EXPLORING THE CORE PHENOMENA OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN EVERYDAY PARENTING PROGRAMS

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By
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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the lived experience of 9 parents, 8 of whom indicated that they were newcomers to Canada. All 9 participated in Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP), a parenting program based on the rights of the child, to determine what it is in the program that reduces their approval of child physical punishment. In a Canadian study on PDEP, it was found that 95% of 321 parents indicated a reduction in the approval of child physical punishment, and more than 80% believed that they would use physical punishment less often (Durrant, et al., 2014). The current study explored why this change occurred and how the program made a difference in the lives/attitudes of parents when deciding to use corporal punishment on their children.

The parents in the present study illustrated their experiences in the program through semi-structured interviews. Many of the same themes appeared across interviews demonstrating that there is something that makes a difference in their attitude toward the use of CPP and other forms of punishment after taking the PDEP Program. It was found that through the program, participants gained a sense of normalization and competence in their parenting. Both of these themes led to increased feelings of self-efficacy that led to the phenomenological essence of empowerment.

This study provides a deeper understanding of what influences parents when making the decision to use or not to use child physical punishment. This study is also expected to assist social workers, allied professionals and policy makers with a greater understanding of the support mechanisms parents need before and during child rearing.
Acknowledgments

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This thesis also would not be possible without the support of the agency that recruited parents who completed the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program as well as the parents who participated in this research. Thank you.

Last, I would like to acknowledge that I could not have done any of this work without my family. To my husband Dave, and my mom and step-dad that supported me by being with the kids or helping me financially, emotionally, and academically throughout the whole process. I also would like to express my love and gratitude to my dad and step-mom, mother-in-law and sister-in-law who all helped by watching our kids so that I could work on my thesis or go to class when Dave had to work. Last, thank you to family, friends and co-workers for cheering me on along the way!
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

- My mother, whose unwavering love and support has always been a source of strength and motivation for everything I do. Thank you for always believing in me and providing me with all the skills necessary to go as far as I can imagine.
- To my children, who inspire me every day to be a better mom, a better person and give me the strength to speak up about things that matter.
- To my husband, who believes I am smart and funny and has always given me the support that I need to fulfill my dreams.
- I also dedicate my thesis to all the families I have worked with in the past whose experiences have filled me with the passion necessary to continue this work.
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Personal Reflexivity

I am a mother of three children. When you find yourself in the position of having children, you realize there are no instructions or self-help books that will prepare you for the actual parenting. Essentially individuals are on their own when it comes to figuring out a parenting style - with the exception of receiving advice from one’s own parents, friends and other family members. Much of this advice does not come from formal education on early childhood growth and development but is more or less based on personal values which are influenced and shaped by the culture and society in which we live (Driekurs & Soltz, 1990; Hanson, 2011). How children are parented can greatly affect their social, emotional and intellectual outcomes (Crill-Russell, 2003; Mutusicky & Crill- Russell, 2009; Clinton, 2013; Grusec & Danyliuk, 2014; Ponzetti, 2016).

Universal parent education is important to me, not only because I am a parent who wants the best for my children, but also because I am a social worker and parent educator who believes that we all have a responsibility for the well-being of children as outlined in the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. Everyone should be allowed the best quality of life possible from birth until death. Good quality of life begins when human rights are realized to the fullest extent for all individuals, including children.

1.2 Conflict of interest

I currently work within an organization in which part of my role involves organizing PDEP trainings and training PDEP facilitators. It was therefore imperative that in order to prevent any perception of a conflict, I could not conduct the research with
any of the individuals I had worked with. For this reason, I chose a location, agency and participants removed from my home province.

I explained my relationship with PDEP in my ethics application to the University of Regina Ethics Review Board and provided assurance that the participants were not known to me prior to the research being undertaken. Once I was ready to approach the agency, I informed them of my work with PDEP and sought their help in seeking participants. The participant consent form also included information about my involvement with the PDEP program. I also verified in my ethics application that I have not provided services or support to any of the participants prior to the research and that none of the participants are friends or family.

1.3 Purpose of study

This study’s focus is on the experiences of parents whose attitudes changed regarding their use and their attitude towards child physical punishment after participating and completing a program entitled *Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP)*. The study refers to child corporal punishment as defined by the *Committee on the Rights of the Child*¹:

Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most corporal punishment involves hitting (‘smacking’, slapping’, ‘spanking’) children, with the hand or with an implement – whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting,

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¹ The *Committee on the Rights of the Child* is the body of 18 Independent experts that monitor the implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* by its State parties (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015)
pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, 
burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths 
out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices) (CRC/C/GC/8, 2006, 4).

The research was designed to answer the following question:

1) What was it about the PDEP program that changed the attitudes of the 
participants regarding child physical punishment? In other words, what was the 
phenomenon that changed their attitude?

1.4 Rationale

This research study focuses on the experiences of parents who participated in a 
parenting program entitled *Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting*. Current research 
on PDEP is through pre and post questionnaires, which only measure the change in 
attitude and not the reasons for the change. From preliminary data completed by the 
Positive Discipline team in 2014, we know 95% of 321 parents indicated that 
participating in PDEP reduced their approval of physical punishment and more than 80% 
believed that the program would help them to use it less often (Durrant, et al., 2014). 
However, this does not help us to understand why they have changed their attitude or 
behaviour.

Through qualitative interviews with nine participants, I explored what it is about this 
program that influenced the change in parents’ attitudes and use of child corporal 
punishment. Eight of the 9 participants described themselves as newcomers to Canada. 
Although this was not part of the selection criteria for the study, the Agency that assisted 
in the recruitment process works primarily with newcomers to Canada. The uniqueness 
of the group is discussed further throughout the thesis. This new knowledge may
contribute to the growing body of research supporting positive parenting approaches, which reject the use of corporal punishment as an effective parenting strategy (Boutwell et al., 2011; Durrant et al., 2014; Gershoff, 2002, 2013; Hecker et al., 2014; Lansford et al., 2014; Mackenback et al., 2014; MacKenzie et al., 2012, 2013; Maguire-Jack et al., 2012; Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007; Scott et al., 2013; Sheu et al., 2010; Tomodo et al., 2009; Vittrup & Holden, 2010; Zolotor et al., 2008; Zolotor, 2014).

There are a number of positive parenting programs, which are characterized by an approach that includes parental warmth, proactive teaching where parents carefully set limits and explain the reasons for their actions, inductive discipline (natural consequences), and positive involvement (Leidy, Uerra, & Toro, 2010).

Additionally, this research could potentially assist in the development and implementation of a national, universal parenting strategy that could include the repeal of section 43 in the Canadian Criminal Code. Furthermore, this research supports the promotion of educating parents on laws about corporal punishment in Canada and promotes the education of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). In the World Report on Violence Against Children, Professor Paolo Pinheiro (2006, p. 6) wrote:

There should be no more excuses. Member states must act now with urgency to fulfill their human rights obligations and other commitments to ensure protection from all forms of violence. While legal obligations lie with States, all sectors of society, all individuals, share the responsibility of condemning and preventing violence against children and responding to child victims. None of us can look children in the eye if we continue to approve or condone any form of violence against them.
1.5 Research problem

The PDEP program was “developed as a primary prevention program to reduce physical punishment of children” (Durrant et al., 2014). It was developed as a result of recommendations arising from the UN’s World Report on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006). The Report called for, “strengthening parenting skills, including…nonviolent forms of discipline, problem-solving skills, and the management of family conflicts” (p. 95). Save the Children, an international non-government organization that promotes children’s rights around the world, instigated the project with the assistance of Dr. Joan Durrant, from the University of Manitoba, and The Global Initiative to End all Forms of Corporal Punishment Against Children.

