

The Child Rearing Experiences of Newcomer Mothers after Taking a Parenting Program in

Winnipeg

by

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## **Abstract**

Canada is a nation known for being highly multiethnic due to its rich history of immigration. But many immigrant parents struggle with acculturation and, at the same time, they are faced with the challenge of raising their children in a new country. This study explored the process of transition among newcomer mothers living in Winnipeg. Using a qualitative approach, ten in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of the process that parents go through as they learn about a particular disciplinary approach - Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP). Four main themes emerged: 1) the meaning of parenting; 2) a new vision of parenting; 3) conflicting notions of discipline; and 4) navigating the acculturation gap. Each primary theme had several sub-themes that expressed the process of transition to a new parenting context. Many mothers had experienced corporal punishment as children but none approved of it. They explained that PDEP had provided them with a new non-violent vision of parenting. Mothers described the parenting changes they had made and how their confidence had increased since learning about PDEP. They also described the impact that the loss of extended family support had on parenting dynamics. Although some of the mothers observed that the PDEP program had not decreased the acculturation gap between them and their children, it had helped them to better understand their children's perspectives. The implications of the findings for professionals who support newcomer parents are discussed.

*Keywords:* newcomer mothers, acculturation, acculturation gap, discipline, parenting program.

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## **Dedication**

For the three special people in my life: My mom Muoi Tat, my brother Thanh Ly and my love

Matthew Jackson.

In memory of my Dad, Bang Dieu Ly

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## **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction**

Since 2005, Canada has maintained steady immigration levels, accepting approximately 250,000 immigrants per year (Government of Manitoba, 2013). During 2005- 2011, the number of immigrants settling in Manitoba steadily increased each year from over 8000 to just under 16,000. However in recent years from 2011-2013 the number of immigrants settling in Manitoba have declined from nearly 16,000 to under 13,000. Despite this recent decline, the number of immigrants who qualify under the family class category in Manitoba have increased from 1,400 to over 1,900 in 2011–2013. Other categories such as immigrants who are considered skilled workers or those who would qualify under the provincial nominee program have decreased in 2011-2013. Immigrants who qualify under the family class category are those sponsored by a spouse, common-law partner, or dependent child. As the number of family class immigrants grows, so does the need to address the needs of these families.

Newcomers arrive in Canada with many settlement needs, including housing, training, employment, and childcare. These needs can be difficult to meet due to accessibility of services, language differences, and transportation barriers. Immigrants' challenges become amplified when they are raising children in their new environment; they often experience a phenomenon called “the acculturation gap” (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Szapocnick, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Arnalde, 1978). This term refers to the fact that parents and children tend to acculturate at different rates, which can cause great distress within the family. In Manitoba, parenting programs are offered to newcomer families with the aim of alleviating some of the pressure that results from the acculturation gap. This purpose of this study was to explore the process of transition after newcomer mothers completed one of these programs - Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP; Durrant, 2013). Using a qualitative methodology, I investigated the challenges newcomer mothers face while adapting to a new parenting approach, as well as their perceptions of its impact

on the acculturation gap. An understanding of the challenges and opportunities experienced by these mothers will inform professionals working newcomer families and will provide insight into how programs can be tailored to meet the needs of newcomer parents.

In Chapter 1, the topic of the thesis is introduced, as well as its objectives and relevance, and the study's theoretical framework is presented. Chapter 2 provides an overview of research findings in the areas of acculturation and parenting. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach taken to answer the research questions, as well as the specific methods implemented. Chapter 4 identifies the four major themes that emerged from the study. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the study's findings and limitations provides directions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

‘Acculturation is the complex process of immigrants’ adaptation to a new culture, involving changes to their beliefs, values, and behaviours (Berry, 2006; Farver, Narang & Badha, 2002). Berry (2006) describes acculturation as a dual-level process occurring at an individual level and a group level. At an individual level, behavioural changes take place during the transition period such as ways of speaking, dressing, and eating. At a group level, social and institutional changes and cultural practices take place. According to Telzer (2011), acculturation is a developmental phenomenon that includes many domains including cultural values, practices and beliefs, language, identity, and obligations, among others.

Seeking to balance the retention of a native culture while responding and adapting to a new environment that presents different cultural norms is a complex process filled with tensions. A new layer of difficulties arises when an individual strives to achieve this balance while attempting to maintain family stability – a challenge that is particularly acute in the case of parent-child relations due to discrepancies in the speed of acculturation between parents and their children. Children tend to acculturate to a new culture more rapidly than their parents (Birman & Trickett, 2001; Liebkind, 1996). The term given to this phenomenon is “the acculturation gap.” This gap can cause considerable conflict and misunderstanding between family members, resulting in family distress (Dinh, Sarason, & Sarason, 1994; Kwak, 2003).

The concept of the acculturation gap dates back several decades. While some early studies suggested that assimilation was an inevitable and desirable process (Gordon, 1964), more recent studies have uncovered the complexity of this process, and how the acculturation gap impacts family conflict and children’s well-being (Birman, 2006; Ho, 2009; Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009). From these studies, the “acculturation distress model” emerged, which posits that immigrant children acculturate more quickly than their parents, “leading to family conflict and

youth maladjustment” (Telzer, 2011, p. 313). Other writers, however, have challenged this assumption, arguing that the inevitability of family conflict resulting from the acculturation gap has been overstated (Lau, McCabe, Yeh, Garland, Wood, & Hough, 2005) or that the process may be more bidirectional than linear (Birman, 1994; Ho, 2009). Bidirectional models examine parents’ and children’s adaptation to the new culture of the host society and their simultaneous affiliation to the native culture (Birman, 2006). Further, researchers have begun to recognize that there may be multiple domains of acculturation, including but not limited to, language, customs, and identification with the new and old cultures (Birman, 1994; Kwak & Berry, 2001). In measuring the acculturation gap, some researchers used these domains to create global indices of acculturation (e.g., Cortes, Rogler, & Malgady, 1994) while others view these domains as distinct and independent constructs, revealing acculturation gaps in some but not others (e.g., Birman, 2006).

#### ***Perceived versus Actual Acculturation Gaps***

Many studies (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Hwang & Wood, 2008; Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000) have explored the acculturation gap by analyzing self-reports of either parents or children, but not both. In these studies, the magnitude of the acculturation gap is determined by assessing the discrepancy between the participants’ self-reported acculturation level and their perceptions of other family members’ acculturation levels. This approach measures the perceived acculturation gap. Studies based on this measurement approach (Buki et al., 2003; Hwang & Wood, 2008; Lee et al., 2000) tend to find that parents’ perceptions of the size of the acculturation gap are related to levels of family conflict (Lee et al., 2000). For example, Buki and colleagues (2003) found that mothers reported a higher degree of difficulty communicating with their children when they perceived a wider acculturation gap. Hwang and Wood (2008) also found that parents’ perceptions of cultural value differences between themselves and their adolescent children were associated with family conflict.

Studies reliant on self-reported information from a single perspective, however, could result in over- or underestimation of the actual acculturation gap among family members and therefore may not capture the reality of this process (Birman, 2006). Moreover, family members' subjective perceptions may be influenced by other factors present in a family who may have been in a state of distress prior to immigration – or individual family members may suffer from internal distress that may influence their perceptions of family discord and, in turn, their perceptions of an acculturation gap (Telzer, 2011).

Measurement of the actual acculturation gap utilizes both parent and child reports of their own levels of acculturation as well as their perceptions of the level of acculturation of each other (Telzer, 2011). The size of the actual acculturation gap is calculated by subtracting the score of each member from the scores of the others. A difference score can then be calculated for each parent-child dyad, which is the difference between the absolute value of the perceived gap and the actual gap (Birman, 2006). This approach is considered by many to be more accurate and less prone to bias than that based solely on one reporter's perceptions. Indeed, in a study of the perceived and actual degree of family assimilation disparity among 50 Hispanic refugee parent-adolescent dyads in Canada, Merali (2002) found that both the parents and the adolescents significantly over- or underestimated the actual acculturation gap. In a study of parents' and children's' perceptions of the acculturation gap in United States, Smokowoski and colleagues (2008) found that the size of the gap was not actually related to parent-adolescent conflict.

### ***Direction of Acculturation Gaps***

Unidirectional acculturation models imply a linear process (Birman, 2006). These models frame acculturation as a zero-sum process “with acquisition of aspects of the new/host culture displacing acculturation to the native culture over time” (Birman, 2006, p. 120). For example, in their study of adolescents' perceptions of acculturation within Hmong refugee families in the

United States, Rick and Forwards (1992) concluded that acculturation is a “one-way process”, and that “refugee adolescents, who are exposed to the mainstream culture’s values when they attend school, often adopt language and behaviours from the host country more quickly than their parents” (p. 85).

Critics of the linear model argue that it “does not account for the possibility for parents to be more acculturated than their children or for acculturation gaps to differ depending on the cultural context” (Telzer, 2011, p. 317). The bidirectional framework encompasses two different types of measurement approaches: the independent measurement approach and the four-fold paradigm approach. The independent measurement approach involves assessing independently the acculturation to the native culture and to the host culture to examine the extent of affiliation to each culture (Birman, 2006; Ho, 2009). In turn, two types of acculturation gaps are measured: the first in relation to the native culture and the second in relation to the host culture. Several studies have used the bidirectional approach to measure the acculturation gap. For example, Farver and colleagues (2002) used the Acculturation Rating Scale to measure separately both parents’ and adolescents’ affiliation to the native culture and to the host culture. Cortes and colleagues (1994) have emphasized the importance of measuring involvements in the host culture and the native culture separately “in order to reflect the complexities of the cultural interactions immigrants and their offspring experience” (p. 707). Their findings indicated that the adoption of the new culture does not occur at the expense of the original culture and they concluded that their findings provided strong evidence contradicting the assumption of a linear zero-sum process. Some of the most compelling findings contradicting the assumption of a linear acculturation process are those of Birman’s (2006) study of Soviet Jewish refugees in the United States. Among these families, 24% had parents who identified more with their American identity than did their children and 50% of

families had parents who identified less with their Russian identity than did their children (Birman, 2006).

The four-fold measurement approach locates acculturating individuals in one of four categories of acculturative styles: assimilation, marginality, separation, or integration (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986). Farver and colleagues (2002) utilized this method to categorize adolescents and parents into one of the four acculturative styles and then placing them into matched or mismatched groups. The matched group comprised parents and children whose acculturative styles were the same. The mismatched group comprised parents and children whose acculturative styles differed. When families with mismatched or separate acculturation styles were compared to families with matched or integrated acculturation styles, the latter reported less frequent and intense family conflict. These findings provide additional evidence that the acculturation process is more complex than the linear model would suggest.

### *Domains of Acculturation*

The acculturation process occurs in a number of domains affected by cultural contexts, including language, ethnic identity, relationships, customs, values, and food. When assessing intergenerational acculturation differences, some researchers (e.g., Cortes et al. 1994; Rick & Forward, 1992) have merged domains into a global index to assess overall acculturation levels. A limitation of this approach is that it does not allow for a focused view of each domain. As one domain may influence family cohesion more than the other, findings of studies on the influence of acculturation gaps on well-being could depend on the cultural domain being measured (Telzer, 2011).

