

UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO
INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY
Child Studies Laboratory – LACRI

NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN
FOR A NON-VIOLENT PEDAGOGY

SPANKING IS NON-EDUCATIONAL



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The fight to ban domestic corporal punishment against children and adolescents is being developed by the Child Studies Laboratory (LACRI – Laboratório de Estudos da Criança – linked to the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo) through the campaign SPANKING IS NON-EDUCATIONAL.

The purposes of this campaign are:

- a. Contributing to the development of a CHILDHOOD CULTURE that considers the child and adolescent as PERSONS and SUBJECTS WITH RIGHTS.
- b. Fighting all and every form of domestic violence against children and adolescents including *specifically the prohibition of corporal punishment and humiliation* in the relationship between parents and children.
- c. Creating a **non-violent pedagogy** in the family upbringing.

This campaign has an absolutely *sui generis* profile as it is shown as follows:

I. CAMPAIGN PROFILE

The Campaign was started in 1994. Its overall objective is a true COPERNICAN REVOLUTION in favour of children and adolescents. For 500-years, Brazil has been a country practicing what can be called “HITTING MANIA”, that is, with a family upbringing that not only tolerates but also defends parents’ right to discipline their children by using several forms of corporal punishment (especially the famous *smack on the buttocks*), often enhanced by many different forms of psychological violence.

To attain this absolutely indispensable cultural transformation banning corporal punishment in the family upbringing, the Campaign was structured in modules, each one having clear goals and coherent feasible strategies.

A thoroughly original feature of the Campaign, within the Brazilian reality, is the fact that it is based on the synergy among RESEARCH, PROFESSIONAL SKILL AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS. THEIR AGENTS ARE STUDENTS OR EX-STUDENTS OF THE SPECIALISED TELECOURSE IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (TELELACRI)*. They are, therefore, professionals with adequate formation to fight the multiple forms of domestic violence against children and adolescents

* SPECIALISED TELECOURSE IN THE AREA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (TELELACRI)
OFFERED YEARLY
OUTLINE

PART I		PART II		
Distance Learning	+	Presence Learning**	=	360
320 hours		40 hours		hours
		UPDATING COURSE CERTIFICATE		SPECIALISED COURSE CERTIFICATE (TELELACRI)

** This is a course dedicated exclusively to TELELACRI students and ex-students.

1. Description

It is a continuing distance education course (EcaD) at the specialisation level and, in academic terms, a UNIVERSITY EXTENSION COURSE.

2. Operational Structure

TELELACRI IS COMPOSED OF TWO OBLIGATORY PARTS:

- Distance Learning
- Presence Learning, which involves an Updating Course where Brazilian and/or foreign professors always take part, in a joint effort with LACRI’s team.

The importance of the TELECOURSE lies in the fact that the fight against DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, while a SERIOUS, GRAVE and EXTENSIVE phenomenon in societies in general and in Latin America in particular, can only be effective if conducted by professionals who are COMMITTED, COMPETENT and FREE FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS. They need thus to be trained in University Specialised Courses such as the TELECOURSE, where interdisciplinary dialog is fostered among professionals from the many areas involved.

(including corporal punishment and the humiliation imposed on them in the everyday life inside the family) acting in a *competent, committed way and without psychological reticence*.

Figure 1 shows how the Campaign Modules articulate with TELELACRI and the major goals and action strategies.