The PDEP program evolved from a book entitled, Positive Discipline: What it is and how to do it? (2007), commissioned by Save the Children in Southeast Asia. The book integrates research findings and children’s rights with a series of exercises that are designed to help parents understand the rationale for the approach to Positive Discipline, which, “is based on children’s rights to healthy development, protection from violence and participating in their learning” (Durrant, 2013, p. v). It is the only parenting program based on children’s rights. The book brought about requests for more training for front line staff to carry out with parent groups. From this, a facilitator model was developed and a facilitator’s manual was produced to support trainings. The book is now in its third edition with an updated name, Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (3rd ed.) and the program is being delivered in over 33 countries (Durrant et al., 2014).

The designers of the program created a pre and post questionnaire that individuals were asked to voluntarily participate in. Through this questionnaire, the
Positive Discipline team gathered quantitative data to measure parental attitudes towards child physical punishment and punishment in general, beliefs in typical parent-child conflict, self-efficacy and the impact of the program. The purpose of the study was to provide a preliminary assessment of the impact of PDEP on attitudes toward physical punishment, subjective norms regarding parent-child conflict, and self-efficacy, which according to the theory of planned behaviour, plays a critical role in changing behavior (Durrant et al., 2014). The Canadian study was comprised of 321 parents living in 14 cities in Canada who participated in the PDEP program from September 2012 to July 2013. Each participant was enrolled in one of 31 parent groups, led by 33 different facilitators (some programs were led by co-facilitators) (Durrant et al., 2014).

Planned behavior theory argues that three types of beliefs influence human behavior: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 2002). According to Ajzen (2002), behavioural beliefs are attitudes individuals have toward a certain behavior that may be positive or negative; normative beliefs are expectations that individuals have around a certain behavior; and control beliefs are about perceived self-efficacy or rather, the belief that one can accomplish a certain behavior. An example of how PDEP uses the planned behavior theory is that when parents believe that CPP is an effective parenting practice, parents are more likely to use CPP (Durrant, Ensom & Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004; Ateah & Durrant, 2005). When parents learn about the detrimental effects of CPP and that there are other parenting strategies, the parents believe less in the effectiveness of CPP. PDEP also uses this strategy with normative beliefs: when parents and caregivers do not understand the stages of child development they may have higher expectations of what is “normal
behavior” for a child of a certain age, which may affect how they discipline that child (Durrant, et al., 2004).

Another example of normative beliefs is from a study conducted by Ateah and Durrant (2005) who found that mothers who considered a child’s misdeed to be serious and intentional, and who feel angry in response, are more likely to react with CPP. Mothers, who interpret the child’s behaviour to be less serious and unintentional, do not respond in anger (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Last, an example of control beliefs is the finding that when parents are knowledgeable about child development they have more confidence in their parenting abilities (Crill-Russell, 2003).

The results from the Canadian study found that when participants were asked about their perceptions of the impact of the PDEP program, 95% of parents indicated a reduction in their approval of physical punishment, and more than 80% believed that they would use physical punishment less often (Durrant, et al., 2014). These findings suggest that, based on planned behavior theory, PDEP reduces individual’s approval of using corporal punishment on their children.

However, the Canadian PDEP study did not determine the reasons for the positive change of reducing their approval of CPP - just that positive changes happened. This lacuna is one of the primary objectives of my study. We now know Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting reduces parental approval of using corporal punishment on their children (Durrant et al., 2014), but why?
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Corporal punishment

Historically, Canada follows English common law, which has its roots in Roman law through the *ius commune*, a university taught mix of Roman and Canon law studied by English lawyers (McGillivray & Durrant, 2012). English common law supported corporal punishment as recorded in Bracton’s *Laws and Customs of England* (c. 1210-1268) as, “… whippings, which are not punishable if imposed by a Master or parent (unless they are immoderate) since they are taken to be inflicted to correct not injure, but are punished when one is struck in anger by a stranger” (Bracton Online, 2016, p. 299).

In addition to permitting parents and teachers to “correct” children with corporal punishment, English common law also allowed the use of corporal punishment by husbands against wives, “by masters against apprentices, guards against their prisoners, and captains against their crewmembers” (Turner, 2002, pp. 17-18).

The right to inflict corporal punishment on specific members of society was codified into Canada’s Criminal Code (CCC) in 1892. The 1892 Code, under the heading of “Protection of Persons in Authority”, permitted the use of corporal punishment on sailors, apprentices, prisoners and children (Watkinson, 2009 (b)). From the right of masters to use corporal punishment against apprentices was removed in 1955, the corporal punishment of criminals by whipping was removed in 1972 and the use of corporal punishment of sailors was removed in 2001 (Turner, 2002; Watkinson, 2009(b)). However, section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada today provides parents with a defense when they use physical punishment on their child. It states:

Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is
justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances (R.S., c. C-34, s. 43).

Historically, in Canada, physical punishment was only debated in the context of its use in the educational system. While physical punishment in schools was questioned, what happened in the home was under parental authority and not to be questioned (McGillvray & Milne, 2011). School boards were to insure that teachers did not exceed the standard of a “judicious parent” (McGillvray & Milne, 2011, p.101). Starting in 1973, British Columbia was the first to amend their Education Act by prohibiting physical punishment in schools (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). Many other provinces and territories followed suit and today all but two provinces, Manitoba and Alberta, have prohibited physical punishment in the schools (McGillvray & Milne, 2011).

Although corporal punishment in the education system changed, section 43 of the CCC continued to provide protection to teachers who used corporal punishment on their students until 2004. Parents in Canada are still protected when they use child physical punishment, despite many attempts at repeal.

2.2 Convention on the Rights of the Child

During the time of provincial and territorial reform of the educational system, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. Ten months later, in September 1990, the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (See Appendix A) came into force. The CRC has four guiding principles: the best interests of the child; survival and development; participation; and non-discrimination (Government of Canada, 2004). The purpose of the CRC is to protect
children from discrimination and affirm their inherent dignity and equal rights while realizing children have specific needs and vulnerabilities that are unique to them (UNICEF, 2014).

Those countries that pledged themselves to abide by the provisions of the CRC now have a legally binding obligation to ensure that their domestic laws and other relevant administrative arrangements satisfy its requirements (Briefings in Medical Ethics, 1991; Watkinson & Rock, 2016). Canada signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, 3). This raises the question as to whether Canada is living up to the promise of the CRC since it still provides protection to parents who use CPP through the defense of section 43 in the CCC. Article 19 of the CRC states that:

States parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989)

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child interprets this article to include a child’s right to be free from physical punishment. The Committee is tasked with reviewing each country’s record in regards to how well they are doing in upholding the rights of children. Since the inception of the CRC, Canada has been reviewed 3 times. Canada was first reviewed in 1995. At the time, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commented specifically on child physical punishment and recommended in their
Concluding Observations that “in light of the provisions set out in articles 3 and 19 of the Convention (See Appendix A), the Committee recommends that the physical punishment of children in families be prohibited” (CRC/C/15/Add. 37, 1995, p. 4). Furthermore, in 2003 the Committee stated that:

The Committee is deeply concerned that the State party has not enacted legislation explicitly prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment and has taken no action to remove section 43 of the Criminal Code, which allows corporal punishment…The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legislation to remove the existing authorization of the use of “reasonable force” in disciplining children and explicitly prohibit all forms of violence against children, however light, within the family, in schools and in other institutions where children may be placed (CRC/C/15/Add.215, p. 7-8).

