some would express and act strongly against corporal punishment. Some were of the opinion that all social workers should work against corporal punishment. They were positive to the removal of the defence and some would state it had taken a long time for South Africa to get there and that there was still a long way to go. They would describe themselves as powerful, where they were able to make a change in the families by using their knowledge. However, research indicates that for attitudes and use of corporal punishment to change within a society, legal bans are not enough (Lansford et al. 2007, p. 44; Maphosa & Shumba 2010, p. 387; Roberts 2000, p. 1034). For a change to happen at a macro level, legal reforms need to be followed by campaigns, clear guidelines, political involvement and leadership (Saunders 2013; Lawrence & Smith 2008; Chan et al. 2002, Watkinson & Rock 2016; Lansfords et al. 2007; Chikoko & Makhasane 2016). We argue that there should be nationwide guidelines how the social workers should act when they encounter caregivers who use corporal punishment. However, social workers could also play a vital role in the change in the society by using their power, compassion and knowledge.

### 7.3 Critical reflection

Like previously mentioned our preunderstanding and experiences have affected us as researchers (see 5.5 Preunderstanding). Due to this, it is possible that we have been blind to certain aspects that could have been of interest to immerse in. This could have been to explore together with the informants how they themselves would define the words they used. What their own definition of being for example a change agent or educator were in relation to our understanding. Language

and its meaning are central parts in social constructionism (Burr 2015, pp. 10-11, 52). Therefore, it would have been interesting to further analyse and explore this, however due to limitations of the study this has not been done.

The informants in the study had all worked in different fields of social work. This has been our intention and we argue it is a benefit. If we had interviewed social workers from the same organisation, there could have been indications to the specific organisation's culture and guidelines regarding corporal punishment. However, the study focuses on analysing professional social worker's understanding of their role without a specific organisational focus. From this focus we have been able to notice indications to contrasting guidelines on how to approach corporal punishment within the different organisation and departments. In some there appeared to be no guidelines in this issue and in others they would be very specific. This is an indication that social workers in different fields lacks guidance, which in turn could affect their assessment.

Our study was inspired by the court case where the defence of reasonable chastisement was removed from the common law. The removal and current laws have therefore been very present in our study. However, the ruling to remove the defence is still new and an ongoing case, since it is appealed. It is possible that guidelines have not yet been updated due to this, though we argue it also relevant what the current guidelines are.

#### 7.4 The studies knowledge contribution

Our study has contributed with knowledge about how eight South African social workers, during the time of the interviews, understood their role when working with caregivers who use corporal punishment. This could give an indication to comprehend how social workers in similar contexts would reason around the subject of corporal punishment. The study could also contribute with knowledge of how social workers assessments could be affected when they are situated in a context where the law could be difficult to interpret. In our study we noticed a difference in the social workers answers depending on if their organisation had guidelines or not. We believe that our findings of how the social workers' experience of corporal punishment appeared to affect their opinions and assessments increases knowledge for social work organisations and education.

The study could increase knowledge about social problems in another part of the world, which we argue is of importance for any social work student and professional due to the current pace of globalisation. In our daily life we meet people from all over the world as well as professional social workers. To comprehend that the world and thereby the understanding of corporal punishment are socially constructed could be vital so that we do not judge people. This perspective could enable us to encourage our curiosity to explore other understandings. When we become curious about how people understand their life it could be easier to approach them in a way that could be helpful for them and their children. By listening to others and invite into dialogue we could create new meanings related to how the Swedish society address corporal

punishment.

## 7.5 Proposals for further research

Through our research, we have found many interesting aspects that we believe would be meaningful to study further.

In aspect to our own study, we believe that it could be of interest to study social workers descriptions of themselves deeper than we have been able to do. It would be beneficial to hear what the social workers within a specific context mean when they assign certain words to themselves and which implications this could have to their professional role. It would enable us as researchers to get a better understanding of the social workers worldview, which could also enhance our own. It would also strengthen the informants' participation in the study, if they together with the researcher could construct the result.

It would be of interest to do a qualitative research in South Africa based on the caregiver's point of view, this could increase the knowledge of their motives and understanding of corporal punishment. It would also be profitable if this research was done in aspect to the probable ban of corporal punishment in South Africa. Related to this aspect it would be valuable to do a longitudinal study about social workers' attitudes toward corporal punishment in South Africa, this could show if these would change over time due to the current debate and legal reforms. During our study, several of the social workers would talk about colleagues supporting corporal punishment. Previous study has indicated that students who were in favor of corporal punishment could miss to register and report child maltreatment (Ashton 2001, p. 389). By doing an ethnographic study it would likely be easier to hear these perspectives as well as if they could affect the social workers register and report of maltreatment of children.