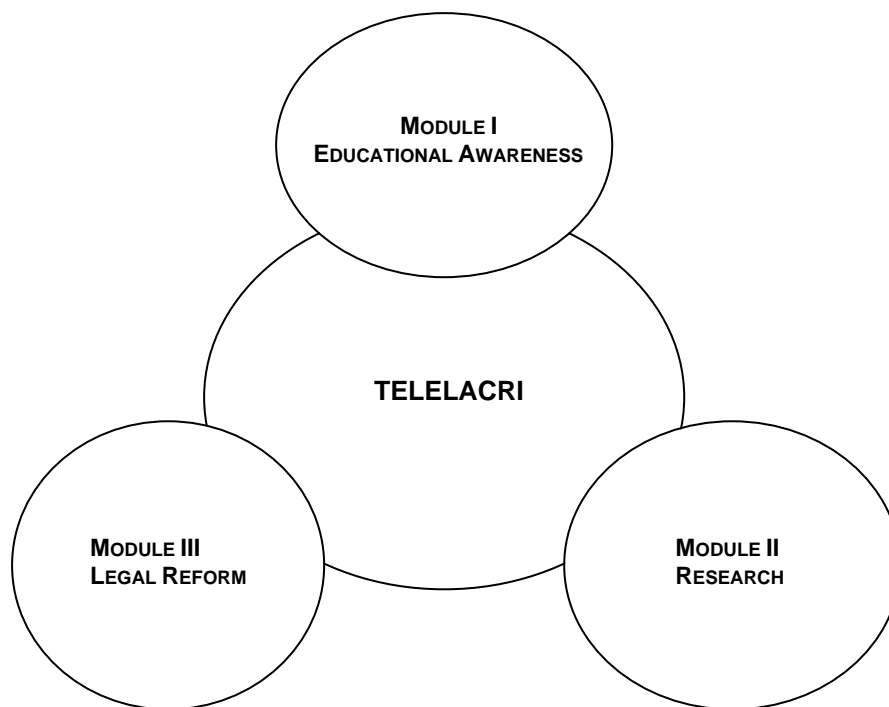


FIGURE 1 – Diagram of the relationship between the CAMPAIGN MODULES and TELELACRI.

II. MAIN RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN

The results obtained to date are utterly encouraging. The most significant ones are stated below by MODULE.

Module I – Educational Awareness

Just in the last two years the telestudents held about 191 community debates where domestic violence against children and adolescents problem was discussed, and whenever possible, *why it is important to be against even the notorious smack on the buttocks*. The debates involved 9678 participants whose ages ranged from 18 to 65, distributed among 19 Brazilian states and Peru.

The telestudents disclosed, as part of their pedagogic tasks, the core of the Campaign: the *Petition For A Non-Violent Pedagogy*. This petition has already been signed by 103,448 people and translated into English and Spanish. It can be found in the site CRESCER SEM VIOLÊNCIA (GROWING UP WITHOUT VIOLENCE) dedicated to children and adolescents: www.renascenca.br/faculdade/lacri-usp.

Over 70 newspapers from all over Brazil have published a text prepared by LACRI named IS SPANKING NON-EDUCATIONAL? Moreover, all the major media in the

Country (radio and TV stations, newspapers and magazines) published notes on the Campaign in late 2000 and early 2001.

Module II – Research

LACRI maintains a consistent Research Program in the area of Domestic Violence Against Children and Adolescents. Masters dissertations and Doctoral theses are under way, focusing on the problem of Physical and Psychological Violence practised at home and at school against children and adolescents. In 2001, the book *HITTING MANIA*, organised and written by Drs. Maria Amélia Azevedo and Viviane Nogueira de Azevedo Guerra, was published by Iglu Editora and launched on March 16. This is the Program Book, since it retrieves the history of *HITTING MANIA* in Brazil and delivers the results of Brazilian research on domestic corporal punishment obtained by interviewing children and adolescents (whose title is *CHILDHOOD VOICES*), as well as incorporating a world-wide panorama of the struggle for policies through contributions from Per Tamm, Simone Ek (Save the Children – Sweden), Lina Inglês (Mozambique) and Tibebe Bogale (Ethiopia). The video, *SPANKING IS NON-EDUCATIONAL*, a cartoon made by 9- to 15-year old children and adolescents, was prepared and launched on the same date as the book *HITTING MANIA*. The book and the video form, as a multimedia project, the key parts of the Campaign.