In 2006, the World Report on Violence Against Children, the first comprehensive global study of violence against children, was released by the United Nations (Pinheiro, 2006). The report concluded that a large proportion of children in every society experience significant violence in their homes. The key message of the report was that “no violence against children is justifiable, and all violence against children is preventable” (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 3). The study called for the elimination of physical and other humiliating punishment of children, as well as support for parents in learning non-violent approaches to raising children (Pinheiro, 2006).

In response to the report, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child wrote a General Comment specifically on child physical punishment, known as General Comment Number 8. The Committee felt it necessary to, “highlight the obligation of all
State parties to move quickly to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment and all other cruel or degrading forms of punishment of children” (CRC/C/GC/8, 2006, p. 3). Furthermore, the Committee stated that corporal punishment is a violation of children’s rights.

In 2011, the Committee released another General Comment (General Comment 13) addressing all member states who ratified the Convention, especially in reference to article 19. This was due to the United Nations World Report on Violence Against Children (2006) discovering that the, “extent and intensity of violence exerted on children is alarming” (CRC/C/GC/13, 2011, p. 3). General Comment 13 specifically directed state parties to implement the recommendations outlined in the World Report on Violence Against Children “without delay” (CRC/C/GC/13, 2011, p. 5).

In 2012, the Committee further stated to Canada that, “the Committee is gravely concerned that corporal punishment is condoned by law in the State party under section 43 of the Criminal Code” (CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, 2012, p. 9). Additionally, the Committee noted, “with regret, that the 2004 Supreme Court decision, Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General) (hereinafter referred to as Canadian Foundation), while stipulating that corporal punishment is only justified in cases of ‘minor corrective force of a transitory and trifling nature’, upheld the law” (CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, 2012, p. 9).

When it comes to corporal punishment, Canada has had a contentious relationship with the UN over children’s rights, even though Canada was a leader in ratifying the Convention 25 years ago (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). Canada still holds on to a hierarchical view that children’s rights are second-class to their parents when it
comes to physical punishment (Watkinson, 1999; Watkinson, 2012). Ife (2012) explains that, “in earlier times, the child was regarded as the ‘property’ of his or her parents, and there was no legitimacy for others to intervene to protect the child against physical, sexual or emotional abuse” (p. 78). While this view has shifted somewhat, there still remains a strong belief that the treatment of children is the responsibility of the parents and that others have no business in determining how the child shall or shall not be treated in the home (Ife, 2012). The family is still seen as a private entity that should not be the object of “public scrutiny or government interference” (Smith & Durrant, 2011). This is supported by our Supreme Court’s decision on the use and legitimacy of corporal punishment in Canada (Canadian Foundation, 2004; McGillivray and Milne, 2011; McGillivray and Durrant, 2012; Watkinson, 2006; Watkinson 2013).

2.3 Charter Challenge

Currently in Canada, corporal punishment of children is justified through section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada (CCC) (1985). It is used as a defense for parents and people standing in the place of parents who use physical force on a child.

The erosion of the reach of section 43 started in 1973 with the success of school boards prohibiting corporal punishment in many jurisdictions. Soon after, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was promoted at the New York Summit for Children in 1990. The Canadian Prime Minister at the time, Brian Mulroney, was the co-chair of the 1990 New York World Summit for Children (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). Canada then ratified the Convention in 1991.

Two years later, in 1993, the Federal Justice Minister, Kim Campbell, proposed Bill C-126 recommending the repeal of section 43 (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). Later
that same year, Brian Mulroney stepped down as Prime Minister and Kim Campbell replaced him. Section 43 was removed from the repeal bill by her successor, Justice Minister Gilles Blais (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). Seven more repeal bills were made from 1994 to 2001 with no success (McGillivray & Milne, 2011).

However, in 1995, the Federal Court Challenges program, which funded legal action for equality rights, granted funds to challenge section 43 to Ailsa Watkinson, now a Professor of Social Work at the University of Regina (McGillivray & Milne, 2011; Watkinson, 2009). Ailsa Watkinson chose the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth, and the Law (herein referred to as the Foundation) to take the case forward due to their expertise in equality rights cases affecting children and youth (Watkinson, 2009).

In 1999, the Foundation filed a constitutional challenge to section 43 in the Ontario Superior Court (McGillivray & Durrant, 2012). The Foundation argued that section 43 violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it discriminates against children based on age; violates a child’s right to physical security; and supports cruel and unusual punishment (Canadian Foundation, 2004; Trocmé, Durrant, Ensom, & Marwah, 2004; Watkinson, 2006; Watkinson, 2009). The Foundation additionally argued that section 43 went against Canada’s obligations under Articles 3, 18, 19, and 28 of the CRC (See Appendix A) (Canadian Foundation, 2004; McGillivray and Milne, 2011). The Ontario Superior Court did not uphold the constitutional challenge, which was then appealed to the Ontario Court of Appeal in 2001 (McGillivray & Milne, 2011). The Court of Appeal agreed with the lower court and once again the decision was appealed, this time to the Supreme Court of Canada (Watkinson, 2009 (b)).

On January 30, 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on the constitutional
challenge to this law (Canadian Foundation, 2004). In a six to three decision, the Supreme Court upheld section 43 of the *Canadian Criminal Code* (Canadian Foundation, 2004; McGillivray & Durrant, 2012; Watkinson, 2006). However, new legal limits on the definition of “reasonable force” were set. The following actions are considered unreasonable and therefore not protected by section 43:

- Corporal punishment of children less than two years of age because it is harmful to them and has no corrective value given the cognitive limitations of young children.
- Corporal punishment of teenagers because it can induce aggressive or antisocial behaviour.
- Corporal punishment using objects, such as rulers or belts, is physically and emotionally harmful.
- Corporal punishment that involves slaps or blows to the head.
- Degrading, inhumane, or harmful conduct is not protected.
- Conduct stemming from the caregiver’s frustration, loss of temper or abusive personality (Canadian Foundation, 2004).

Further, the Supreme Court granted that it is reasonable for parents to use corporal punishment as long as it does not exceed what is considered ‘trifling and transitory’ therefore posing no reasonable risk of harm (Canadian Foundation, 2004). The Supreme Court also ruled that teachers are able to restrain a child to remove them from a classroom or secure compliance with instructions, but they cannot use corporal punishment (Canadian Foundation, 2004).

The Supreme Court decision was widely criticized by children’s rights advocates across Canada (Durrant & Ensom, 2004; McGillivray & Milne, 2011; McGillivray &
Durrant, 2012; Watkinson, 2006; 2009(a); 2009 (b); 2013). Twelve years later, the Government of Canada has not amended section 43 of the CCC nor has it widely promoted a public education campaign against corporal punishment as referenced by the Supreme Court (McGillivray & Milne, 2011).

The Supreme Court stated in the Canadian Foundation case that, “we know that the government has adopted a program designed to educate parents and caregivers on the potentially negative effects of using corporal punishment against children” (Canadian Foundation, 2004, p. 44). The program the Supreme Court (2004) was referring to the ‘Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program’. It is designed for parents of children ages 0-5 to meet the needs of parents who are one or more of the following: young; socially and/or geographically isolated; have a low-income; and limited formal education. ‘Nobody’s Perfect’ was created by Health Canada and the Atlantic Provinces and then expanded to the rest of Canada in 1987. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) now owns the ‘Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program’, but the provinces and territories deliver it across Canada through various funders. According to a Nobody’s Perfect pamphlet, released by PHAC in 2007, the Canadian Foundation (2004) cited, “Nobody’s Perfect as an example of a successful federal initiative that promotes the use of non-physical forms of discipline and positive parenting” (p. 6).