Other researchers (e.g., Birman, 2006; Pasch, Deardorff, Tschann, Flores, Penilla, & Pantoja, 2006) have focused on one or more distinct domains. This multiple domains approach allows researchers to capture a picture of the many elements of acculturation and how each impacts

family cohesion. Both Birman (2006) and Kwak and Berry (2001) used distinct domains in order to measure the differences in acculturation levels between parents and children. Specifically, Kwak and Berry (2001) examined three domains - traditions, language and marriage - to assess differences in attitudes towards acculturation between parents and adolescents. Birman (2006) examined language, identity and behaviours in order to assess how each domain affected family cohesion. Both studies found that the size of the acculturation gap depended on the domain measured. For instance, Birman's (2006) study found that only identity affected family cohesion. Kwak and Berry's (2001) study found that different acculturation gaps emerged depending on the domain. Telzer (2011) has argued that the acculturation gap distress model may be overly simplistic and suggests that any links between acculturation gaps and family conflict are complex, including many directions, domains, and dimensions. Moreover, many characteristics of the family, such as age, family composition, socioeconomic status, parental education, ethnicity, and cultural values may lead to different family outcomes (Telzer, 2011).

A question that has not been addressed in the literature on the acculturation gap is the degree to which parents' behaviour toward their children during the acculturation process may mediate the size of the acculturation gap. For example, it might be the case that parents who maintain strong bonds with their children and provide a safe, secure home environment for them help to nurture a successful transition to the new culture while maintaining an affiliation with the native culture. Parents who fear the outcomes of their children's acculturation, on the other hand, may respond more punitively to their children's expressions of acculturation, an approach that may generate resistance in their children and a greater psychological distance from their parents' native culture. In other words, the parents' disciplinary approaches might be an important factor influencing the extent to which an acculturation gap develops, as well as a contributor to the family conflict and distress that has often been found to accompany it. In the following section, research

on the parenting styles of immigrant parents will be summarized to form a basis for exploring this question.

### *Parenting Styles*

Parenting styles are a combination of parenting behaviours such as affection, punishment, and monitoring. Although various parenting behaviours have been proposed, two key behaviours (support and control) have been used to assess the quality of parenting (Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, Laan, Smeek, & Gerris, 2009). For many decades, researchers have been examining the effects of child rearing practices on children's outcomes (e.g., Baldwin 1948; Baumrind, 1966; Hoffman & Saltzstein 1967; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin 1957). Research on parenting styles dates back to the 1950s when Robert Sears and Eleanor Maccoby studied patterns of child rearing. Based on their research, they classified maternal disciplinary techniques into two approaches: love-oriented and object-oriented (Sears et al., 1957). They described the love-oriented disciplinary approach as the use or withholding of warmth, affection, and praise in response to children's behaviour. They described the object-oriented disciplinary approach as the use or withholding of physical or non-physical objects, such as toys or privileges. Their research found that parenting approaches influenced children's internalization of their parents' values, and that children whose parents used the love-oriented approach had a higher probability of internalizing the values of their parents than children whose parents used the object-oriented approach. Sears and colleagues (1957) also found a positive correlation between parents' use of the love-oriented approach and children's self-control and self-regulation. Children exposed to the love-oriented approach were better able to understand their parents' rationales and actions while children exposed to the object-oriented approach spent energy striving to avoid object removal and had difficulty understanding their parents' actions and rationales.

In 1967, Martin Hoffman and Herbert Saltzstein suggested that when parents used induction (i.e., explanations for their disciplinary actions) this facilitated their children's understanding of the rationale behind their parents' actions and the impact of their own behaviours. Hoffman and Saltzstein (1967) introduced a three-factor typology of parenting discipline – power assertion, induction, and love withdrawal - which fall into “power assertive’ and “non-power assertive” categories. Power assertion involves parental use of threats of direct or indirect force against the child. In the category of non-power assertive discipline, induction involves parents explaining the impact of the child's actions, whereas love withdrawal refers to parents' removing their emotional support in response to the child's actions (Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967). Hoffman and Saltzstein (1967) found that frequent parental use of power assertion is associated with weak moral development in children, while parental use of induction is associated with advanced moral development in children.

Early studies on parenting styles considered many dimensions or classifications of parenting behaviour, such as affection, punishment, and monitoring (Hoeve et al., 2009). Baldwin (1948) explored dimensions such as democratic versus autocratic, control versus non-control, and activeness versus inactiveness. Baldwin (1948) suggested that democratic parenting, characterized by a high level of verbal parent-child interaction, tended to produce a highly active child. “It seems generally to raise the activity level and to produce an aggressive, fearless, planful child, likely to be a leader in the nursery school situation, but who is also more cruel than the average child of his age” (Baldwin, 1948, p. 129). Sears and colleagues (1957) explored the dimension of responsiveness and unresponsiveness, finding that more responsive parents had children with higher levels of competence and adaptability.

Baumrind (1978) introduced three primary parenting styles – authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive - that set the parenting research agenda for the subsequent two decades. These

parenting labels reflected different combinations of dimensions of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting. Parenting typologies have been described as constellations of parenting dimensions, or a shortcut to describe a wide-range of parenting behaviours (Hoeve et al., 2009; Rodriguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009). Maccoby and Martin (1983) eventually added a fourth style to Baumrind's typology, which they labeled "neglectful." As Darling and Steinberg (1993, p. 491) stated "neglectful parents are low in both responsiveness and demandingness."

### ***Cultural Contexts of Parenting Style***

Recent studies have included the influence of cultural contexts on parenting styles (e.g., Ferguson, Hagaman, Maurer, Mathews, & Peng, 2013; Lee, Zhou, & Eisenberg, Wang 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2009). Their findings have suggested that the typologies developed primarily on the basis of white American parents do not necessarily map onto the styles of parents in other cultures or sub-cultures. For example, in a study of Latinos' parenting styles in the United States, Rodriguez and colleagues (2009) proposed and measured all four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful) using high and low scores on each style. Parents who scored high on warmth, high on demandingness and low on autonomy were labeled "protective" and parents who scored high on warmth, low on demandingness and low on autonomy were labeled "affiliative." The majority of parents (61%) were categorized as protective. The four traditional categories accounted for only one-third of their sample's styles. Lee and colleagues (2012) examined parenting style and the temperaments of Chinese children. Their finding of a bidirectional relationship between high authoritarian parenting and children's low effortful control and high anger/frustration were consistent with previous research on Western samples, but they found no relationship between an authoritative parenting style and child temperament. Ferguson and colleagues (2013) found that the reported styles of Asian parents differed significantly from

those of Euro-Caucasian parents and that parents' values differed within a given location, across locations within the same country, and between countries with different ethnicities.

Berry, Benard and Beitel (2009) emphasized the need for broadening the content of tools to assess child rearing attitudes among ethnic groups to include cultural variables, rather than simply focusing on authoritarian parenting styles in these groups. Indeed, many studies (e.g., Berry et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2009) have demonstrated that child rearing practices of immigrant parents do not necessarily fit the widely accepted parenting style typology developed by Baumrind (1978) nor do the child outcomes predicted by the typology necessarily develop in immigrant families (Lee et al., 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2009). For instance, Choa (1994) found that Chinese mothers had higher scores on parental control and authoritarian parenting style than their Western counterparts. Also, Chinese mothers were more approving of spanking a disobedient child than their Western counterparts. However, an important finding in this study indicated that categorizing Chinese mothers as authoritarian is not as simplistic as it seems. For example, Chinese mothers understood "training" to include high involvement and physical closeness, which are not part of the authoritarian concept. Their Western counterparts viewed "training" as militaristic, regimented or strict. Therefore, scores on measures of authoritarian parenting may not have the same meaning for Chinese parents as for their Western counterparts. Furthermore, in contrast to the belief that authoritarian parenting is a predictor of poor school achievement, the Chinese children in this study performed well in school.

The prevalence of punitive parenting was found to be common in the top source areas of newcomers to Manitoba (Asia and Pacific regions, Africa, and the Middle East). For example, Tang's (2006) study found that nearly 60% of Chinese parents in Hong Kong often used corporal punishment on their children. The study also indicated that the reasons for parents using physical aggression were to solve child-related problems, ventilate their own feelings, and because they

were unaware of alternative strategies (Tang, 2006). Tang's (1998) study on the frequency of parental violence against children in Hong Kong Chinese families found that the Chinese children were often subject to parental violence. Furthermore, the Chinese parents believed that infliction of physical pain was necessary to train children's strength to endure physical hardship. In Mbagaya, Oburu, and Bakeermans-Kranenburg's (2013) retrospective study of child physical abuse and neglect in Kenya, Zambia and the Netherlands, 42% of the Kenyan sample and 40% of the Zambian sample reported physical abuse. Physical abuse was measured by two items: 1) "When I was less than 12 years old, I was spanked or hit a lot by my father or mother", and 2) "When I was a teenager I was hit a lot by my mother and father." Akmatov's (2011) study on child abuse in 28 developing and transitional countries found that 40% of parents in 9 African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Togo) believed that physical punishment should be used as a method of child-rearing, compared to 8% of parents in 12 transitional countries (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine). This study revealed that violent behaviour towards children is more common and widely accepted in the 9 African countries in this study than in other cultures. A study of mothers in Iran found that 78% of mothers used corporal punishment and the most frequent form was spanking on the bottom with a bare hand; 65% of mothers reported having done so in the last year (Douki, Esmaeili, Vaezzadeh, Mohammadpour, Azimi, Sabbaghi, Esmaeil, & Shahhosseini, 2013). An Egyptian study found that 37.5% of children were disciplined physically in the form of beatings, that Egyptian culture values child obedience and power assertive discipline, and that corporal punishment is not uncommon (Yousseff, Attia, & Kamel, 1998).

Grusec, Goodnow and Kucynski (2000) have noted that traditional theories of parenting styles have failed in several ways: 1) they have not considered different cultural forms of

responsiveness; 2) they have focused primarily on internalization of values as the desired outcome; and 3) they have narrowed their purview to just a few parenting behaviours. Not only might the traditional four-factor parenting style typology not adequately capture the parenting of various cultural groups, it may be the case that the parenting styles used in immigrant families clash with the parenting styles considered appropriate in their host countries. In such cases, how do parents make the transition to the styles accepted in their new countries while attempting to parent children within a new environment with new norms and expectations for their children to navigate? As newcomer parents attempt to understand and adopt new disciplinary approaches, how does this process affect their perceptions of the acculturation gap? Do they view the disciplinary norms of their new country as permissive and therefore posing risks to their children's safety in the new culture? Or do they adopt the values underlying the host country's disciplinary norms, viewing them as constructive to their acculturation process and that of their children? Perhaps the transition process is not as difficult as is often assumed. It may be that some newcomer parents' disciplinary approaches are already compatible with those of their new country, and that such compatibility reduces their perception of an acculturation gap.

The purpose of the present study was to explore this process of transition among a sample of newcomer parents to Manitoba after they had learned about a particular disciplinary approach – Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting - offered locally to newcomer parents. Through an exploration of newcomer parents' lived experiences, the study sought a greater understanding of the challenges they face in adapting to this approach and their perceptions of its impact on the acculturation gap.