We believe that further knowledge also is needed about corporal punishment in the Swedish context. A similar study about Swedish social workers that work in the field of corporal punishment and child abuse would be valuable. To listen to their opinions and assessments when encountering corporal punishment. This could be combined with research about how Swedish social workers work with families who have recently immigrated from countries where corporal punishment is legal. How the social workers act with caregivers who might have another understanding of corporal punishment than according to the Swedish law could contribute to further knowledge within the subject.

## 8.0 References

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. (2010) African charter on the rights and welfare of the child. Available at:

[http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/child/achpr\\_instr\\_charterchild\\_eng.pdf](http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/child/achpr_instr_charterchild_eng.pdf)

(Retrieved 2018-03-08)

Ashton, V. (2010) Does ethnicity matter? Social workers' personal attitudes and professional behaviors in responding to child maltreatment. *Advances in Social Work*. (11:2): 129-143.

Available at: <http://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/advancesinsocialwork/article/view/266/1780>

(Retrieved 2018-03-08)

Ashton, V. (2001) The relationship between attitudes toward corporal punishment and the perception and reporting of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. (25): 389-399.

DOI: 10.1016/S0145-2134(00)00258-1

Bower, C., Hindle, K., Tan, S. & van den Berg, W. (2015) *Policy brief: Prohibition of corporal punishment in the home in South Africa*. Sonke Gender Justice & The Men Care Global Fatherhood Campaign. Available at: <http://genderjustice.org.za/publication/prohibition-corporal-punishment-home-south-africa/> (Retrieved 2018-09-12)

Breen, A., Daniels, K. & Tomlinson, M. (2014) Children's experiences of corporal punishment: A qualitative study in an urban township of South Africa. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. (48): 131-139.

DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.04.022

Brown, A. S., Holden, G. W. & Ashraf, R. (2018) Spank, slap, or hit? How labels alter perceptions of child discipline. *Psychology of Violence*. (8:1): 1-9. DOI: 10.1037/vio0000080

Burr, V. (2015) *Social constructionism*. (2nd ed.) London: Routledge

Börjesson, M. (2003) *Diskurser och konstruktioner: En sorts metodbok* [Discourses and constructions: A kind of method book]. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Carlsson, B. (1991) *Kvalitativa forskningsmetoder för medicin och beteendevetenskap* [Qualitative research methods for medicine and behavioral science]. (1st ed.) Solna: Almqvist & Wiksell

Chan, J. S., Elliott, J. M., Chow, Y. & Thomas, J. I. (2002) Does professional and public opinion in child abuse differ? An issue of cross-cultural policy implementation. *Child Abuse Review*. (11): 359-379. DOI: 10.1002/car.767

Chikoko, V. & Makhasane S. D. (2016) Corporal punishment contestations, paradoxes and implications for school leadership: A case study of two South African high schools. *South African Journal of Education*. (36:4): 1-8. DOI: 10.15700/saje.v36n4a1316

Christian Action. (n.d.) *Spanking and parental rights*. Available at: <https://www.christianaction.org.za/index.php/articles/religious-freedom/921-freedom-of-religion-conscience-and-home-education-at-risk> (Retrieved 2018-10-24)

Dalen, M. (2007) *Intervju som metod* [Interview as a method]. (2nd ed.) Malmö: Gleerups AB

Daniels, L. (2018) New law prohibits corporal punishment in the home. *The South African*. Available at: <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/new-law-prohibits-corporal-punishment-in-the-home/> (Retrieved 2018-09-12)

Dawes, A., De Sas Kropwnicki, Z., Kafaar, Z. & Richer, L. (2005) *Corporal punishment of children: A South African national survey*. Save the children: Sweden. Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-data/view/2011> (Retrieved 2018-03-07)

Department of education. (2000) *Alternatives to corporal punishment*. Pretoria: Department of Education. Available at: [https://www.westerncape.gov.za/text/2005/7/alternatives\\_corporal\\_punishmen.pdf](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/text/2005/7/alternatives_corporal_punishmen.pdf) (Retrieved 2018-09-17)

Durrant, J. E. (2003) Legal reform and attitudes toward physical punishment in Sweden. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*. (11): 147–173. DOI: 10.1163/092755603322397241