PHAC (2007) subsequently created two other supplemental resources, “What’s wrong with spanking?” pamphlet co-authored by Joan Durrant with the Department of Justice and Health Canada (2004) and a booklet entitled “Feelings: Responding to Your Child’s Feelings” by PHAC and the Department of Justice Canada (2005) (p. 6). Both were intended to educate parents about the negative impact corporal punishment has on
children. Regardless of Nobody’s Perfect being a successful, nationally recognized, and evaluated program, it is limited to age specific families of children 0-5 and those who are less likely to access a parenting program (PHAC, 2007). Consequently, this means that many parents and caregivers do not have access to this initiative because they would not fall under the target groups. Conversely, Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) is a non-targeted parenting program covering birth to early adulthood that is based on children’s rights. PDEP will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

2.4 Research on Corporal Punishment

Regardless of whether corporal punishment is a legal issue under law or an unjustifiable act as identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, we now know - through decades of research - that corporal punishment is not good for children. In 2002, Elizabeth Gershoff completed a meta-analyses of 88 studies over the previous 62 years that examined the effects of all forms of child physical punishment. She concluded that parental corporal punishment is associated significantly with a range of negative impacts. Some of these impacts include short and long-term effects on externalizing behaviours (aggression), internalizing behaviours (mental health), brain development, physical abuse and impaired parent-child relationships.

In all 27 of the relevant studies in Gershoff’s 2002 meta-analysis, she found that childhood aggression was associated with corporal punishment. Meaning, when parents use corporal punishment their children can become more aggressive. Gershoff (2002) also found that physical punishment predicted higher levels of delinquency and antisocial behaviour. Subsequent research has also found similar correlations between corporal punishment and increased negative externalization behaviours such as childhood

The use of corporal punishment on children has also been associated with increased emotional and behavioural problems (Lansford et al., 2014; Mackenback, Ringoot, vander Ende, Verhulst, & Jaddoe, 2014; Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007; Scott, Lewsey, Thompson, & Wilson, 2013). Gershoff (2002) identified an increase in poorer mental health when physical punishment was used. Boutwell et al. (2011) suggest that, “when protective relationships do not exist, exposure to stress in the form of violence can disrupt the developing nervous and immune systems, leading to greater susceptibility to physical and mental health problems” (p. 5).

Corporal punishment is also associated with poorer parent-child relationships (Gershoff, 2002, 2013). In a study on children, 6-10 years of age, researchers found that 70% of 108 children interviewed said CP would teach children to be afraid of their parents and 60% of 108 indicated that children would likely forget about the reasons for being spanked (Vittrup & Holden, 2010). This is significant because even though they may forget why they were being spanked in the first place, they do not forget how their parents made them feel (Vittrup & Holden, 2010).

In addition, harsh corporal punishment (HCP) in childhood has actually been found to alter development in the brain (Sheu, Polcari, Anderson, & Teicher, 2010; Tomodo, Suzuki, Rabi, Shea, Polcari, & Teicher, 2009). Tomoda et al. (2009) found that adults who were exposed to harsh corporal punishment (HCP) as children had reduced
prefrontal cortical gray matter volume, which is part of the brain that plays a role in social
cognition and functional organization. The study suggests that HCP acts as a traumatic
stressor that can alter the development of the brain. In another study, Shea et al., (2010)
found significant associations between T2-RT measures, which are associated with
resting cerebral blood volume, in dopamine target regions and the use of drugs and
alcohol in those who had experienced HCP. Shea et al. (2010) argue that HCP “may
increase susceptibility to substance abuse by altering the developmental trajectory of the
ascending dopamine system” (p. 417).

Corporal punishment has been associated with higher rates of child injury and
reports of child maltreatment (Gershoff, 2002; Zolotar, 2014). Zolotor, Theodore, Cheng,
Berkoff, and Runyan (2008) found that parents who frequently spank and/or spank with
an object are more likely to report that they abused the child. The 2010 Canadian
Incidence Study conducted by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) (2010)
found that out of the 85,440 cases of substantiated child maltreatment in Canada, 20%
(17, 212) escalated from physical punishment (PHAC, 2010). Interestingly, no physical
harm was reported in 74% of the physical abuse cases that were substantiated, supporting
the idea that an injury does not have to occur for it to be an act of abuse (PHAC, 2010).
This may be surprising because people tend to believe that for something to be
considered abuse there needs to be some sort of lasting mark associated with it
(Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol, 2014).

Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016) have now updated Gershoff’s 2002 meta-
analysis asking different questions but using many of the same studies she had included
in her original 2002 study. This new study shows additional evidence from the past 12
years on the harmful effects of corporal punishment. The updated study addresses some of the criticisms Gershoff’s (2002) original study received. Her earlier research was criticized for including studies where parents used harsh punishment methods such as hitting children with objects (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Critics argued including harsh punishments in the study would lead others to believe that only severe methods of physical punishment are harmful (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016).

Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor’s (2016) main objective in the later meta-analysis was to determine whether spanking, on its own, had detrimental outcomes independent of harsh or abusive methods. They attempted this by utilizing peer-reviewed journals with the focus on parents exclusive use of spanking. Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016) found that spanking alone, which they describe as “hitting a child on their buttocks or extremities using an open hand” (p. 453) is associated with 13 out of 17 negative child outcomes similar to the negative outcomes associated with physical abuse (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Spanking was associated with higher levels of aggression, antisocial behaviors, externalizing problems, internalizing problems, mental health problems, and negative relationships with parents (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016) also found that spanking was significantly associated with lower moral internalization, lower cognitive abilities, and lower self-esteem. The authors also found that the more children are spanked the greater the risk they will be physically abused by their parents (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016).

The three outcomes in childhood that were not significantly associated with spanking were immediate defiance, child alcohol or substance abuse, and lower levels of self- regulation (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016)
explain that the findings for alcohol and drug abuse and lower levels of self-regulation could be due to the small sample size. The authors expected to find that spanking was associated with immediate defiance, since in Gershoff’s original study from 2002 that had been the finding (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). However, what they did find is that children are as likely to defy as comply with parents when they are spanked (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). The study also found that adults who were spanked as children are more likely to support spanking of children (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). This finding has been observed in previous research (Durrant & Ateah, 2005; Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Drogemueller, & Silver, 1985; Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991; Belsky, 1993; Milner & Dopke, 1997; Stith et al., 2014).

The prime limitation of this meta-analysis is that the authors were unable to causally link spanking with child outcomes. However, it was found that there is no evidence that spanking is associated with improved child behaviour and, in fact, spanking is associated with detrimental outcomes (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016).

2.5 Supports Towards Ending Corporal Punishment

Before and after the Supreme Court challenge, support was mobilized to prohibit corporal punishment and abolish section 43. The Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth (Durrant, J., Ensom, R., and Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004) was initiated by the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) in 2004 and developed in partnership with a national coalition of organizations. The purpose of the Joint Statement is three-fold: 1) to provide evidence of the negative effects of physical punishment on children’s development and its limited effectiveness in correcting or changing children’s behaviour; 2) to encourage parents and other caregivers
to use discipline that does not rely on physical punishment; and 3) to explore the implications of this evidence in relation to Canadian law and a child’s right to protection from physical assault (Ontario Public Health Association, 2004). Joan Durrant, a leading child psychologist on the effects of corporal punishment explains that, “physical punishment has been redefined as a developmental risk factor by leading organizations concerned with children’s health” (2008, p.55). Endorsements of the Joint Statement have been sought since its initial publication in April 2003. As of January 2012, 400 organizations across Canada and several notable individuals have approved this momentous report (Durrant & Ensom, 2012).