### ***Research Questions***

The central question addressed by this study was, what are the experiences of newcomer mothers raising children in Winnipeg after taking a parenting program focused on non-violent and

non-punitive discipline? The study's specific research questions were: 1) How do newcomer parents view the disciplinary norms of their new country?; 2) What are the experiences of newcomer parents as they make a transition to these disciplinary norms?; and 3) How does the process of adopting new disciplinary norms affect newcomer parents' perceptions of the acculturation gap?

## **CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Procedures**

### ***Qualitative Research Methods***

Qualitative research methods provide a variety of paradigms and approaches to help us understand the lived experiences of individuals. Berg (2012) describes qualitative research as the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. There are a number of paradigms within qualitative research. Guba (1990 as cited in Creswell, 2007) describes a paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 19). Qualitative paradigms include post-positivist, social constructivist, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatist. For this study a social constructivist approach was deemed most appropriate. With this approach, researchers attempt to uncover patterns of meaning that individuals form through interaction with others and through cultural norms (Creswell, 2007). The goal of social constructivist research is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2007, p.20), focusing on the process of interaction among individuals and their cultural settings. Through an interpretive process, researchers attempt to make sense of the meanings participants have constructed about the world.

### ***Participant Selection Criteria***

Initially, those eligible for participation in this study were newcomer parents who: 1) were at least 18 years of age; 2) had at least one child under the age of 18; 3) had lived in Canada for less than five years; 4) were able to speak and comprehend basic English; and 5) had taken the PDEP program (Durrant, 2013) through Mosaic Newcomer Family Resource Network in Winnipeg.

The fifth criterion ensured that all participants had experienced the same parenting program to standardize, to some extent, their exposure to parenting concepts. PDEP was selected as the program most appropriate for examining the process of parenting and acculturation because, of programs offered in Winnipeg, it most strongly represents a non-authoritarian disciplinary

approach. Three specific aspects of the program make it an interesting and useful context for examining the process of change in parents' disciplinary beliefs. First, PDEP is based on child rights standards. The approach was explicitly designed to help parents learn how to resolve conflict with their children in a way that upholds their children's rights to protection from physical and emotional punishment, dignity, and participation in their learning (Durrant, 2013). As the idea of children as rights bearers is new to many parents - both Canadian and newcomer - this program provides an opportunity to explore parents' understanding and internalization of disciplinary attitudes that are often quite different from the ones they might have held prior to participating in the program.

Second, PDEP is not based on behavioural principles, but on developmental principles. Most other parenting programs teach parents how to use rewards and punishments to shape their children's behaviour (e.g., Triple P, Incredible Years), whereas PDEP teaches parents how their children develop cognitively, emotionally and neurologically and how their development influences their behaviour and their perceptions of conflict with their parents. The ultimate goal of PDEP is to help parents learn how to problem solve with their children, rather than how to impose external consequences on them. Viewing children's behaviour and solutions to parent-child conflict from this perspective is new to many parents, so this aspect of PDEP provides opportunities to explore how parents internalize this shift in focus.

Third, PDEP was developed through extensive consultation with parents and parent educators in a wide range of cultural communities, including Southeast Asia, South Asia, the South Pacific, and West Africa. It was developed with strong emphasis on cross-cultural relevance and provides delivery adaptations for parents living in diverse cultural, religious and socioeconomic contexts (Durrant et al., 2013). Therefore, PDEP was considered to provide an appropriate context for exploring the process of change in disciplinary beliefs of newcomer parents.

Evidence is accumulating that PDEP does lead to change in parents' beliefs. For example, in a sample of 327 parents in Canada, approval of physical punishment decreased significantly; 95% believed more strongly that parents should not use physical punishment (Durrant et al., 2013). Over the course of the program these parents also altered their perceptions of parent-child conflict, becoming less likely to attribute it to defiance, spoiling, or disrespect. More than 90% reported that PDEP helped them to understand their children's development, communicate better with their children, understand their children's feelings, control their anger, and build stronger relationships with their children. Therefore, there was reason to expect that the present sample of parents would have undergone some degree of change in their parenting beliefs at the time of the study.

### ***Participant Recruitment***

The study was advertised in organizations that offered the PDEP program to newcomers in Winnipeg: Mosaic Newcomer Family Resource Network (MNFRN), NorWest Coop Community Health Access Centre (NorWest) and 2 community centres. First, I contacted these agencies to request permission to post the recruitment poster (Appendix A) on bulletin boards in their buildings. Mosaic offered to have the recruitment poster added to their electronic newsletter. The poster asked interested parents to contact me by telephone or email.

Between February 29 and June 23, 2014 eleven parents contacted me. Five parents contacted me by telephone; four of them agreed to participate in an interview. Six parents contacted me by email, inquiring about the study and expressing interest in participating. I called them to discuss the purpose of the study and explain the interview process. Four out of the six parents agreed to participate. By June 23, a total of 8 interviews were conducted. After the eighth interview, I did not hear any new information that would add to the developed categories. This led me to believe saturation was reached. To ensure that the data was robust I interviewed two more parents.

Throughout July, no parents contacted me, so I adjusted one of the eligibility criteria to include more parents. I raised the minimum number of years they had lived in Canada from five to eight. After this change was made, two parents contacted me by telephone and both agreed to participate. Recruiting was then stopped, as saturation had been reached.

### ***Participant Demographics***

The study participants were asked their age, gender, how many children they had, their children's ages, their country of origin, how long they have lived in Canada, and if they had participated in any parenting programs other than PDEP. The ten participants, all were mothers who had participated in the PDEP parent program. The average age of the participants was 37.1 years. The participants arrived from four source regions, Africa, Middle East, Asia and South America. Seven of the participants had at least two children, one participant had three children, and two participants had four children. Three participants had lived in Canada for two years or less, four participants arrived in Canada less than four years ago and three participants lived in Canada for over four years. Six participants took the PDEP facilitator training program and they are now active PDEP facilitators who deliver the program to other parents. Their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

### ***Procedure***

A private semi-structured interview (Appendix D) was conducted with each participant. The majority of the interviews took place at Mosaic Newcomer Family Resource Centre (MNFRC) because this agency offered private space for the interviews to be conducted. A few of the interviews were conducted in participants' homes when their spouses were at work and children were in school or daycare. Prior to each interview the researcher explained the study, asked participants if they had any concerns or questions, and obtained informed consent. The consent form (Appendix C) provided details about the study, contact information and information on

Table 1

*Demographic Profile of Participants*

Pseudonyms	Age	Source region	Number of child(ren)			Years lived in Canada	PDEP status
			Aged: 0-3	4-6	7-10		
Hana	43	Africa			4	3.5 years	Facilitator
Jana	33	Africa	1	1		3.5 years	Parent
Idella	34	Middle East	1	1		2.5 years	Facilitator
Gemma	N/A	South America	1	1		4 years	Facilitator
Shirley	31	Asia	2			3.5 years	Parent
Vicky	43	Africa			2	2 years	Parent
Aubrey	40	Asia		1		2 months	Parent
Marley	51	Asia			4	3 years	Facilitator
Melanie	26	Asia			1	8 years	Facilitator
Sue	33	Middle East	1	1	1	8 years	Facilitator

participants' privacy and rights. It included an area for participants to indicate if they agreed to be audiotape recorded and if they wished to receive a summary of the results.

All participants agreed to be audiotaped. The duration of the interviews ranged from 38 minutes to 120 minutes. As each interview was completed, the participants were offered a list of resources that contained counselling services and received an honorarium of \$20.00 as compensation for their time and contribution to the study.

### ***Data Analysis and Interpretation***

I approached the data using qualitative content analysis, which is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). This method is appropriate for research focusing on the content or contextual meaning of text. Extending beyond quantifying words into a number amount of categories, this method is aimed at providing knowledge and understanding of a particular phenomenon. Krippendorff (2013) posits that content analysis is a form on empirical inquiry into the meanings of communications. The process of coding is taking raw data and transforming it into a standardized form in accordance to a conceptual framework. Essentially, coding is when the researcher searches for specific details that answer the research questions and are in accordance to the existing literature.

Each audiotaped interview was transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document with a wide right-hand margin for my notes. Immediately after each interview I transcribed the audio tape. Each interview was nearly a week apart and this gave me the opportunity to transcribe them right away. After each transcription was complete, I began to read through them. The first reading of an interview was used to gain a sense of the overall picture. At this time each participant was assigned a pseudonym. During the second reading of an interview, I focused on significant statements that could become themes. I highlighted them and made notes of my thoughts, ideas and

questions in the right-hand margin of the transcript. After highlighting significant statements I went back to my proposal and reviewed the purpose of my study and my research questions. In a new reading, I began to assign potential themes, and in some cases, I wrote some initial interpretations. I coded the data as a way to address the research questions. From there I reviewed the potential themes, my notes, and my initial interpretations and four overarching themes emerged.

The four themes which emerged are the meaning of parenting, a new version of parenting, conflicting notions of parenting and navigating the acculturation gap. These themes were found to describe the data collected to the fullest extent. Within each theme, multiple sub-themes appeared which highlighted the overarching four themes. An additional level of coding was completed in order to organize the sub-themes. Themes that emerged from the data were found to either occur across interviews, or to be new and interesting themes that were not found in the existing literature.

### *Rigor*

Building on previous work conducted by Lincoln (2985), Creswell (2007) concluded that in order for rigor to be established at least two out of the following eight strategies must be utilized: 1) prolonged engagement and persistent observation; 2) triangulation; 3) peer review or debriefing; 4) negative case analysis; 5) reflexivity; 6) member checking; 7) thick description; and 8) external audits. In this study, I employed member checking and reflexivity. Member checking involves discussions between the researcher and the participants to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the data (Barusch, Gingeri, & George, 2011) "By listening deeply and raising questions with participants, researchers have a chance to clarify or develop their thoughts, which will strengthen their findings" (Barusch, Gingeri, & George, 2011, p. 13). I held a group discussion with six of the participants in which I presented the data and inquired whether my transcripts and interpretations were accurate and complete. During the focus group, we discussed

the major and sub-themes. Each mother was given a chance to reflect and confirm what was found or clarify and share more information. By the end of our discussion, the participants verified my representation and interpretation of the data.

Reflexivity is the continuous process of self-reflection in which researchers engage to generate awareness of their actions, feelings and perceptions (Darawsheh, 2014). “Reflexivity enables researchers to gain awareness of personal attitudes that may influence the research process” (Darawsheh, 2014, p. 562). This process is important because it allows researchers to recognize their social location and emotional responses to respondents and the data, all of which can shape their interpretations (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). As someone who is closely connected to both the research question and to the PDEP program, employing the process of reflexivity throughout the analysis process was critical. I consistently questioned my interpretations and decisions. Each review of the transcripts allowed me to reflect deeper upon my own assumptions. For example, the issue of independence arose from the findings. Since the topic of independence was a large part of my own experiences, I had to consistently reflect on my own assumptions about this topic. In one instance I wrote: “I was brought up in a home where interdependence was greatly valued.” Independence was frowned upon because my parents believed it was a reflection of the family values they taught us. “Could it be that this parent has similar beliefs about independence as my parents once had? What does independence mean for this parent? Could it be that they see it as a reflection of their parenting?”

To the best of my abilities, I made decisions based on accurate interpretations of the participants’ accounts. With the emergence of each theme, I attempted to reflect on my assumptions to avoid bias. I recorded my own thoughts and feelings about each theme. In doing so, I strove to be as aware as possible when making interpretations. I also reminded myself continuously that all research is influenced by the researcher. True separation between the

researcher's and participants' perceptions will never be achieved. Darawsheh (2014) asserts that qualitative research findings are a result of a combination of both researcher and participant perspectives; thus it is inevitable that the researcher influences the collection and interpretation of the findings.