Enotes. (n.d.) *What are some positives/advantages of corporal punishment? Corporal punishment may be divided into three main types.*. Enotes. Available at: <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-some-positives-advantages-corporal-punishment-147055> (Retrieved 2018-09-28)

Eriksson-Zetterquist, U. & Ahrne, G. (2015) Intervjuer [Interviews]. In editors Ahrne, G. & Svensson, P. *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder* [Handbook in qualitative methods]. (2nd ed.) Stockholm: Liber AB, 34-54

Freedom of Religion South Africa [FOR SA]. (2017) *Press Release – FOR SA Appeals “Spanking Judgement”*. Available at: <https://forsa.org.za/press-release-for-sa-appeals-spanking-judgement/> (Retrieved 2018-09-16)

Foucault, M. (1980 a) Truth and power. In editor Gordon, C's: *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by Michael Foucault*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 109-133

Foucault, M. (1980 b) Two lectures. In editor Gordon, C's: *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977* by Michael Foucault. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 78-108

Foucault, M. (1989/1969) *The archaeology of knowledge* [Original title: L'Archéologie du savior]. (1st ed.) London: Routledge

Foucault, M. (1990/1976) *The history of sexuality: an introduction* [Original title: Histoire de la sexualité]. New York: Random House, Inc

Foucault, M. (1993/1971) *Diskursens ordning: Installationsföreläsning vid Collège de France den 2a December 1970* [The order of discourse: An inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, given on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1970]. [Original title: L'ordre du discours]. Stockholm: B. Östlongs bokförlag. Symposium

Foucault, M. (2011/1989) *Vetandets arkeologi* [Original title: The archaeology of knowledge]. (2nd ed.) Lund: Arkiv

Gergen, K. J. (2001) *Social construction in context*. London: Sage

Gergen, K. J. & Gergen, M.M. (1997) Toward a cultural constructionist psychology, draft copy for *Theory and Psychology*, Vol. 7 [15 p.] Available at: [https://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/kenneth-gergen/Toward\\_a\\_Cultural\\_Constructionist\\_Psychology.pdf](https://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/kenneth-gergen/Toward_a_Cultural_Constructionist_Psychology.pdf) (Retrieved 2018-09-16)

Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children. (2018) *Prohibit corporal punishment*. Available at: <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/> (Retrieved 2018-09-16)

Globalis. (2016) *Sydafrika* [South Africa]. Globalis. Available at: <https://www.globalis.se/Laender/Sydafrika> (Retrieved 2018-10-22)

Graneheim, U. H. & Lundman, B. (2003) Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*. (24:2): 105-112. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001

Gray, M., Collett van Rooyen, C., Rennie, G. & Gaha, J. (2002) The political participation of social workers: a comparative study. *International Journal of Social Welfare*. (11:2): 99-110. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2397.00204

Hochfeld, T. (2008) 'Influencing... It is our role, it is our duty': how social workers unintentionally reinforce conservative ideas on the family. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity, Family Politics*. (76): 92-104. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27739404> (Retrieved 2018-03-15)

Human Sciences Research Council [HSRC]. (2018) *Code of research ethics*. Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/about/research-ethics/code-of-research-ethics> (Retrieved 2018-09-16)

Höglund, L. (2016 a) *Befolkning och språk* [Population and language]. Landsguiden - Utrikespolitiska institutionen [The country guide – The Swedish Institute of International Affairs]. Available at: <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/sydafrika/befolkning-och-sprak/> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Höglund, L. (2016 b) *Ekonomisk översikt* [Economical overview]. Landsguiden – Utrikespolitiska institutionen [The country guide – The Swedish Institute of International Affairs]. Available at: <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/sydafrika/oversikt/> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Höglund, L. (2016 c) *Modern historia* [Modern history]. Landsguiden – Utrikespolitiska institutionen [The country guide – The Swedish Institute of International Affairs]. Available at: <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/sydafrika/modern-historia/> (Retrieved 2018-03-14)

Höglund, L. (2016 d) *Turism* [Tourism]. Landsguiden – Utrikespolitiska institutionen [The country guide – The Swedish Institute of International Affairs]. Available at: <https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/afrika/sydafrika/turism/> (Retrieved 2018-03-14)

International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW] & International Council on Social Welfare [ICSW]. (2012) *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitment to Action*. Available at: <https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/ifsw-cdn/assets/globalagenda2012.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-09-27)

International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW] & International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW]. (2004) *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles*. Available at: <https://www.iassw-aiets.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Ethics-in-Social-Work-Statement-IFSW-IASSW-2004.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-09-27)