Not only are organizations behind the prohibition of corporal punishment but parents and the Canadian public are supporting the movement. A Canadian study found that 59% of mothers believed that spanking is harmful and 86% indicated that it is ineffective (Durrant, 2003). More recently, Bell & Romana (2012) found in their Canadian study of 818 non-parents that only 16.7% approved of spanking. However, in the same study, participants were equally divided in favour of upholding and removing section 43 (38.6%) and (39.5 %) respectively (Bell & Romano, 2012). If guidelines were to be developed so that parents were not prosecuted, the number of participants who agreed with removing section 43 went up to 45.9% and only 25.8% believed it should still be upheld (Bell & Romano, 2012).

Countries around the world are abolishing corporal punishment in all its forms. Sweden was the first country to prohibit child corporal punishment and, in 1979, initiated a law that called for all forms of violence against children to be prohibited (Janson, Långberg, & Svensson, 2011). Fifty countries have since followed Sweden’s
example in prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in all settings, including the home, schools and institutions (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, 2016). However, 80% of children around the world are still spanked or physically abused by family members regardless of the attempts of law reform and education (UNICEF, 2014).

The prevalence of child physical punishment is due, in part, to limited education on the effects of corporal punishment on children. And, as in the case of Canada, it is still legalized through section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada. Many other countries, as noted above, have prohibited its use, but lack of education on the use of alternate approaches for parents is of concern. More education needs to happen to alter parent’s beliefs that CPP is normal and effective (Lansford et al., 2015). States have to recognize that parents and children need education on child development and children’s rights as well as the damaging effects of CPP. This could be through education initiatives and parent programs as well as change laws and policies to have multiple levels of influence (Lansford et al., 2015).

2.6 Parent Education

Parent education is not a new practice and in fact, information was traditionally passed down from generation to generation (Ponzetti, 2016). However, formal parent education programs did not become popularized until the second half of the 20th century with the goal of helping “caregivers develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities they need to contribute to children’s healthy physical, emotional, social and cognitive development” (Ponzetti, 2016, p.4). Effective parent education programs have been linked to a variety of positive childhood outcomes such as decreased rates of child abuse
and neglect, and better physical, cognitive and emotional development (Crill-Russell, 2003; Chislett & Kennett, 2006; Matusicky & Crill-Russell, 2009; Durrant et al., 2014; Grusec & Danyliuk, 2014; Ponzetti, 2016). Effective parent education programs also have positive outcomes for parents, such as increased parental knowledge of child development and parenting skills, improved parent-child communication, and parent efficacy (Crill-Russell, 2003; Chislett & Kennett, 2006; Matusicky & Crill-Russell, 2009; Durrant et al., 2014; Grusec & Danyliuk, 2014; Ponzetti, 2016).

There are many evidence based parenting programs available to parents if one knows where to find them. The following are but a handful of what is considered to be “best practice” or rather have been shown to work in design and implementation (Ponzetti, 2016). These programs were also chosen based on what is in the literature and because they are considered positive parenting programs, which PDEP also falls under. Positive parenting can be described as an approach that includes parental warmth, proactive teaching where parents carefully set limits and explain the reasons for their actions, inductive discipline (natural consequences), and positive involvement (Leidy, Uerra, & Toro, 2010).

Parenting education programs, sometimes referred to as parent-training programs, often utilize social learning theory (rewards and punishment with the objective of modifying behaviour). Unlike the PDEP, they do not include children’s rights as a foundational pillar within their training program. The most common such parent programs are described below.

2.6.1 Nobody’s Perfect Parenting Program.

This program was mentioned earlier and has been endorsed by the Public Health
Agency of Canada. The goal of Nobody’s Perfect (NP) is “to improve participants’ capabilities to maintain and promote the health of their young children” (Kennett & Chislett, 2016, p. 294). Nobody’s Perfect is a national education and support program for parents who are young, single, socially and geographically isolated or who have limited formal education or income (PHAC). It is also based on adult education principles and the experiential learning cycle where parents learn problem-solving skills through a series of approximately 6-8 sessions that are group directed (Kennett & Chislett, 2007). Parents receive a certificate upon completion of the program. Furthermore, the program has been adapted for the use in other countries such as Japan and the Dominican Republic (Kennett & Chislett, 2016). Chile has adopted it as their national parenting program with notable success (Cordero, Pearson, Evans, Bedregal, Cornejo, Galasso, & Arriet, 2014).

Nobody’s Perfect has undergone several evaluations that have all indicated that, “NP participants increase their parenting knowledge, skills and confidence, utilize more community resources and supports, and feel less isolated” (Kennett & Chislett, 2007). Kennett and Chislett’s (2007) study found that parents who earned NP certificates demonstrated an increase in resourcefulness, warm/positive parent-child interactions, sense of parenting competence and satisfaction, and knowledge and use of community resources. An additional outcome was that the more sessions a parent attended the better their parenting resourcefulness and warm/positive parent-child interactions on completion and follow up. They also displayed less anger and punitive parenting at follow-up (Kennett & Chislett, 2007). In another study conducted by Kennett and Chislett (2012), they found that parents did much better when the groups of parents were
smaller in number (less than 15), and mixed by gender, custodial/non-custodial, skill level and life experience, than when they were in larger groups (15 or more) that was made up largely of a severely multi-stressed group. Last, Skrypnek and Charchun’s (2009) study found that a number a key changes in parent behaviour can be attributed to partaking in NP such as an increased use of positive discipline strategies, decreased use of punitive strategies, increase in parent coping skills, and problem solving. An increase in parent child interactions was a temporary effect, however, the frequency diminished over time (Skrypnek & Charchun, 2009). Many of the parents in this study expressed that being part of a group not only normalized parent issues but also helped them to gain social support from other parents (Skrypnek & Charchun, 2009).

Nobody’s Perfect and PDEP are actually quite complementary to one another. They are both Canadian; both programs focus on child development rather than behaviour modification; and both focus on an approach to parenting rather than telling parents what to do in any given situation or conflict. They also complement each other in that neither condones CPP, including spanking. However, there are a few differences. Nobody’s Perfect targets specific parent groups and focuses on the early years, ages 0-5 (Kennett & Chislett, 2007; Kennett & Chislett, 2016; PHAC). Conversely, PDEP is a universal program that does not target parents and covers infancy to young adulthood (Durrant, 2007). One of PDEP’s foundational pillars is children’s rights, which are highlighted in the program.

2.6.2 Triple P- Positive Parenting Program.

Sanders and Turner (2016) describe Triple P as a, “tiered multi-level system of parenting support designed as a population based strategy to enhance the knowledge,
skills and confidence of parents in the task of raising their children” (p. 226). The
principles of Triple P are a safe and engaging environment, a positive learning
environment, assertive and consistent discipline, realistic expectations, and taking care of
oneself as a parent (Sanders & Turner, 2016). Triple P does promote child development
and positive parenting, and explores parental expectations recognizing that it is often
parents who have unrealistic expectations who are at risk for abusing their children.
However, it does so through many behaviour modification approaches. Sanders and
Turner (2016) explain that, “Triple P teaches parents specific child management and
behaviour change strategies that are alternatives to coercive and ineffective discipline
practices such as shouting, threatening or using physical punishment” (p. 226).