### *Researcher's Role*

It is important that I acknowledge that my personal experiences and culture have undoubtedly shaped elements of this study and its findings. According to Creswell (2007), a researcher's approach is a reflection of subjective interpretation based on his or her culture, gender, class and personal politics. Through reflexivity, the researcher should become "conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 243). I will describe the process I undertook to engage in reflexive analysis of the data.

As a daughter of two immigrant parents, I was no stranger to being raised in a household that strove to find a balance between retaining our cultural beliefs while adapting to the new ones in Canada. While my parents raised me to value family and respect my elders, they often rejected my need for independence. They felt that independence was a Canadian value that did not fit in our cultural practices. In fact, I was encouraged to stay at home and be a good girl because that was my duty as a daughter. The acculturation gap made itself very apparent as I became an adolescent. I started my first job and made many friends. I began to go out and do things independently. My mom, now widowed, stayed home and became the head of our household. She spoke very little English and only went out of the house to buy essentials. We began to drift further and further apart, and there was continuous conflict between us. I did not understand her thought process, and she did not understand mine. Our relationship deteriorated, and we began to avoid each other and say very little to one another. As an adult my relationship with my mom grew to be the strongest of all my relationships, and she is truly my best friend. After countless late night talks, I realized that

she was constantly struggling because she felt she was in the same place as she was when she first arrived. She was still unable to communicate with others, she was working a job well below her skill level, she had a difficult time with the Canadian weather, and she did not feel this was her home. These experiences have led me to believe that newcomer parents have many difficulties during their adjustment period, and length of time exposed to a culture does not necessarily reflect their level of acculturation. My perception of the acculturation gap is that the larger it becomes regardless of the direction, the more it hinders the parent-child relationship.

My experiences as a child of two immigrants could be described as confusing. I knew early on in my childhood that there was a difference between the rules at home and the rules in daycare. The approach to discipline was very different at home than in the daycare. I knew that if I was disobedient at home I would be spanked and in daycare I never feared being spanked. As a child I knew that while I behaved the same way both at home and at daycare, I was treated very differently depending on where I was. At home I knew that I was loved and cared for but I also knew that if I stepped out of line there would be consequences. In daycare, I felt I was just another child no different or more special than the others, but I knew that I was able to explore my independence. As a nervous child I was often afraid to do things the wrong way; avoidance was my way of coping. Although my mother phased out spanking as I grew older, avoidance was still my key method to escape failure. These experiences have had a lasting effect on me and the way I approach life. Having been influenced by my parents' disciplinary approach, I believe that corporal punishment has no place in child raising.

My experience as being an interpreter for my mother heightened my awareness to language issues that many newcomer mothers face. As a young adolescent I would witness on many occasions people getting frustrated with my mother's difficulty with speaking English. Often they would finish her sentence and interrupt her before she could complete her thought. Some

individuals would even interrupt her and say, “I have no idea what you’re trying to say” and look at me for a response. After seeing this many times, I started to speak for my mom to avoid people being rude to her. As I grew older, I started to realize that by speaking for her I was not allowing her to communicate for herself. This did not sit well with me. I felt that I was no better than the people who interrupted her. In some ways I felt very guilty for denying her the chance to use her voice, possibly making her feel inadequate. Realizing this, I began to encourage her to speak to people in public. I would be there for support if she needed someone to clarify. We would still run into the problem of people interrupting her; however, I would advocate for her and ask them to be patient and allow her to finish her sentence. Having the ability to advocate for my mom gives me a sense of pride that I did not feel when I simply interpreted. These experiences have shown me that being patient with newcomer mothers and giving them the opportunity to speak on their own terms is important. Giving them time to respond is important, but I find body language is just as critical. During the interviews, I made sure that the mothers did not feel rushed to answer my questions and I ensured my body language was relaxed and focused on them.

I am currently the project coordinator for the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program. I was first approached by Dr. Joan Durrant in my second year as a graduate student. It felt natural to be a part of this project because I had been a child advocate for years. I have the utmost respect for the PDEP program and its objectives. Because of this I am able to understand that no matter what types of feedback we receive about the program, it is most welcomed. I often remind myself what my mom always said to me: “It is only when we are given criticism we can grow.”

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Findings**

### ***The Meaning of Parenting***

The first theme that emerged focused on newcomer mothers' descriptions of parenting in Canada and in their native countries. When asked to describe parenting in Canada, many mothers expressed an impression that Canadian parents communicated well with their children and often encouraged them. When asked to describe parenting in their native countries, most of the mothers noted that it was less challenging there due to extended familial support. The following sections set out the subthemes of this category.

#### ***Parenting in Canada***

Many newcomer mothers felt they had a different approach to communicating with their children compared to their Canadian counterparts. Four of the mothers expressed the view that Canadian parents had a better understanding of their children due to this different approach. Three of the mothers observed that Canadian parents communicated with their children on an equal level, an approach that these parents stated they did not normally use. They believed that this style of communication enhanced Canadian parents' ability to understand their children. "I admire them because they are able to speak to their children in their own level. But in our home our country children cannot speak" (Marley). Two of the parents believed that their own style of communication was more direct and less open to dialogue. These parents explained that when they gave their children orders they were expected to be obeyed. "It's more that we are above the kids because we make sure that they are good, kids have to obey out of respect" (Sue).

Six of the newcomer mothers noted that parenting in Canada included encouragement, a technique not often used in their own parenting. They indicated that that they would like to start encouraging their children more, seeing it as a positive form of interaction. "I love to be like them to encourage my kids" (Hana). Seven of the newcomer parents described encouragement as being

there for your child and making them feel good about themselves and their abilities. However, these mothers also mentioned that while encouragement was a positive technique it needed to be offered with limits.

I saw her stand there with her kid and she stand there the all the time. She watched her make sure she not fall. It's good because sometimes I see that they don't watch. It is important to see make sure she not fall (Aubrey).

Eight of the newcomer mothers suggested that parenting in Canada fostered independence, and that children in Canada were raised to be very independent. "They want to raise very independent kids. Some parents say, 'Oh, I can't wait for so and so to turn 18 so he can move out' (Shirley). For many of the mothers, being independent meant that children were given more opportunities to do things on their own, such as going out with friends. Six of the parents indicated that this was not customary in their homes. Four of the mothers viewed independence as something they wanted to foster because they wanted their children to fit in. However, three of the participants saw parenting in Canada as too lenient and as giving children too much freedom. "I find that some children are given too much independence, too much freedom for my liking" (Vicky). All of the newcomer mothers felt that allowing their children to be independent was important but it had to be reasonable. They felt that their children's safety was most important; independence was secondary.

Six of the parents described parenting in Canada and the PDEP approach as if they were interchangeable. Three of the mothers mentioned that parents in Canada parent their children with "warmth and structure," which are terms used in the PDEP program (Durrant, 2013). Two of the mothers spoke about having open communication with their children. For example, Shirley stated, "The parent-child relationship is a two-way street so there is an equal." Both of these parents explained that allowing their children to express themselves helped them understand "how their children think and feel", which is another focus of PDEP (Durrant, 2013). Two of the mothers

believed that Canadian parents consistently encourage their children and one explained that Canadian parents do not punish their children often. These viewpoints also reflect core themes of PDEP (Durrant et al., 2014).

### ***Parenting Back Home***

When newcomer mothers were asked to describe parenting in their native countries, most described their own experiences as children. Nine of the mothers began by stating that their parents were not aware of alternatives to strict and/or harsh parenting. “My parents were good parents but they beat us, they hit us, they didn’t know that they could do other things” (Hana). Nine of the parents described their childhoods as including corporal and other punishments. Eight mothers believed that their parents’ actions were motivated by love and affection, and out of fear for their children’s safety.

None of the mothers believed that corporal punishment was constructive. Five parents explained that they did not want to do it to their own children on the basis of their own childhood experiences. Two of the women believed that these experiences had negatively affected their relationships with their parents.

I know already I can’t beat kids because my mom before was beating me and I know how it feels. Because of that I am really far [don’t want] to hurt or to beat my kids. Yeah because I know how I grow up and what kind of relationship with my mom because she was hurting me and sometimes I can remember it (Hana).

Five of the participants identified poverty as an important factor in how they parented in their native countries. “The neighborhood is not so good. When you live in bad or poor neighborhood you just want to protect our children. Most of the time we tell our kids to not go outside, they can’t play” (Aubrey). This mother explained that fear inhibited her ability to encourage her child to explore and play outdoors. She further stated that many families in her

country are constantly confronted with weighing the benefits of outdoor play with the possibilities of dangers that may be present.

Two of newcomer mothers indicated that they were unable to put their children in school because of the financial costs they would incur. “School is expensive. Buying clothes, shoes, and food to my kids was very hard. I have job but cannot get enough to pay for school” (Hana). Hana explained that placing one child in school was very difficult due to the costs; for families with multiple children, it was virtually impossible. As a result, children left home early to avoid being financial burdens on their families.

When discussing the impact of living in poverty, four of the mothers gave examples of systemic and environmental barriers to escaping their situation. Systemic barriers, such as costs associated with putting children through school and a lack of social programs, were identified as barriers to breaking the cycle of poverty in the next generation. Environmental barriers, such as impoverished neighbourhoods, access to drugs and alcohol, and violence were described as constant dangers that prevented their children from going outdoors. Opportunities to find work were usually found far outside of their neighbourhoods and required long hours of travel and a high risk of being attacked while returning home in the evenings. Working at a job also required childcare, a task was usually assigned to the eldest child. As a result of these obstacles, many women opted to stay at home instead of earning an income for their families. Of the mothers who discussed none felt that it would have been possible to break out of their economic situation. Breaking the cycle of poverty was described by these mothers as virtually unattainable.

### ***Similarities and Differences***

Seven of the participants had strong familial support systems in their native countries, which was not the case in Canada. “When we were growing up, we are with the family. We are together with the family. A lot of help is with the family. Here you don’t have family. Here you

are responsible for everything [for] your child” (Jane). However, the other four women stated that they had more social supports in Canada than in their native countries. These supports had aided their own transitions, providing them with time for themselves and opportunities to learn about life in Canada. Four of the mothers expressed gratitude for the help they had received at MNFRC. One stated that it had changed her life; she had felt very isolated before she connected with MNFRC. These women also felt that the social supports they had received had helped their children’s adjustment to living in Canada both directly and indirectly. Direct help for the children after school activities, while indirect support came from the parenting programs and/or English language classes the mothers took. Two of the parents observed that learning how to speak English gave them the ability to help their children with school work.

They have many, many programs here to help kids and parents. Different programs like fitness, like volleyball. They have a lot of programs with kids, like after school programs. There is no nothing like this like program in my country (Jane).

Nearly all of the newcomer mothers believed that regardless of where parents live (Canada or country of origin) they love their children. They believed that Canadian parents loved their children just as much as they did. Although the approach to parenting differed, the common thread was love for the children. “Lots the same, we love our children. Canadian parents love their children and back home they love their children” (Jane).