Järvinen, M. (2013) Ett maktperspektiv på mötet mellan klient och system [A power perspective on the meeting between client and system]. In editors Meeuwisse, A. & Swärd, H. *Perspektiv på sociala problem* [Perspectives on social problems]. (2nd ed.) Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 281-300

Lansford, E. J., Cappa, C., Putnick, D. L., Bornstein, M. H., Deater-Deckard, K. & Bradley, R. H. (2017) Change over time in parents' beliefs about and reported use of corporal punishment in eight countries with and without legal bans. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. (71): 44- 55. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.10.016

Lansford, J. E. & Dodge, K. A. (2008) Cultural norms for adult corporal punishment of children and societal rates of endorsement and use of violence. *Parenting: Science and Practice*. (8): 257-270. DOI: 10.1080/15295190802204843

Larsson, S. (2005) Om kvalitet i kvalitativa studier [About quality in qualitative studies]. *Nordisk pedagogik* [Nordic pedagogic]. (25:1): 16-35

Lawrence, J. & Smith, A. (2008) A place where it is not okay to hit children: The role of professionals. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*. (34): 113-123. Available at: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj34/not-okay-to-hit-children.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-09-10)

Lee, K. S., Mdhluli, T. D. & Matshidze, P. (2017) An analysis of the efficacy of the mechanisms for the protection of minor children against domestic violence in South Africa and Zimbabwe. *Gender & Behaviour* (15:2): 8917 -8924. Available at: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/gab/article/view/163372> (Retrieved 2018-03-15)

Lock, A. & Strong, T. (2010) *Social constructionism: Sources and stirrings in theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Loseke, D. R. (2003) *Thinking about social problems: an introduction to constructionist perspectives*. (2nd ed.) New York: Aldine de Gruyter

Mailovich, C. (2017) Reasonable chastisement of children declared unconstitutional. *Business Day*. Available at: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2017-10-19-reasonable-chastisement-of-children-declared-unconstitutional/> (Retrieved 2018-09-05)

Maphosa, C. & Shumba, A. (2010) Educators' disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education*. (30): 387-399. DOI: 10.4314/saje.v30i3.60033

Minister of Social Development. (2018) *Children's third amendment act, 2018*. Available at: [https://www.scribd.com/document/384289085/Draft-Childrens-Amendment- Bill#from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/384289085/Draft-Childrens-Amendment-Bill#from_embed) (Retrieved 2018-09-12)

Patel, L., Schmid, J. E. & Venter, J. H. (2017) Transforming child and family services in urban communities in South Africa: Lessons from the south. *Child & Family Social Work*. (22:1): 451-460. DOI: 10.1111/cfs.12263

Pecnik, N. & Bezensek-Lalic, O. (2011) Does social workers' personal experience with violence in the family relate to their professional responses, and how? *European Journal of Social Work*. (14:4): 525-544. DOI: 10.1080/13691457.2010.487411

Richer, L. M. & Dawes, A. R. L. (2008) Child abuse in South Africa: rights and wrongs. *Child Abuse Review*. (17:2): 79-93. DOI: 10.1002/car.1004

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. (2018) *How a law is made*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.za/how-law-made> (Retrieved 2018-09-12)

Pierce, L. & Bozalek, V. (2004) Child abuse in South Africa: An examination of how child abuse and neglect are defined, *Child Abuse & Neglect*. (28:8): 817-832. DOI: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2003.09.022

Rennstam, J. & Wästerfors, D. (2015) Att analysera kvalitativt material [To analyse qualitative material]. In editors Ahrne, G & Svensson, P: *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder* [Handbook in qualitative methods]. (2nd ed.) Stockholm: Liber AB, 220-236

Roberts, J. (2000) Changing public attitudes towards corporal punishment: The effects of statutory reform in Sweden. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. (24:8): 1027-1035. DOI: 10.1016/S0145-2134(00)00155-1

Rädda barnen. (n.d. a) *Barn ska aldrig utsättas för våld eller övergrepp* [Children should never be subjected to violence or abuse]. Available at: <https://www.raddabarnen.se/vad-vigor/trygghet/vald-mot-barn/> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Rädda barnen. (n.d. b) *Du föddes i Sydafrika* [You were born in South Africa]. Available at: <http://www.livetslotteri.raddabarnen.se/land/sydafrika> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Rädda barnen. (n.d. c) *Länder som förbjuder våld mot barn* [Countries that prohibit violence against children]. Available at: <https://www.raddabarnen.se/rad-och-kunskap/skolmaterial/barnens-varldskarta/> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Saunders, B. J. (2013) Ending the physical punishment of children by parents in the English-speaking world: the impact of language, tradition and law. *International Journal of Children's Rights*. (21:2): 278-304. DOI: 10.1163/15718182-02102001