Triple P is one of the most evaluated parenting interventions to date but has
conflicting results. In a study led by Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen and Day (2014), it was
found that there were significant effect sizes for improvements in child social, emotional,
and behavioural problems, and parenting practices. Contrary to this study, Children’s
Mental Health Research Quarterly (CMHRQ) (2015) found that both targeted and
universal Triple P programs did not significantly reduce the use of physical punishment
or significantly improve children’s outcomes. The CMHRQ (2015) did report that while
parenting skills and children’s behaviours did improve for some Triple P families,
working with a community nurse led to similar gains.

2.6.3 Incredible Years.

The Incredible Years Parent Series was originally developed for parents of
children ages 4-6 years old to reduce risk factors that led to negative outcomes for
children, such as, “ineffective parenting, harsh discipline, neglect and poor attachment,
parent isolation and lack of support and low involvement with daycare providers and teachers” (Webster-Stratton, 2016, p. 144). It has since evolved to include a BASIC program (tailored to developmental stages of baby, toddler, preschool and school age) and an ADVANCE program (for high risk populations) (Webster-Stratton, 2016). The Incredible Years is offered in a group setting with a variety of teaching tools such as videos that model effective parenting interactions with children; role playing; small group breakouts to behaviour plan and practice; and weekly home practice assignments (Webster-Stratton, 2016).

Incredible Years has also been extensively evaluated. In over fifty, randomized control group studies it was shown to improve parenting practices and children’s social and emotional behaviour (Webster-Stratton, 2016). In a review by CMHRQ (2015), parents who participated in the intervention Incredible Years program (ADVANCE) used less problematic discipline (e.g., spanking and prolonged exclusion); were less critical of their children; had increased use of positive discipline; paid more attention to their children by playing with them more; and showed more warmth towards their children (CMHRQ, 2015).

Incredible Years promotes positive parenting, but it is also a behavioral modification program. Webster-Stratton (2016) writes that, “during the role-plays parents apply behavioural and cognitive principles to situations that are specific to them” (p. 152). Some of the positive parenting approaches contradict what other positive parenting programs teach (e.g. NPP and PDEP) such as using rewards and time outs (CMHRQ, 2015).

The previous three parenting programs covered along with PDEP make up only a
fraction of what is out there for parents to choose from and there are also many barriers
to participating in a parenting program. Many of the programs require parents to seek
them out on their own and to possibly pay a fee. Alternatively, parents can be referred
which may contribute to the stigma of participating in a parenting program even though
it is increasingly recognized that “effective prevention and early intervention programs
promote children’s development” (Sanders & Turner, 2016, p. 225). Many parents who
are referred may be associated with targeted groups that exclude a large portion of
society that may otherwise need support; many parents may not fit into what is
considered a program’s targeted group.

Optimally parents would be provided with parenting support regardless of who
they are or where they come from. All parents need support. It is recognized in the
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 18.2 that:

For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present
Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal
guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall
ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of
children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) also proclaims that state parties take
all “social and educational measures” to “protect children from “violence” and “include
effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary
support for the child and for those who have the care of the child” (CRC, 1989, Article
19.1 and 19.2). As a ratifying nation, Canada has agreed to uphold the CRC (1989),
which includes providing parent and caregiver support so that they can achieve their
responsibilities as parents and caregivers. The message is clear: it is all our responsibility, not just parents, to ensure the well-being of our children.

2.7 Working with newcomers

The research described here recruited eight newcomers to Canada. This was not part of the criterion selection but came about because the agency (Herein referred to as The Agency) involved in recruiting participants for my study, specifically works with newcomers to Canada. The Agency’s involvement transpired out of their association with the PDEP program. The Agency offered PDEP on a regular basis in their family programs. Previous research has shown that immigrant families share several of the same risk factors for child maltreatment as non-immigrant families with the most frequently reported risk factor being high family stress (LeBrun, Hassan, Boivin, Fraser, Dufour, & Lavergne, 2015). LeBrun, Hassan, Boivin, Fraser, Dufour, and Lavergne (2015) argue that there is no evidence that immigrant and refugee children are at a higher risk for child maltreatment than non-immigrant or non-refugee children.

Out of the G8 countries, Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born people at 20.6% (Statistics Canada, 2016). Between 2006 and 2011, the approximate number of newcomers to Canada was 1,162,900 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Refugees account for approximately 10% of all newcomers to Canada (Schartz, 2015). This is significant for anyone who works with newcomers to Canada (immigrants and refugees) because they are one of the target groups that many parenting programs are funded to work with. This is because they are considered to be a population “at risk” (PHAC, 2007). Previous literature has shown parents “at risk” for CPP experience loneliness, isolation, poverty, and language barriers (Coohey, 1996; Gracia & Musitu, 2003; Stalker,
Maiter, & Alaggia, 2009). Depression and other mental health issues can place a parent at further risk for using CPP (Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Stalker, Maiter, & Alaggia, 2009).

Due to the fact newcomers are an identified targeted group (PHAC, 2007, 2016) for parenting programs, it is very important for practitioners in Canada to educate themselves on the risk and protective factors that affect child maltreatment and CPP. Knowledge of cultural practices is also very important while being cognizant to the fact that the, “goal to cultural learning is insight, not stereotype” (Lynch, 2011, p. 20). Hanson (2011) enlightens further that, “assumptions about an individual’s behaviour based on a cultural label or a stereotype may result in inaccurate, inappropriate, or harmful generalizations” (p. 15). It is important to note that, “although people of the same cultural background may share tendencies, not all members of the same group who share a common cultural background and/or history will behave in the same manner” (Hanson, 2011, p. 2). This is especially important when considering CPP because, “in all cultures, parental discipline methods range from useful and appropriate to abusive and unacceptable” (Stalker, Maiter, & Alaggia, 2009). Despite CPP being a common parenting practice throughout the world, newcomers and those who are minorities, encounter the child welfare system to a greater extent than those who do not fall into those categories (Stalker, Maiter & Alaggia, 2009).

Working with parents who are newcomers to Canada is a very rewarding and positive experience because of the interchange of invaluable and empowering information. This not only fosters cross-cultural competence in the service provider but also for the family the service provider is working with. Some of the recommendations
Stalker, Maiter, and Alaggia (2009) make in their study is that immigrants be provided with accessible information about the new culture as soon as possible after arriving and provide parents the opportunity to talk with other parents who have experienced similar struggles. Stalker, Maiter, and Alaggia (2009) as well as Hanson (2011) explain that front-line workers and service providers who are more aware and sensitive to the stressors immigrants face and have respect for cultural differences will be more effective when working with these families.

2.8 Positive Discipline

The parenting program, *Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting* (PDEP), was developed to meet the needs of educating parents around children’s rights and what is typical child development. The program was established in response to many of the activities that were occurring throughout the world around children’s rights and violence against children. The Positive Discipline approach has three primary objectives (Durrant, Barker, and Plateau, 2013):

1. To provide a valid and effective alternative to physical and emotional punishment.
2. To increase parents’ knowledge of children’s rights in a non-threatening way.
3. To provide concrete and constructive tools for resolving parent-child conflict.

The goals of these objectives are to: 1) reduce approval of physical punishment; 2) normalize parent-child conflict; and 3) strengthen parenting self-efficacy (Durrant et al., 2014). *Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting* was developed as a primary prevention program to reduce physical punishment of children. It grew out of an academic-non-government partnership between the University of Manitoba and Save the Children Thailand (Durrant, et al., 2014).
Positive discipline not only reduces the use of physical punishment but also can be the vehicle that educates parents on the CRC; educating the public on children’s rights is an obligation State parties agreed to fulfill upon ratifying the CRC. Positive discipline can also educate parents on child development, which many parents do not understand, and offers alternatives to physical punishment that help foster positive parent-child relationships. It is important to determine the factors that contribute to parents’ disapproval of physical punishment and what it is about this particular program that contributes to their belief that they will use it less frequently.