One mother described parenting in Canada as lacking parental involvement, compared her native country. Vicky described her observations of her brother and his family who constantly assert that they raise their child the Canadian way, and that their approach should be considered typical and normal in Canada.

I think the involvement with your children so that they know that you are concerned is important. The openness, the communication I feel like here the simple things I’ve observed

is like [for example] the Canadian parents.... and I'm talking about my brother's almost ex-wife [who] is Canadian and she was born here. She had a son around 16. The way she allowed him to do things I was shocked and she said that is how things are here in Canada. An example is he'll sit on his Xbox and for hours in his room contained and there's no socialization. If there are visitors, he's playing with his Xbox. I kept saying it was wrong but they kept telling me that this was the Canadian way. (Vicky)

Vicky viewed Canadian children as disrespectful and considered the root of the problem to be lack of parental guidance. "Canadian kids don't even look you in the eye and greet you. This kind of disrespect, the 'I don't care' attitude, the 'I'll do whatever I want' attitude; that is something I don't like about the Canadian parenting style or upbringing of some kids." She indicates that her opinion may be slightly skewed because her exposure to parenting in Canada was limited to observations of family members and the school where she volunteers.

### *A New Vision of Parenting*

The second theme captured newcomer mothers' experiences as they made the transition to using the PDEP approach. All indicated that they had changed their parenting after taking the PDEP program. Some described a large change in their parenting, while others noted smaller changes. Despite the size of the change, all of the parents indicated that they are more patient with their children. This theme contained the following subthemes.

#### *Changes Newcomer Mothers Made After the Program*

All of the newcomer mothers indicated that they made some degree of change to their parenting approach after taking the PDEP program. The degree of change ranged from slight to dramatic. Two of the mothers explained that they had already believed in and practiced the PDEP approach at home before taking the program. "I found this program that the opportunity to try something different for the thing I know before" (Gemma). For those who stated that they had

made slight changes, these changes included being more patient. For example, one mother stated “...if I’m going to be honest about it, is that I was kind of impatient with my little one...I expected her to do it [school work] 100% correctly.... I’m more patient now after the program. It’s more positive than negative” (Vicky).

Nine of the participants indicated that they now understood that controlling their own emotions through self-regulation was the first step to guiding their children. All of the women used the term “flipped lid,” which is a term used in the PDEP program to describe the human stress response (Durrant, 2013). They understood that highly aroused emotional brain (a “flipped lid”) might lead to overreacting to frustration, which hampers their ability to problem-solve with their children.

Before when I first flip. When this is positive discipline language. When I flip up, children flip up. I flip up. Just going to conflict, I don’t know how to regulate myself, calm down, but I learnt a lot of things (Jane).

After taking the PDEP program, nine of the mothers indicated they now try to understand their children’s thoughts and feelings, which they believe is crucial to their children’s development and the parent-child relationship.

Before I didn’t . . . I don’t think I think about the children and what they thinking. I just think what they way it’s supposed to be. I can see now when I’m talking to my children, I’m more relaxed and more understand when I’m explaining (Idella).

Six of the women seem to have changed their perspectives on children. These mothers indicated that they respected their children more because they saw them as individuals and not extensions of themselves. “I know their brain now. I understand their stage. They are people too and they are different than me. I cannot think they are mine mine anymore. They are people. They are their own self” (Jane).

Nine of the participants valued the child development knowledge they gained from PDEP, which they viewed as increasing their confidence. Their increased confidence influenced how they approached situations outside of their home. One mother described that she was afraid to speak to employees at her child's day care. She explained that when her child was having problems with other children, she encouraged her child to stay away from the other children and keep to herself. After taking PDEP, she understood that her child had a problem that required help from the day care staff. She approached the staff and explained what was happening and asked for their help. In describing this experience, she emphasized that whereas she would previously have avoided the situation, she now she felt she had the knowledge and confidence to handle it. Another mother explained that after taking the PDEP program, she felt that she had an equal understanding of child development to that of other parents, which gave her confidence to converse with other parents about their children. "Every time I speaking to people, to moms, I understand it" (Gemma).

Some of the mothers in the study seemed to have internalized key parts of the PDEP program, as indicated by their consistent use of PDEP terms, such as flipped lid, regulation, "warmth and structure" and long-term goals. They were able to describe these terms and give examples from their own lives. For example, Shirley demonstrated her knowledge of problem solving with a child:

So I regulate myself more, especially this is one of the I give myself credit on it, that I'm kind of always loud and I get frustrated quickly, and since I took the PD I catch myself as much less than before. Much less than before. Where I think, 'Okay this is happening, this is the stress and now this is what I do'. So I try to calm myself down and I talk to my kids more. I think that now I was trying to imitate what I saw around but after taking PD I know exactly what I have to do. So I started telling my kids about the brain, the model, and when they are getting mad because I think they start to get my anger too. When I'm mad they also

get mad. I tell her, 'Remember the brain.' I ask her, 'Are you thinking from your thinking brain or your emotional brain?' She'll say emotional brain and I will ask, 'Do you need help to calm yourself down?' So there's a lot a lot of things and I apologize more with the things that I do even if I get out of my control. Before I think I'm just going to make up for this any way but now I admit it I say, 'Okay, I think I was upset and working from my emotional brain and I'm not going to do that again and I will try to do that'. (Shirley)

Some parents' comments indicated that they may require ongoing support or post-program follow-up sessions to deepen their understanding of the core components of the program. For instance, Vicky, who had stated that her parenting was closely aligned with the PDEP approach, described an interaction with her child that belies this statement:

I remember this one time to the store and she looked at this doll that talked and she said 'I want that doll'. She was about 3 that time. I said, 'You can't have that doll because it's too expensive'. My gosh, she was crying her eyes out. I never seen this because my eldest never did that. I went to another aisle and she went on and on, 'I want that doll'. So I said, 'Listen - do you like to come to the shop with mom?' She said, 'Yes'. I said, 'Then if you're going to crying again I'm not going to bring you again'. Even though she was 3, I made her understand that, and I took it down to her level and said, 'You like to come with me to the store, but you're not always going to get your way'. I told her that the doll was too expensive: 'I would love to buy it for you but I can't afford it now'. The next time I took her and we went to the same aisle and she looked at the doll and then she looked at me and back at the doll, but she didn't cry.

Although Vicky did explain her rationale and take it down to her child's level, PDEP would not recommend threats such as "I'm not going to bring you again," which is a power assertive statement intended to instill fear. Although this was only one incident that does not

necessarily reflect this mother's everyday interaction with her child, it does raise the question of whether follow-up sessions would be helpful to ensure parents' full understanding of the PDEP approach.

### ***The Challenges Newcomer Mothers Faced After Taking PDEP***

Six of the newcomer mothers described challenges they face when trying to make changes to their parenting. Two of the mothers suggested the PDEP approach was difficult at times. "They teach you to calm and see long term. But when my kid's yelling and screaming and whining, it's really, really, really hard. I don't think it's real sometimes" (Hana).

Two of the women indicated that it was difficult at times to match PDEP with their cultural traditions, explaining that obeying one's elders (which they equated with respect) has long been a part of their culture, so it was difficult to explain to grandparents the need for explanations and listening to the child. They found it difficult to balance their new approach to parenting with their childhood experience of being parented.

In my culture, you learn to respect your elders and your parents and your siblings. When they told you what to do, you did it. So to tell my kid that it's okay to speak and have opinion and then see my mom and dad say, 'Go do that' and then my kids says, 'I don't want to' . . . I have problem. I see my kids on one side and I see my parents on one side (Idella).

Two of the mothers felt that the PDEP approach may not be the best response in some situations, such as those in which their children's safety is at-risk. A few of the parents described school incidents in which another child was hitting their child. They questioned whether PDEP was the right approach in these situations.

Well, I don't know I feel bad sometimes but I think this very little, not always, but I think in situations like when my daughter was in school. I think sometimes when I hear my daughter

told she was getting hurt, someone, a boy hitting her, he should be punished. I know, I know it's not the way. It's wrong but sometimes when it's your own child you want them to be safe. PD I know does not punish and it's better this way, but sometimes I'm a mom and I want to protect my child to be safe (Gemma).

Vicky considered the PDEP approach to be common sense and said that she did not encounter many challenges in implementing it. She explained that she was using similar techniques before taking the program. "Even when we did the PDEP, I gave the instructor information about how I brought up my kids. Yet it was weird because everything related to the theory, the theory he was giving us. It's kind of like, for me, it was common sense and I didn't have to read about it to know it, right?" She did, however, mention that at times it is difficult to stay positive in all interactions with her children. After the program ended, she needed to make a conscious effort to stay positive and provide positive guidance.

Hana mentioned that she did not make a significant change to her parenting after taking PDEP. She was trained as a teacher prior to coming to Canada, and had been taught to think about the reasons why children misbehave, which is a strategy used in the PDEP program. But Hana did make some changes to her parenting. Interestingly, she spoke about trying to be more Canadian after taking the PDEP program.

"Yes, I understand like, ah because, I have a teen I understand I try to be like a Canadian. When my kid, my son, have like a volleyball, we have to go to school to pick up him. Maybe at when he finish, he asked for the time at 6. We go to pick him up. Or if they went to other school, maybe he finish at 7, and we go and we assisted him. Yeah, we do like Canadian. We encourage him."

***What Has Helped: Newcomer Mothers' Realizations and Reflections about the PDEP Program.***

All participants indicated that learning about child development has helped them with their parenting “I learned to respect my children more. Before I take this one PD, I didn’t know what happens at this age. Now I know what happens at this age” (Jane). Most of the participants said that they try to understand their children’s perspectives by seeing things from their children’s point of view. This technique was brought up in most of the interviews.

I try to see what they see now. Any trying to think that sometimes we think it’s a big deal but we’re making a big deal and it’s not a big deal to them. We need to see it the way they see it to understand (Idella).

Seven of the parents observed that learning about temperament has helped them to understand their children. These mothers felt that their expectations have changed because of this new knowledge. Four of the mothers had previously expected their children to behave like themselves and had great difficulty when their children displayed temperaments different from their own.

Because I learned that in temperament some kids are just not open to changes in schedule right away and stuff like that. I didn’t know. I can change my routine anytime. Even as a kid it didn’t bother me, so when he was fussing I didn’t understand why, because I was fine (Shirley).

### ***PDEP’s Impact on Families***

Four of the newcomer mothers indicated that their family relationships have changed as a result of taking PDEP. Two of the parents stated that their relationships with their children had changed a great deal. One noted that as she has become more patient and communicative, her children have responded by being more understanding.

There’s a beautiful story a night that we had class PD at the evening and I don’t remember which session but I was driving and the kids was with me. And then I told them, “I’m going

to make you a promise.” They say, “What?” I say, “I’m going to promise that I’m not going to yell in the morning.” And one of them said, “I will promise I will get up from the bed quickly.” This is the one that never, he’s always needs to stay. And the other one said, “Okay, I will dress up quickly.” And this is the one that doesn’t dress up. You need to dress him up. So it was fantastic. We had a very good day after it, it went smooth, they know. So I kind of know that after taking the program that it’s more me that’s causing the problem. It’s not them, it’s me. So if I behave better or deal with the stress better, this is where they learn from us (Sue).

Interestingly, two of the newcomer mothers suggested that they noticed a change in their spouse’s behaviour after they had participated in the PDEP program. By learning about temperament and how to calm down before trying to problem solve, they learned how to approach conflict with their spouses more effectively.