It is important to remember that the book, *Hitting Mania*, involves two types of research: *historical and empirical*. *Historical* research, was accomplished through a survey regarding the use of domestic corporal punishment against children and adolescents over the 500 years of Brazilian history. For this purpose existing historical testimonies were used, although sparse and fragmentary, since the History of the Child in Brazil only now has begun to be written, and very timidly too. Furthermore, the survey used episodes of domestic corporal punishment suffered by Brazilian writers at different ages and reported by them in their autobiographies. As to the *empirical* research, very properly named *CHILDHOOD VOICES*, the result was the following:

1. How it was carried out

In 1999, 894 children and adolescents were surveyed (49% boys and 51% girls) with ages ranging from 7 to 15 years and attending public schools in the city of São Paulo. The sample was chosen at random. The schools were chosen in function of a *continuum* of social inclusion and exclusion, measured by the IHD (Index of Human Development) scale. The survey subjects were divided into three age groups: 7-9, 10-12 and 13-15 years old. All were duly authorised by their parents to answer standard questionnaires (which involved completing sentences, selecting among closed alternatives, writing answers, and drawing). All the children and adolescents volunteered.

2. What was possible to identify:

The results obtained enabled answering the following basic questions:

I – Is domestic corporal punishment of children and adolescents a past or current practice?

The survey showed that parents beating children is a practice:

- Absolutely familiar, because it is still strongly present during the childhood and adolescence of our survey subjects;
- Virulently democratic, because it was experienced by almost everybody, regardless of sex and social-economical status;
- Paradoxically resistant, considering its duration in years in the life of the survey subjects and the huge cruelty of some of the modalities.

All of these characteristics allow us to say that since HITTING CHILDREN is an omnipresent practice in the family habits of very young survey subjects (7-9 years old), it is far from being a sad inheritance from the past, as it would be if it had happened only in the lives of adolescent subjects (13-15 years old).

Therefore, HITTING MANIA is one of the national institutions of Brazilian culture. In spite of that, there are some hints of future, although slow, transformations.

Even though they represent a minority, there are those who have never been beaten at home (26.67% of the boys and 29.51% of the girls at schools with a high IHD, versus 7.25% of boys and 10.99% of girls at schools with a low IHD, all of them ranging from 10 to 12 years).

II – Which are the main means of corporal punishment applied to children by parents?

Slipper paddling and spanking are among the most popular means through which HITTING MANIA is exercised. Regardless of age, sex and social-economical status, sons and daughters are very familiar with these punitive practices.

It must be emphasised though, that there is a huge diversity of punitive means and manners, as well as a strange association among them: from bare aggression (using parts of the body, preferably feet and hands) to aggression with tools (using a broad variety of objects, from those for household or personal use to those extracted from nature such as rods, switches, etc).

III– Who beats the children more: the father or the mother?

The younger the survey subjects, the more the MOTHER figure is stressed in the practice of HITTING THE CHILDREN. Although domestic corporal punishment of children is a usual practice of MOTHERS and FATHERS, there is evidence of some division of tasks by gender:

- not only as to the sex of the children (mothers with daughters, fathers with sons) but also as to the kind of punishment applied (mothers/smack on the buttocks, fathers/beating, kicks, blows with the fist, ...).

Such conclusions suggest that perhaps the role of the parents is being revised inside the Brazilian family of a big metropolis such as São Paulo, due either to the emergence of family units led by women or to the fathers' longer physical absences from home for work or other reasons.

The data contradict the myth of the NON VIOLENT MOM and suggest that so-called moderate physical punishments (spanking) are a practice of women addressed with priority to GIRLS. Although both parents hit their children, the latter tell us that the MOTHER hits more because maybe she is more present in everyday family life.

IV– What do the children feel when they are being beaten by their parents?

If we compare the voices of childhood and adolescence, we can remark a decrease in feelings which we could call DEMOBILISING (PAIN, SADNESS, SHAME) and an increase in MOBILISING feelings (RAGE, REVOLT, ...). This may result from the fact that as they grow, the young people become aware not only of the “injustice” of being beaten by their parents, but also of their own social strength, inside and outside the family.