This is the crux of problem with corporal punishment in Canada. Canada’s Criminal Code and the Supreme Court condone corporal punishment yet rely on a parent’s intuition to not cross the line into abusing their children. Yet we know that in Canada, 75% of substantiated child abuse cases are those that have escalated from parental use of child physical punishment (PHAC, 2010). At the same time there is very little in programming for everyday parenting to safeguard against abuse.

This sets parents up for failure when they are not educated on the law, the rights of children, and child growth and development. However, it is the children who are really the ones affected by the lack of support for parents.
Chapter Three: Research Design

3.1 Worldview and theoretical framework

Lundy (2011) explains that, “our assumptions and beliefs form the lens through which we look to understand and respond to social and individual situations” (p. 83). I have a pragmatic view of the world, which includes the use of all qualitative research paradigms (Creswell, 2007). My analytical side views research as a series of logical steps (post positivist) but the social worker in me believes all research should have a purpose in order to have an action at the end that serves humanity (advocacy perspective). I believe in multiple perspectives of reality that reflect the social, historical and political experiences of the individuals involved, what the experience means to them and what, if anything, is to be done about it (constructionist or pragmatic). I also recognize that the life experience of an individual within a particular society shapes the interpretation of the meaning of the research and its outcomes (Creswell, 2007).

A structural and human rights approach to social work was used to inform this study. A structural social work approach is always concerned with power and oppression while connecting micro (individual and families) and macro (social change) practice; how the personal is political. Since structural social work is grounded in critical theory, a structural social worker would assume that social, political and economic activities can be oppressive (Moreau, 1990; Mullaly, 2007). This makes the individual more aware of the discrimination the people they work with face, whether it is because of race, sex, class, health, ability, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, or in this case, age (Moreau, 1990; Mullaly, 2007; Lundy, 2011; Ife, 2012). Therefore, a structural approach can be viewed as a practice that acknowledges the role of social structures in producing
and maintaining inequality, personal hardship and oppression while simultaneously seeking to change the social system and to empower personal change (Carniol, 1992; Ife, 2012; Lundy, 2011; Moreau, 1979, 1990; Mullaly 2007). Structural analysis fits within a human rights perspective (Ife, 2012; Lundy, 2011).

Ife (2012) explains that, “A human rights perspective… implies that, where there is a conflict, human rights have priority over other claims of rights” (p. 19). Human rights practice also requires us to recognize the structural causes of inequality and that they are linked with human rights abuse, denial, and oppression (Ife, 2012; Watkinson 2001). A human rights perspective implies that no one person’s rights can outweigh another person’s rights. Ife (2012) explains that, “a structural perspective links human rights practice with attempts not only to make the system work better but also to change the system to one more consistent with human rights principles” (p. 76).

Both structural and human rights perspectives are based on critical theory and socialist ideologies that value freedom and equality (Ife, 2012; Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007). Critical theory can help us make sense of the current social order and our place within it:

The whole point of critical theory is to redress a situation in which a group is experiencing deep but remedial suffering as a result of the way their lives are arranged. Its aims are to overturn these arrangements and to put into place another set in which people can relate and act in fuller, more satisfying ways. (Fay, 1987, p. 29)

Section 43 was codified into the *Criminal Code* in 1892 and reflects a 19th century belief that corporal punishment is an appropriate and necessary way to correct
children (McGillivray & Durrant, 2012). This was based on the ideology of the time that espoused the belief that unless you were a white male you were not a person (Edwards v. A.G. of Canada, 1930). In the words of Rudolf Dreikurs (1990), “our conviction that we are superior to our children stems from our cultural heritage: that people are inferior or superior according to their birth, their money, their sex or color, or their age and wisdom” (p. 8). The cultural heritage Dreikurs addresses is based on a patriarchal and Eurocentric ideology that is currently embedded into the policies and practices of our social institutions and laws (Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007). Consequently, patriarchal and Eurocentric ideology, continue to be reinforced, from a very young age to both males and females, because they are so deeply entrenched in our society (Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007). How we currently allow children to be treated, as ‘second class’ citizens, also stems from patriarchy and Eurocentrism and is based on the belief that children are not equal to adults and therefore should not be treated with the same dignity and respect (Watkinson & Rock, 2016).

Another challenge is changing the attitudes of those who support physical punishment is that they often feel that their own childhoods, their own parent’s behaviour and their parenting experiences are being criticized (Smith & Durrant, 2011). Lynch (2011) eloquently explains that it is, “only when we examine the values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour that are part of our own cultural identity can we distinguish truth from tradition” (pp. 23-24). We cannot parent children based on tradition alone. Traditions need to be questioned when they are not in line with human rights.

The goal of critical practice is to assist individuals to see their own oppression so they might engage in collective action that transforms society (Mulally, 2007; Salas, Sen,
& Segal, 2010). This too is the goal of PDEP; to bring knowledge to parents about healthy child development and children’s rights so that they may parent in a way that has positive outcomes for children. How societies understand children is fundamental to how children are treated (Smith & Durrant, 2011). With this knowledge parents can become advocates for policy change such as repealing s. 43 and implementing parenting education across sectors.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Phenomenology.

As noted earlier, 95% of 321 parents who participated in a PDEP program believed more strongly that parents should not use physical punishment on children and 80% agreed that PDEP would help them to use physical punishment less often (Durrant et al., 2014). What I wanted to explore further was the actual experience of participating in the PDEP program, specifically what happens to parents, enrolled in the program that might explain the attitudinal change (Durrant et al., 2014). For this reason, I utilized the methodology of phenomenology, “the study of lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Additionally, I was drawn to phenomenology because it resonates with my curiosity of the human experience and my continuous pursuit of knowledge. van Manen (1990) writes, “we gather other people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves” (p. 62). As a parent and a trainer of the PDEP program I wanted to learn about the experiences of others so that I can grow both personally and professionally.

De Freitas (2007) writes that, “phenomenology looks for the experiences the subjects live, through the senses, recollections of when and how the phenomena appear
to them through experience” (p. 9). These recollections are an important aspect of this research because there are many layers to the PDEP program that one can experience. In my quest to find “what is the difference that makes the difference,” I understood that there might be more than one part of the program that contributes to change. As a phenomenological researcher, I need to be open to whatever phenomenon is presented (Converse, 2012).

I had considered two other methodologies, namely narrative and grounded theory, but decided on interpretive phenomenology because this school of thought is grounded in the idea that researchers cannot remove themselves from the meanings of the text (Reiners, 2012). Due to my connection to the PDEP program I truly felt that I could not remove myself and thus, chose interpretive phenomenology.

Similar to phenomenology, narrative also begins with an “experience as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 54). However, the procedures consist of focusing on one or two individuals, gathering data through their stories and reporting on those stories and their meaning, it does not seek to find the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007). This is an important distinction as van Manen (1990) argues, “the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (p. 77).

Another methodology that I could have employed was grounded theory, a study that attempts “to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory” (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). In grounded theory, the inquirer generates an explanation or theory of a process, action or interaction shaped by a large number of participants who have experienced the process, action or interaction (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is
different from phenomenology in that phenomenology highlights the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals (Creswell, 2007).