South Africa Vanues. (2018) *The Cape Flats*. Available at: <https://www.sa-venues.com/attractionswc/cape-flats.htm> (Retrieved 2018-09-28)

South African school act. (1996) Section 10 (1). Available at: <https://www.gdeadmissions.gov.za/Content/Files/SchoolsAct.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Sonke Gender Justice. (2017) *Victory for child rights and violence prevention in South Africa as defence of reasonable chastisement ruled out of line with constitution*. Sonke Gender Justice. Available at: <http://genderjustice.org.za/news-item/victory-child-rights-violence-prevention-sa-defence-reasonable-chastisement-ruled-line-constitution/> (Retrieved 2018-03-14)

Statistics South Africa. (2018) *General household survey 2017*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. (Statistical realise: P0318) Available at: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182017.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-09-10)

Svensson, P. & Ahrne, G. (2015) Att designa ett kvalitativt forskningsprojekt [To design a qualitative research project]. In editors Ahrne, G. & Svensson, P. *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder* [Handbook in qualitative methods]. (2nd ed.) Stockholm: Liber AB, 17-31

Svensson, P. (2015) Teorins roll i kvalitativ forskning [The theory's role in qualitative research]. In editors Ahrne, G. & Svensson, P's. *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder* [Handbook in qualitative methods]. (2nd ed.) Stockholm: Liber AB, 208-219

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa. (1996) Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng.pdf> (Retrieved 2018-09-28)

Trots, J. (2010) *Kvalitativa intervjuer* [Qualitative interviews]. (4th ed.) Lund: Studentlitteratur AB

UN General Assembly. (1989) *Convention on the rights of the child*. United Nations. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Retrieved 2018-09-10)

United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]. (n.d.) *Hur många länder har skrivit under barnkonventionen?* [How many countries have signed the Children's Convention?]. Available at: <https://unicef.se/fragor/hur-manga-lander-har-skrivit-under-barnkonventionen> (Retrieved 2018-07-29)

Vetenskapsrådet. (2002) *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* [Research ethical principles in humanistic social-science research]. Available at: [https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1268/1268494\\_forskningsetiska\\_principer\\_2002.pdf](https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1268/1268494_forskningsetiska_principer_2002.pdf) (Retrieved 2018-09-28)

Watkinson, A. M. & Rock, L. (2016) Child physical punishment and international human rights: implications for social work education. *International Social Work*. (59:1): 86-98.  
DOI: 10.1177/0020872813503861

## Appendix 1

**Welcome to a study where you have the opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences from your social worker perspective**

### **To possible participants – information about our study**

Our names are Lovisa Granath and Maria Sandström and we study social work at Linköpings University in Sweden. We are interested to learn more about social work in different settings and countries and have therefore chosen to write our bachelor thesis here in South Africa. In Sweden we do an internship during our third year. Both of us did our internships abroad the fall of 2017, Maria in India and Lovisa here in Cape Town.

During Lovisa's internship the defence of reasonable chastisement was removed from the common law. This caught our interest and we started following the debate about child corporal punishment in South African media. Our understanding is that there are different perspectives on child corporal punishment. This makes us curious to learn how you as a social worker in South Africa, who have the local knowledge and expertise, describes this. We wish to get the opportunity to hear your thoughts and experiences.

The aim of our bachelor thesis is to learn how South African social workers understand their role when working with caregivers who use child corporal punishment and/or children who are exposed to it.

All participants are anonymous and you have the ability to withdraw your participation any time during the process without any explanation.

The interview will be approximately 60 minutes, on a time and location that suits you. In total we will do eight interviews and the analysis will be made by finding patterns in the different interviews. All the interview material will be kept in a secure locked area so that no else but us has access to it.

If you would like to take part of the bachelor thesis you are welcome to when it is finished.

Please contact us if you need more information or have questions about our study. You can also contact our Swedish supervisor Dr. Kicki Oljemark.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

#### **Lovisa Granath**

xxxxx@hotmail.com

Whatsapp: 07x-xxx xx xx

Phonenumber: 06x- xxx xx xx

#### **Maria Sandström**

xxxxx@hotmail.com

Whatsapp: 06x- xxx xx xx

Phonenumber: 06x – xxx xx xx

#### **Dr. Kicki Oljemark**

xxxxx@liu.se