I had a class about temperament; even with my husband . . . I think that not only with the kids I see a lot of differences now. Okay I know why he’s like this and I know why I’m like this. Surprises me when we are the same. This is why we cause the conflict. So now I approach everything differently with him and my kids. It’s been a big difference for all of us (Marley).

Another mother had mentioned that her spouse’s relationship with their children changed along with their relationship. “Sometimes he argues with me about PD. I keep telling him that’s what I’m using with you right now. It’s changed our relationship and his relationship with my kids” (Marley).

### *Conflicting Notions of Parenting*

The third theme to emerge described participants’ perspectives on discipline before and after their arrival in Canada. Their definitions of discipline were influenced by the disciplinary

norms of their native countries and by how they had been parented, which was most often with punishment. For many, this changed after their arrival in Canada; they now define discipline as listening, discussing and role modeling.

### ***My views on discipline before I arrived in Canada***

Nine mothers began to describe what discipline was by explaining how they were disciplined as children and all of them experienced corporal punishment. Two of these mothers described experiencing severe corporal punishment by being whipped, kicked and beaten when they behaved badly or disobeyed their parents. Regardless of the form of corporal punishment they experienced, all nine of the mothers noted that they did not approve of it but understood why their parents used it. Some explained that their parents were following traditional practices and/or the cultural norms of their native country. They understood that their parents were not aware of any alternatives. As Shirley explained, “If we ever did something wrong, we would automatically get, you know, spanked with a ruler or a newspaper and stuff like that. But they did it because their parents did it, that’s all they knew. I wouldn’t. I don’t believe in this but I know they did it to teach us, not hurt us.”

Gradually, the participants expressed their own perspectives on discipline. When describing their approaches to discipline before they arrived in Canada, eight of the mothers defined discipline as a tool to get their children to “behave” or do what was expected of them. Three mothers described bad behaviour as being disobedient, lazy, and lacking attention – and believed their job was to adjust their children’s behaviour. Two of the mothers had viewed their children’s bad behaviour as a reflection on them, so if their children misbehaved others would get a bad impression of their parenting. Seven of the parents said that they did not approve of physical punishment before they came to Canada, but they did approve of taking away privileges, asserting their authority and raising their voices.

### *My Views on Discipline Today*

Eight of the newcomer mothers indicated that their understanding of discipline changed. Two now defined it as reasoning with children, being a positive role model, understanding children's development and having realistic expectations. Seven of the mothers described using warmth and structure when disciplining their children. Hana explained, "I can say I can take care of my children with warmth and structure, trying to hear them and trying to discuss with them to getting to solution with problem solving". Seven of the mothers observed that their expectations of their children have changed. For example, Idella described her realization that "...they can be very good person without having a PhD or Master's degree. All I will ask them what they want to do and I will respect".

Seven of the newcomer mothers indicated that their views about discipline had changed since arriving in Canada, especially after taking PDEP. For one newcomer mother, discipline had become a way to guide her and her children towards problem solving. Two of the mothers described how their new recognition of their children's developmental stages helped them to understand their children's needs. "I changed my thinking about that; it's helping our children grow with understanding how they are growing and developing. Because of this program, I realize that I understand more the steps. I understand how children mind" (Gemma). Six of the newcomer mothers now viewed their children differently, as people with their own thoughts and feelings. Previously, these newcomer mothers had not seen their children as capable of making their own decisions. After taking the PDEP program, their views had changed. Marley said, "I now take them, their feelings into consideration when I, or when they did something wrong. I try to understand their side first".

### *Navigating the Acculturation Gap*

The final theme that emerged from the interviews described newcomer mothers' perspectives on their own acculturation process and their perspectives on their children's acculturation experiences. They emphasized language and clothing as important issues, and noted that learning how to understand their children's feelings and point of view had been very helpful as they navigated the acculturation process.

### ***Newcomer Mothers' Adjustment to Living in Canada***

Nine of the newcomer mothers described their difficulties with adjusting to living in Canada. Language played an important role in their adjustment in ways ranging from an inability to speak any English to striving to understand Canadian slang. Those who arrived without any knowledge of English had experienced intense emotions related to the need to communicate. Melanie explained, "When I was here and then I tried to speak, my tummy is like biting me to talk, but I can't speak". Two of the mothers said that although they were able to carry on a conversation in English, they still felt embarrassed or afraid to speak English with strangers or people from their community. "Sometimes it's really embarrassing if you're talking to a fellow [ethnicity] and your grammar isn't good in English" (Marley). Eight of the mothers described a feeling of not belonging in Canada when they first arrived. Three mothers became isolated and depressed. "I started my English classes with [agency name]. I was kind of isolated. I was home and didn't know what to do" (Sue). A few mothers described their difficulties making medical appointments. Because they needed an interpreter, they had to schedule appointments that could accommodate an additional person. They also felt inadequate, a feeling that intensified when scheduling appointments for their children. Although many of the mothers described difficulties adjusting in the early stages of immigrating to Canada, they felt that as their ability to communicate improved, so did their adjustment. In discussing friendships, eight of the mothers made a distinction between 'friends' and 'Canadian friends,' noting that it was difficult to relate to their Canadian counterparts. "If it

was my community it was very easy, but the Canadian it's harder cause also the standards are different and they have different views" (Idella). Gemma explained that, "You can be very well with people from different culture but you cannot be friends like you had before" (Gemma).

Nine of the newcomer mothers were unsatisfied with their current employment situation. They described difficulties entering their previous field of work and the frustration and helplessness they felt in their search for employment. Many had expected to find many job opportunities in Canada, but discovered that they would have to work in sectors outside of their field, in low-paying, unstable jobs well below their skill level. Although many of the mothers described feelings of disappointment, discouragement and frustration with this situation, they also felt it was worth the sacrifice for their children's future. All of the mothers felt that it was important for them to fit into Canadian society because it would have an impact on their children's adjustment. As Jane explained, "I am raising my children here. I have to adjust."

Seven of the parents explained that having social supports was essential to their adjustment. Many described their community agency of choice as a place where they felt safe to learn and seek help. Two parents described their experience with their community agency of choice as life changing. Melanie explained, "They understand other people feeling. They give opportunity for [me] to grow up. I said to God, 'God bless them to help me to come this.'"

### ***Newcomer Mothers' Perceptions of Their Children's Adjustment to Living in Canada.***

Eight of the newcomer mothers described their children's adjustment as easy and fast. Their children had made friendships and learned to speak English quickly. As Jane described, "Yes, very fast, they speak English. They don't want to speak my language. They adjust to speaking with friend. They make friends fast." However, two of the mothers indicated that their children had struggled with learning to speak English, and had become upset and frustrated because they could not communicate with other children. "I know that he was frustrated, he was really sometimes

screaming. ....I think it was because of language adjustment” (Idella). Some children struggled with fitting in at their schools or daycares because they were unable to communicate with other children. “Because before he doesn’t know how to say, ‘Sit down’ in English so he’ll tell them in (native language) and they don’t really understand him” (Shirley).

One mother explained that her child struggled with differences in rules between his Canadian daycare here and his daycare in his native country. “The different schools and daycares [in our native country] we are teaching our children, ‘If somebody hits you, just hit back.’” In Canada it’s, ‘No, you not’ (Idella). A few of the newcomer mothers described their children’s struggles with adjusting to Canadian foods while others described their difficulties with sending traditional foods to school with their children.

Okay, so food. Sometimes he’ll say, “Don’t give me that for school” and then he’ll say, “Okay, this one is good for school.” So he’s . . . they are more aware that we have different food and culture. He won’t eat it at school, but he’ll eat it at home (Sue).

Four of the participants remarked that being a supportive and understanding parent had helped their children’s adjustment. They viewed being supportive as taking the time to see the world through their children’s eyes and understanding their perspectives.

I saw my kid need me. She have hard time at school. So I put myself in her, like I look, I see through her eyes and I said, “Oh yeah, this is hard even for her. As a kid it’s hard for them too.” So I changed myself the things I do to help her. This is PD you know?” (Hana)

Another mother described helping her child by using open communication, that is, talking with her child about their situation and being open and honest. She explained that her child had not been aware that they were struggling together, and that it had made a difference for her child to know they were experiencing the same thoughts and feelings.

### ***Newcomer Mothers’ Perceptions of the Acculturation Gap***

All but one newcomer mother perceived a large difference between their adjustment and their children's adjustment. Most noted that their children were able to learn English more quickly than they could because their children only had to worry about playing. "He doesn't have the responsibility for all the family so he doesn't need to find a job" (Idella). One mother explained that although she and her children were learning to speak English at the same time, her children learned more quickly than she did. Seven of the mothers noted that their children had helped them with their English studies. For example, Melanie said that, "I think sometimes she correct me. Sometimes words because she can speak very well than me" (Melanie). However, a few of the mothers described how conflict emerged from this situation. "Sometimes if she said to me and I don't understand what she mean so she say, 'You don't know mommy anything!'. So that time I feel guilty myself" (Melanie).

Four of the newcomer mothers emphasized the role of friendships in the greater speed with which their children had adjusted. "They have friends from school. They are Canadian and not from my community. I only have friends from my community" (Hana). A few of the mothers suggested that their children may be more accepting than they are, as children lack preconceptions about others.

I think because of the age, I think the age, as I said before, when we come in with what we think different is not right, different is not okay. And then the kids don't have that so they [learn] quickly and smoothly (Sue).

Two mothers indicated that they and their children were adjusting at the same rate. However, one mother predicted that her child would adjust much more quickly in the future. Shirley explained, "When he goes to school he'll adapt so fast that he'll learn."

All of the newcomer mothers indicated that they had a great desire for their children to retain a part of their native culture. Nine of the parents felt that their cultural customs, religious

beliefs and language were essential to maintain. Shirley explained, “Hopefully he still embraces his own language or food and culture.” Another mother explained that her community has difficulties with children not attending church.

Actually going to church every Sunday, we do that. I think most (ethnicity) I’ve been talking to, many (ethnicity) parents. They were saying that their children don’t come with them anymore, but good for me because I still have them (Marley).

All of the newcomer mothers explained that learning about PDEP has not changed their perceptions of the size of the acculturation gap, but felt that it has helped them to understand their children. For example, most of the mothers believed that it was inevitable that their children would learn to speak and understand English more quickly than they would. However, by understanding their children’s needs, thoughts and feelings, they felt better prepared to problem solve and communicate with their children, which fostered a positive relationship between them. Some mothers felt that learning about child development had provided them with opportunities to help their children. “I think PD has helped a lot. It helped me to know how to help my kids. I know now how they grow, how they learn things” (Jane).

Nine of the newcomer mothers viewed their children differently after attending the PDEP program; they now recognized that their children’s behaviours were not related to disobedience. For example, Sue explained she had perceived her child’s acceptance of Canadian foods and rejection of their traditional foods was rude and hurtful. After problem solving, she realized that her child liked eating Canadian food and was embarrassed to eat ethnic food around his friends.

