**PUNISHMENT DISCOURSES IN EVERYDAY LIVES**

This paper examines the language used in everyday life to judge, discipline and control, and traces its genealogy and symbolism to corporal punishment discourses; discourses which can remain influential long after the practice of corporal punishment has ceased. Words such as ‘blow’, ‘cuts’, 'dead'-lines, ‘targets’, 'cutbacks', 'crackdowns', 'carving up', 'fitting in', ‘lick into shape’, ‘break in’ and ‘sum up’ have become familiar to the point where we are desensitised to their violent origin. Yet they symbolise actions which seek to label, curtail, contain and suppress human beings as if they were things; phenomena devoid of subjectivity or value. We will consider examples of these terms used by policy-makers, media commentators and populist campaigners, often to further political agendas of economic competition, performativity and bodily control. This inherently violent language has been normalised to the extent that we take it for granted and even adopt it during our self-reflections and relationship interactions, which can become harsh and judgemental as a result. We consider possible effects of corporal punishment discourses upon our psychological, emotional and spiritual flourishing - and ultimately, our health and material well-being.

By examining the autobiographical accounts of several corporal punishment survivors from Nepal, we see how violence has been used as a discourse in the classroom, as teachers claim that it is “the only language that pupils understand”. Accompanying this violence, are the words associated with it – to threaten, intimidate, hurry and manage the minds and actions of others. But the accounts show how intimations and reverberations of this language continue long after the actual violence has ceased, even in seemingly innocuous expressions. When echoed in the workplace and adult learning institutions, this can trigger barriers to lifelong learning and career development. As each story unfolds and the survivor’s self-perceptions become apparent, connections may be made between their past experiences of violence and their current experiences of repression, facilitated by symbolic associations expressed in both verbal and non-verbal language. Can the unpicking of constructed ideologies from these discourses achieve some degree of liberation – both personally and socially? Or is this ‘unpicking’ itself an act of violence, appropriation and conceptual supremacy, far from the self-reflexive critique described by Theodor Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* as “thinking against itself” (1973).

Finally, I ask if new discourses can be created and popularised which might avoid punitive phraseology and instead import elements from other linguistic traditions, be they sub-cultures, political unions, spiritual texts or terms of endearment and empathy often derided as ‘working class’. I consider some examples from English and Nepali language usage. Is it too late for adults to find sanctuary and psychological release in such alternative discourses? Can they facilitate and reproduce new ways of thinking and being that can enable personal and social transformation? Or does the effectiveness of our critique of punitive language disappear as soon as we begin prescribing alternative discourses?