However, although this may mean hope for a future transformation in the domestic disciplining relationship, the echo of the captured voices – with some few exceptions in the case of those who are usually not beaten at home – sounds much more like a conformist and impotent lamentation than a war cry.

The HITTING MANIA of parents as part of a violent pedagogy generates *destructive feelings in the children: WRATH, SADNESS, FEAR, DISGUST, SHAME*, while those who are brought up without corporal punishment utter *constructive feelings such as PLEASURE and LOVE*.

V – *What do the children think about domestic corporal punishment?*

The MANIA OF BEATING CHILDREN was condemned by children and adolescents based on logical, moral and psychological arguments. In spite of this massive condemnation, the pedagogy of corporal punishment – especially represented by smacking on the buttocks and slipper paddling – is still defended and legitimised by a rather large number of our survey subjects. Fortunately, this number decreases with age, suggesting that the new generations are perhaps asking themselves why do children and adolescents have to “TAKE A BEATING TO BECOME GROWN UPS”?

Module III – Legal Reform

Considering that the Brazilian Penal Code, in Chapter III – On jeopardy to life and health, article 136 – Ill Treatment reads: “Jeopardising the life or health of persons under one’s authority, custody, or supervision for purposes of upbringing, teaching, treatment or custody, whether by depriving them of food or indispensable care or by submitting them to inadequate or excessive work, or by **misusing disciplinary or corrective measures**:

Penalty: 2 (two)-months to 1-year confinement or fine

Paragraph 1: if serious corporal injury results from the fact

Penalty: confinement of 1 (one) to 4 (four) years

Paragraph 2: if the result is death

Penalty: confinement of 4 (four) to 12 (twelve) years

Paragraph 3; the penalty is increased by one third if the crime is practised against someone under 14 (fourteen) years old.

One can thus conclude that **lighter corporal punishments are not included**, and are thus permitted by this legislation. At this time, when a review of our Penal Code is being proposed, one must struggle to ban for good each and every corporal punishment towards childhood and adolescence.

It is important, though, to think that the **legislative changes must have educational rather than punitive features**, i.e., it must provoke a change in attitude to show that it is undeserving to use any type of corporal punishment on children

and adolescents. On the other hand, children should be able to count on legal protection against this kind of punishment.

With regard to this, the LACRI intends to go deeper and begin the struggle, with the signing of this petition as the starting point.

How to comply with the law

In a country such as Brazil, where transgression is the rule, you can achieve this by establishing ways to ensure compliance with the legislation that will ban once and for all domestic corporal punishment.

III. NEXT STEPS

All this synergetic effort shall be directed to a legal reform, since in Brazil only “*immoderate and cruel punishments*” are forbidden. As has already happened in 10 other countries, our expectation is that Brazil will become the next country to cancel the “*parents license to hit their children under the doubtful pretext of educating them*”.

However, the fundamental challenge is to create a culture recognising domestic corporal punishment as Violence against children and adolescents and, therefore, as part of the Culture of Terror Galeano speaks about and to which we should say NO.



The Culture of Terror

Eduardo Galeano

Extortion, insults, threats, rap on the head, slapping, beating, whipping, dark rooms, cold showers, mandatory fasting, mandatory food; not being allowed to go out, to speak one's thoughts or to do what one feels like and public humiliation...

These are only some of the so commonly used forms of punishment and torture in family life. In order to punish disobedience and examples of freedom, the family tradition perpetrates a culture of terror, which serves not only to degrade women and make children develop their ability to lie, but also infects all with the pestilence of fear.

Human rights, recounts Andrés Domingues in Chile, *should first be exercised in people's homes!*

Finally, it is necessary to say that any Campaign of this nature cannot lose sight of the fact that one should give priority to considering the rights of the children as citizens. The Convention on the Rights of Childhood recommends that children have the right to be protected against all forms of interpersonal violence. Therefore, the countries that have ratified the Convention (among which is Brazil) must have clearly in mind that no level of corporal punishment is compatible with this Convention and that it must be forbidden, coupled to programs in the Education area.