When he didn’t want to eat (ethnic) food, only Canadian food, I was thinking he was disrespectful. But now after talking to him, and asking and listening to him, I understand that he just didn’t want to eat this in front of his friends. He still wanted to eat Canadian food a lot especially outside but he didn’t want to be embarrassed (Sue).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion**

This study explored the process of transition among ten newcomer mothers living in Winnipeg, Manitoba in terms of the meanings they assign to the concept of ‘discipline.’ Through one-on-one interviews, the mothers shared their lived experiences of making this transition, their thoughts about the meaning of discipline, and their perceptions of their relationships with their children and spouses.

This chapter presents a discussion of how the study’s findings answer the research questions. The findings are compared and contrasted with those of the broader literature. The relationship between themes that emerged in this study and concepts and theories from the literature are explored.

### **Discussion of the Research Findings**

#### ***The Meaning of Parenting***

Some of the mothers in this study used PDEP terms to describe their understanding of parenting in Canada, suggesting that they view the PDEP approach as typical Canadian parenting. For some of the mothers, the PDEP program was their first exposure to discussions of parenting in Canada, so it was likely influential in shaping their beliefs about parenting in their new country. Some of the mothers stated that it was important for them to acculturate into Canadian society because it would help their children to adapt successfully. They may believe that their children’s acculturative success depends to some degree on their ability to parent like Canadians. Are these mothers using the PDEP approach because they feel it will facilitate their children’s acculturation? Or are they embracing the approach because they feel that it is an effective way to parent their children, regardless of the parenting context?

There is evidence that positive parenting has an impact on newcomer children’s adjustment. Among Latino immigrant families, children whose parents communicate effectively and positively

and maintain healthy parent-child relationships show higher levels of social competence in problem solving skills and self-efficacy (Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010). A healthy parent-child relationship may also be a buffer against acculturative stress. Studies examining the effects of acculturation on adjustment and family relationships have found that the acculturation gap can have a negative impact on parent-child relationships (Dinh et al., 1994; Rick & Forward, 1992; Pasch et al., 2006). Conversely, maintaining healthy family relationships despite the presence of an acculturation gap between parents and children may have a significant impact on both the parent's and children's adjustment.

Many of the newcomer mothers in this study noted that they needed to keep their children safe in their native countries. This was also found in Wong, Tran, Schwing, Cao, Ho, and Nguyen's (2011) study, the parents were cautious about possible dangers in their children's environment. This was due to the presence of environmental and societal dangers. These dangers were seen to inhibit parents' ability to allow their children the freedom to explore their environment independently. However, many parents also noted that these dangers were no longer an issue because they lived in Canada. Could it be the case where newcomer mothers are still in the process of adapting to their new environment? Furthermore, their children are adapting to a culture which fosters independence and where environmental and societal dangers are not as apparent as they once were in their native country.

The loss of familial support was discussed among many of the women in this study. They explained that the support of extended family members was critical to the functioning of their families. The loss of this support had a significant impact on some of the mothers because it meant that they had to stay at home to care for their children without help or support. The loss of extended family support can have a significant impact on newcomer parents' acculturation experiences (Leidy, Guerra & Toro, 2010; Perreira, Chapman & Stein, 2006). For instance, in Perreira and

colleague's (2006) study in the United States also found that some parents believed it was difficult for them to parent their children alone without family support. Leidy and colleague's (2010) study in the United States found that parents were faced with challenges of balancing work and family. This study further suggested that "the loss of extended family connections and changes in the family dynamic may be among the most significant aspects of an immigrant parent's migration and acculturation experience (Leidy and colleagues, 2010)". The mothers interviewed in this study described the support they received from resource centres such as MNFRC as life-changing. These agencies enabled them to communicate with others, strengthened their confidence in searching for employment and helped them to build relationships outside of their homes. As a result of this support, they were better equipped to support their children's adjustment. There is evidence that social support has positive impacts on immigrants' acculturation stress and perceptions of their health (Finch and Vega, 2003).

### *A New Vision of Parenting*

Many of the newcomer mothers described changes in their parental practices after taking the PDEP program, including increased empathy, patience and understanding, and greater awareness of the importance of recognizing their children's thoughts and feelings. This finding is supported by a larger quantitative study of Canadian PDEP participants, in which 95% of mothers stated that the program had helped them better understand their children's feelings. Renzaho and Vignjevic's (2011) study on the impact of a parenting intervention in Australia among migrant and refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo and Burundi found that the parents in their study used more positive parenting practices in the dimensions of parental expectations, parental empathy towards children's needs, and awareness and knowledge of alternatives to corporal punishment, and parent-child family roles. The newcomer mothers in the present study indicated that the program provided them with opportunities to implement a new approach to parenting. More than

half of the mothers in this study observed that their relationships with their children had changed as a result of taking the PDEP program, in terms of improved communication and greater understanding of their children. Durrant and colleagues (2014) found that 99% of their sample of 321 Canadian parents believed that PDEP would help them to build stronger relationships with their children and 98% believed that it would improve parent-child communication. Wong and colleagues' (2011) study on a pilot parenting intervention delivered to Vietnamese American immigrant parents also found that parents understood the need for improvement in communication skills between parents and children. In the particular case of newcomer mothers, the need for understanding of their children's perspectives and for maintaining a strong relationship may be more acute due to their perceptions of an acculturation gap. These mothers may have previously drawn from own experiences as children to make assumptions about their children's experiences. Perhaps, after taking the PDEP program, they are now more likely to seek their children's views, rather than operating on prior assumptions, and to empathize more with their children. The PDEP program emphasizes collaborative problem solving which enables children to tell their own stories in their own words (Durrant, 2013). This process may be lessening newcomer mothers' perception of the acculturation gap, as they engage in two-way communication that encourages children to express their own points of view.

The majority of mothers in this study indicated that they have integrated the PDEP approach to varying degrees into their daily lives. While some mothers believe the PDEP approach is 'common sense,' others experienced challenges to implementing it. A few felt a conflict between the PDEP approach and their cultural traditions and found it difficult to find solutions. For instance, they explained that filial piety, the practice of unconditional obedience to elders, was difficult to incorporate into the PDEP approach, which encourages children's involvement in problem solving. Loh and colleagues (2011) found that the importance of obedience to adults is explicitly taught and

expected in Filipino families. Reconciling this traditional value with PDEP's emphasis on listening to and respecting children's perspectives could be very challenging for parents who have been taught to value obedience. It could be a struggle for these mothers to re-frame children's involvement in problem solving as fostering respect and strengthening the parent-child relationship.

### *Conflicting Notions of Parenting*

Intergenerational transmission of parenting is the process by which, intentionally or unintentionally, one generation psychologically influences the parenting attitudes and behaviours of the next (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992). Many of the participants in this study were undergoing a process of interrupting the intergenerational transmission of punishment. They recognized that their notions of discipline were initially based on their experiences as children. Although most noted that they had experienced corporal punishment, they had never approved of its use. However, many of these mothers did use punishments, such as yelling, time outs, and locking children into rooms, and some had struck their children at some time. It may be the case that the acculturation issues these mothers were facing had contributed to their use of punishment. Park (2001) found that greater levels of acculturation discrepancy and conflict were associated with a stronger endorsement of physical punishment.

It appears that their participation in PDEP helped to reduce these struggles and to reduce these mothers' use of punishment. They all noted that their understanding of discipline had changed as a result of taking the PDEP program and now included being a positive role model, understanding their child's development, and having realistic expectations. Previous research on PDEP indicates that most parents (97%) better understand their children's development after taking the program (Durrant et al., 2014). In the present study, many of the newcomer mothers stated that

understanding child development and temperament was pivotal to changing their understanding of discipline as it altered their expectations of their children.

### *Navigating the Acculturation Gap*

Most of the mothers in this study recognized the importance of their adaptation to life in Canada, and all indicated that they were adjusting more slowly than their children, in terms of understanding English, building friendships, and fitting into their social environments. The difference in English language comprehension between mothers and children was particularly significant to them. Costigan and Dokis (2006) found that language acquisition was the most common difference between parents' and children's acculturation levels. Many of the mothers in the present study felt that their acculturation process directly affected their children's acculturative process. While several studies (Lau et al., 2005; Pasch et al., 2006; Smokowski et al., 2008) have found that an acculturation gap between parent and child does not necessarily lead to family dissonance, these studies did not account for parental interventions such as parenting programs.

For some of the mothers in this study, the PDEP program had no effect on their perception of the acculturation gap. But most noted that their parenting confidence had increased. They felt better equipped to effectively communicate with and understand their children, and more confident in using problem solving skills. Many explained that they now understood the value of their own self-regulation and had changed the ways in which they approached difficult situations. These findings support those of Durrant and colleagues (2014), who found an increase in parental self-efficacy following participation in PDEP, and that 90% of their sample indicated that PDEP helped them to control their anger.

PDEP provides a framework for communication and conflict resolution that could be applied to all relationships. In this study, nearly all of the mothers reported that the teachings of the program had positive impacts on their family relationships beyond the parent-child

relationships. It may be the case that PDEP has a broad impact on communication throughout the family, but further research is needed to explore this possibility.

### *Implications of the Present Findings*

Although the struggle of newcomer mothers to raise their children in a new country is not a new topic, it is a complex one that merits additional investigation. The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exploring how newcomer mothers perceive parenting, discipline and the acculturation gap before and after taking a parenting program, and provides insight into how practitioners can provide effective support. The mothers in this study emphasized the substantial impact that loss of familial support had on their families' functioning. The study participants explained that support was vital to their acculturation. Their participation in PDEP had provided them with opportunities to meet other parents and discuss common concerns. For some, the opportunity to become a PDEP facilitator fostered further social interaction, expanded their social networks, and increased their confidence and employability. Many of the mothers in this study perceived opportunities to find employment in their fields were nonexistent. This finding highlights the need for professionals working with newcomer mothers to offer or refer newcomer parents to workshops and training sessions that can enhance their employability. Mentorship and role modelling are key ingredients in the development of interactional and negotiation skills.

A central finding of this study was that most mothers changed their parenting approach after taking the PDEP program and that their understanding of their children was enhanced. However, it is not clear that these changes are maintained over the long term. A large amount of material is covered during the eight-week program; retention of it over time may be a challenge for parents. Also, as children's needs change with their developmental stage, it could be helpful for practitioners to offer ongoing follow-up sessions to address the issues that parents are facing at different points along the developmental trajectory. Follow-up sessions also may help to maintain

family cohesion as family members acculturate to their new home at different rates and face unique challenges.

### *Limitations of the Present Study*

The experiences of the mothers who participated in this study cannot be generalized to all newcomer mothers. The present sample was small and the mothers were recruited from one agency in Winnipeg. It cannot be assumed that the participants were representative of the population of newcomers to Canada.

Given their struggles to learn English, it can be assumed that these mothers might have had difficulty understanding the interview questions and/or expressing their responses. I had prepared alternative wording of the questions and I used prompts to encourage participants to expand on their answers. However, some or all of the participants may have had difficulties understanding what I was asking, or expressing their thoughts in the depth or accuracy that would have been possible in their native languages. The study's methodology did not include interviews with the children. Therefore, the picture that emerged of their acculturation levels and experiences were based on their mothers' perceptions. As a result, the findings may not accurately or fully capture the children's perspectives.

Although the study was open to both mothers and fathers, only mothers volunteered to participate. Therefore, fathers' perspectives on parenting, acculturation and the acculturation gap were not obtained. Insight into fathers' experiences and views is critical to a full understanding of how newcomer families adjust and adapt.

As a member of the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting research team, I took steps to minimize participants' perceptions of my having power in this situation. However, it is possible that they may have answered the questions differently if the interviews had been conducted by a researcher who was independent of the PDEP program.

Six of the ten study participants were PDEP facilitators. The fact that they chose to become facilitators reflects that they feel positively toward the program. Being trained as facilitators also provided them with opportunities to work, develop skills, and be mentored. It is possible that they perceived their positions to be potentially threatened if they expressed negative views of the program. They also might have a vested interest in ensuring that the program receives positive reports.

### *Directions for Future Research*

An important direction for future research is the inclusion of children's perspectives on their acculturation experiences and their parents' adjustment. Including the child's perspective is essential to understanding the family as a whole. Many of the study participants recognized that they were speculating about how their children felt and that their speculations may be inaccurate. In order to fully understand the process of a family's acculturation and changes in parenting approaches, it is imperative that children's perspectives are obtained. This information will help practitioners to provide the support families need to address the acculturation gap.

Fathers also have a unique perspective on their families' experiences. Gaining insight through the father's lens is crucial in order to understand family dynamics and relationships, and how families cope with acculturation.

Many of the newcomer mothers indicated that we all "flip our lids". They noted that all parents both newcomer and Canadian, have responded emotionally and not rationally to conflicts within the family at one time or another. Gaining insight on the thoughts of newcomer parents about the similarities they have with Canadian parents is important.

The diversity of participants' cultural backgrounds permitted an exploration of the commonalities in their experiences across cultural contexts. It would also be useful to focus on specific cultural groups, to examine differences in their experiences and perceptions. The

information yielded by such a study would inform program developers as they create adaptations and/or customizations of programs for newcomer families.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored changes in newcomer mothers' understanding of 'discipline' after taking the PDEP program in Winnipeg. Although they did not indicate a change in their perspective on the size of the acculturation gap, they did indicate that the program had an impact on their relationships with their children. Unexpectedly, many also described changes in their relationships with their spouses.

The PDEP program was meant to help newcomer parents learn a new approach to parenting and also help them navigate through the process of acculturation. It appears that the newcomer parents in this study gained much more. They have stronger relationships with their children and spouses. Many gained employability skills and most built lasting friendships.

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## Appendix A

### Information Poster



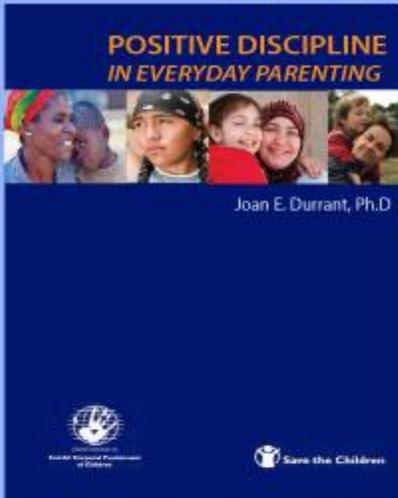
UNIVERSITY  
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### The Child Rearing Experiences of Newcomer Parents After Taking a Parent Program in Manitoba



Have you taken the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program?  
If so, I invite you to join my study!

**About the Study:**

This study will be exploring the process of change that newcomer parents go through as they learn about a new parenting approach.

**Who am I looking for:**  
I am inviting newcomer parents, who have lived in Canada for less than 5 years and have children under 18 years old.

**What you will be doing:**  
I will be asking you to do an interview with me for up to 1 hour.

During the interview I will ask you about your experiences as a newcomer parent, your thoughts about your child(ren)'s experiences as a newcomer and your thoughts about the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program and your thoughts on discipline.

After the interview you will be given \$20 as a thank you gift for your time.

**Your privacy:** Your answers will be completely private. They will only be seen or heard by Gia Ly the primary researcher.

This research study has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board.

Advisor's Name: Dr. Javier Mignone  
Phone number: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]@umanitoba.ca

**Are you interested?**

Please contact me Gia Ly, MSc (Candidate) at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]@umanitoba.ca

## Appendix B

### Letter of Request to Agencies

Gia Ly  
### Street Ave  
Winnipeg, MB  
A#B #C#

February 15, 2014

Name of Coordinator  
Agency Name  
Street Address  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3B 2K9

Dear (Name of Coordinator),

My name is Gia Ly and I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a study on the child rearing experiences of newcomer parents after taking a parenting program.

I am writing to you because I am seeking permission to place recruitment posters around the (Agency Name) centre. The recruitment poster will display the title, requirements and the duration of time needed, what the parents will be doing, along with contact information for further inquiry. I have enclosed a copy of the recruitment poster for your review. Additionally, I would like to request to have an electronic recruitment poster added to your monthly newsletter.

If you require any additional information you can contact me via email at [email@umanitoba.ca](mailto:email@umanitoba.ca).

Sincerely,

Gia Ly

## Appendix C

### Consent Form



Department of Family Social Sciences  
Faculty of Human Ecology

204 Human Ecology Building  
University of Manitoba,  
Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2,  
Canada  
Ph: 204.474.1234

### Parent Consent Form

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**Title of study:** The Child Raising Experiences of Newcomer Parents After Taking a Parenting Program in Manitoba

**Background:**

1. I am doing a study on the child rearing experiences of newcomer parents in Manitoba.
2. I would like to invite you to this study.
3. Joining the study is up to you. Even if you join, you can choose not to answer any questions. You can participate in the study and withdraw any of your information during or after your participation.
4. You can say yes or no and it will not change any services you might be receiving now or in the future.
5. You will receive compensation of \$20.00 for sharing your time and experiences. You will receive compensation even if you choose to withdraw in part or wholly from the study.
6. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact me (Gia Ly) or my advisor Dr. Javier Mignone by telephone or email indicating that you no longer wish to be a part of the study.

**What you will be asked to do:**

1. If you choose to join, I will be asking you to do an interview with me. The interview will take no longer than one hour.
2. Your answers will give information about your experiences as a newcomer parent, your thoughts about your child(ren)'s experiences as a newcomer and your thoughts on discipline.
3. If you agree below, the interview will be audio tape recorded with a Sony handheld audio tape recorder. The researcher will take the recording and transcribe the interview. Transcribing is when the researcher listens to the recorded interview and types what has been said in a

document. If you choose not to be recorded, the researcher will handwrite your answers on a note pad.

4. Your answers will be used to inform my Master's thesis and related academic publications such as posters and presentations. The findings will be used to help me understand the lived experiences of newcomer parents and their children, their adjustment to Canada, and their thoughts about discipline.
5. Your answers will be kept securely for a period of no longer than two years after the researcher has completed their Master's thesis on December 31, 2014. Therefore, the data will be destroyed before December 31, 2016.

**Your privacy:**

1. Your answers will be completely private.
2. They will only be seen or heard by Gia Ly the primary researcher.
3. The university may ask to see research records to make sure that I am doing the research properly. The university will not see your personal information.
4. When I write a report about what I find out from the study, I will not be using any names or personal information.

**Your rights:**

1. This study has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Committee.
2. If you join the study, all of your legal rights will be respected.
3. If the researcher, Gia Ly suspects any form of abuse, she has the legal responsibility to report the information to her professor Dr. Javier Mignone.
4. Child abuse is defined as "When a child's life, health or emotional well-being is put at risk by something a person does or fails to do, and when the action (or failure to act) causes a physical injury, could cause a permanent emotional disability or involves sexual activity (Government of Manitoba, 2014)".
5. The researcher's advisor will make the final decision about situations of child abuse and notify the authorities.
6. The researcher (Gia Ly) and the university will follow all legal and professional rules.

**Who to contact:**

1. If you have questions at any time during the study, feel free to ask.

2. You can contact Gia Ly at 204-XXX-XXXX or email@umanitoba.ca. You can also contact the advisor Dr. Javier Mignone at 204-XXX-XXXX or email@ad.umanitoba.ca.
3. If you cannot reach Gia Ly or Dr. Javier Mignone or want to talk to someone else, contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122 or Margaret\_bowman@umanitoba.ca.

**Giving your consent:**

If you agree to take part in the study, and if you understand what you will be asked to do, please sign below:

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you agree to be audiotape recorded, please check this box:

You will get a copy of this form to keep.

Please check on the yes or no below if you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study.

Yes \_\_\_ No\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Interview Guide Questions

In order to understand how newcomer parents view disciplinary norms in Canada two questions will be asked.

1. How would you describe parenting in Canada?

Probe: Do you believe that it is less or more strict than parenting in your native country?

This question may provide information on how newcomer parents view the parenting practices they see in Canada.

2. How would you describe parenting in your native country?

Probe: Are there differences or similarities between parenting in your native country and parenting in Canada?

Probe: Please tell me more, please give me some examples of what would be different? Probe:

Please tell me more, please give me some examples of what would be similar?

This question will allow the parent to reflect on the differences or similarities of parenting in Canada and their native country.

In order to understand how newcomer parents make the transition to the disciplinary approaches accepted in their new host country three questions will be asked.

1. Have you changed the way you have parented since you took PDEP?

Probe: Please tell me more. What are the challenges and opportunities? What has been hard or what has helped you?

Probe: What kind of changes have you made in your parenting?

Sub-probe: Do you have the same expectations from your child as you did before taking PDEP?

Probe: Please tell me about the reasons why you have decided to change?

This question and or probes may identify the rationale behind how and why newcomer parents make the transition to a different disciplinary approach. I may also identify the challenges and or opportunities they face in adapting to this approach.

2. How did you define discipline before you arrived in Canada? Probe: What did it mean to you?

This question may provide a basis for how newcomer parents described discipline before exposure to the host environment and to PDEP.

3. How do you define discipline now? What does the word discipline mean to you? Probe: What does it mean to you now?

Probe: How has it changed since you've arrived? Can you give me examples? What influenced the change?

The second part of this question will show whether the parent has changed their perspective on discipline. Probing further may encourage the parent to reveal the process of why and how they have changed their parenting approaches.

In order to understand how the process of adopting new disciplinary approaches affects newcomer parents' perceptions of the acculturation gap, three questions will be asked.

1. How well do you think you have adjusted to living in Canada? Probe: Do you feel that you fit in?

Have you made new friends since you've arrived to Canada? Do you have any hobbies or activities that you like to do?

Do you like your job?

Please give me an example of when you felt like you just fit in? Please give me an example of when you felt like you didn't fit in?

Probe: What has helped with your adjustment? Please give me examples?

This question will provide information on how parents view their acculturation process.

The term adjusted may be interchanged with the term adapted.

2. How well do you think your child has adjusted to living in Canada? Explain. Probe: Do you feel your child fits in?

Has your child made new friends since you've arrived in Canada? Does your child have any hobbies or sports that he/she likes to do? Does your child like to go to school?

Probe: What do you think has helped your child with their adjustment? Probe: What do you think might help more?

This question may provide information on how parents perceive their child's acculturation process.

3. Do you think there is a difference in your adjustment and your child's adjustment to living in Canada? Explain.

Probe: Do feel that your child is adjusting better than you are? Or do you feel you are adjusting better than your child is? Explain.

Probe: Do you feel that this difference between you and your child has changed since you have learned a new way to discipline? Explain.

This question may provide information on how parents view the acculturation gap. Further probing may reveal whether they feel their new approach to discipline has made an impact on the acculturation gap.