There are two main schools of phenomenology, descriptive and interpretive. Edmund Husserl developed descriptive phenomenology and made it distinct by emphasizing, “a way of coming to know through the actual experience of a phenomenon with a goal of describing the experience of the phenomenon” (Converse, 2012, p. 29). Interpretive phenomenology, as developed by Heidegger, is based on the notion that all understanding is interpreted knowledge, even that of natural science (Converse, 2012). Heidegger developed interpretive phenomenology, also known as hermeneutic phenomenology, by studying being in the world rather than knowing the world (Reiners, 2012).

Descriptive phenomenology attempts to focus on the experiences of the participants by using bracketing in which the investigator sets aside their own experiences to take an unmarked perspective toward the phenomenon under examination (Creswell, 2007). van Manen (1990) questions how “one can put out of play everything one knows about an experience” (p. 47). van Manen (1990) suggests, “we should come to terms with our assumptions” so that they do not “creep back into our reflections” (p. 47). van Manen (1990) explains that it is better to be explicit about what we know and to use the “knowledge against itself” (p. 47). Converse (2012) also questions descriptive phenomenology, “because it is assumed that the researchers have the faculties to set aside their assumptions” (p. 32). The hermeneutic/interpretive approach embraces the philosophy that, “researchers are not detached observers; rather, they experience the phenomena they are studying as a first-hand witness” (Cherry, 2000, p. 50).
Interpretive phenomenology is more befitting this study because it is, “a branch of philosophy for which the human being and the world can only be understood based on their experiences, on their life context, by questioning themselves, the life world and their place within it” (de Freitas, 2007, p. 8). I interpret the world based on my ontological and epistemological view that even though we can share similar experiences we come to those experiences, and interpret them in different ways. van Manen writes that, “the phenomenologist knows that one’s experiences are also the possible experiences of others” (p. 54).

Phenomenology does not require the researcher to adopt a set of steps or rules. Keen (1975) writes, “…unlike other methodologies, phenomenology cannot be reduced to a ‘cookbook’ set of instructions. It is more an approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals” (p. 41). van Manen (1990) subscribes to the idea that hermeneutic phenomenology may be understood, not as a methodical pursuit, but as an interaction between six research activities or themes. The 6 themes are:

- Turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world.
- Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.
- Reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon.
- Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
- Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.
- Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Moustakas (1994) states, “the reflective-interpretive process includes not only a description of the experience as it appears in consciousness but also an analysis and
astute interpretation of the underlying conditions, historically and aesthetically, that account for the experience” (p.10). This interpretation of the process covers all the areas I am curious about when it comes to parents experiences with the PDEP program; that is what part of the program contributes to their experience and how did their life experience contribute to this transformation?

Hermeneutic phenomenology is critical action research. The process of phenomenological research “deepens our thought and therefore radicalizes thinking and the acting that flows from it” (van Manen, 1990, p. 154). van Manen (1990) proposes that phenomenology may lead us to become more “aware of aspects of human life…[that were once] glossed over or taken for granted” and “bring us to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action” (p. 154). van Manen (1990) suggests that one may engage in collective action: action against political, bureaucratic, or ideological structures; or personal action that may help specific challenges.

3.3 Recruitment

Recruitment for this research was accomplished through criterion sampling. Criterion sampling specifically includes participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), in this case, it was parents who had previously participated in the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) program and now believe more strongly than before that they do not support the use of physical punishment on children; and that PDEP would help them to use physical punishment less often (Durrant et al, 2014)
The criterion for participant selection was chosen as outlined by Moustakas (1994). This included identifying research participants who had experienced the phenomenon; were intensely interested in understanding its nature and meaning; were willing to participate in two 60-90 minute interviews (the first one being an initial interview and the second one as a follow up to validate the investigator’s findings); and who granted the investigator the right to tape-record the interview; and publish data in a dissertation and other publications.

For this study nine participants were recruited voluntarily from the same agency. All of the participants recruited for this study had participated in at least one PDEP program offered by The Agency. Eight of the nine participants were newcomers to Canada and their residency varied from recent immigrant status to residing in Canada for a number of decades.

Phenomenological research requires a smaller number of participants because of the vast amount of data collected in the interview process (Hycner, 1985). Sample size can range from 1-325 subjects according to Creswell (2007) with most studies containing about 10 individuals. According to Cherry (2000) a sample size of 25 or less is considered a good size when doing qualitative research. Giorgi (1985) explains that you rarely want one subject for phenomenological research because it would be very difficult to write what is essential to the phenomena. The more subjects there are, the more variation, which leads to a greater ability to see what is essential.

In order to recruit enough individuals from the same group criteria, the researcher sent out a letter to The Agency who offers PDEP in their programming, explaining the research and its objectives. One of the facilitators of the program within The Agency
assisted with the recruitment of the participants. The facilitator provided parents with the recruitment poster, which included the researcher’s email and telephone number so that participants could call directly or sign up with the facilitator. The facilitator also provided the particulars of the criterion sampling, the purpose of study, as well as details of the Participant Consent Form.

Once the participants volunteered, the facilitator provided the researcher with the list of names and interview times. The researcher met with the parents at the arranged location at a time that was convenient for them. The researcher provided parents with $5.00 Canadian dollars for transportation and a $10.00 grocery gift card for their participation costs as indicated in the recruitment poster. The Agency provided childcare.

Upon meeting with the participants individually, the researcher provided each parent with two printed copies of the consent form. The participants read through the form, and they all agreed to take part in the study. They signed both copies and gave one to the researcher and kept one for their records. The researcher also explained the follow-up procedure to them. The follow-up included the researcher providing the participants with a transcribed copy of the interview either through email or regular mail if they did not have an email address. Once they had time to look over their transcript, the participant emailed the researcher back with any alterations and edits. Following this, they had two weeks to contact the researcher to cancel participation. If they did not do so, the researcher used the information given in the current study. Not one participant dropped out of the current study.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Interview.
A typical method of data collection in phenomenology is in-depth, semi-structured interviews of up to 10 people (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This study had nine participants. According to Moustakas (1994) the “interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (p. 114). Moustakas (1994) recommends that the phenomenological interview take place in a relaxed atmosphere beginning with an informal conversation in order to build trust and for the participant to feel comfortable; hopefully in doing so, they will be honest and forthcoming in the interview.

The interviews took place at a time and location that was convenient for the participant. The location was also quiet and conducive to audio recording. The researcher was able to provide water, coffee, or tea and comfortable seating. The meeting and interviews included informal conversation, reading and signing the consent forms and the interviews.

van Manen (1990) contends that there are two very specific purposes to the phenomenological/hermeneutic interview: it may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon; and, the interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relationship with a partner (research participant) about the meaning of the experience (p. 66). van Manen (1990) proposes that the phenomenological interview cannot have “ready-made” questions but must focus on the fundamental question that prompted the research in the first place. This is to safeguard against any confusion around the research question and/or to limit the amount of non-informative material. Moustakas (1994) advises that the phenomenological
interviews have questions that are previously devised but maintain an informal process that is guided by the experiences of the participant. This suggests that the interview be semi-structured and that the investigator have some guiding questions that can be altered or replaced as the participant shares their experience (Dudley, 2005).

The purpose of my interviews was to explore what it is about PDEP that contributed to parental attitude change towards physical punishment. Keeping the fundamental question in the forefront and the semi-structured format in mind, the following questions made up my interview guide:

1) Tell me how you came to be in the PDEP program?

2) What about the experience, specifically changed your attitudes toward physical punishment and punishment in general? Or rather, did you experience an “aha” moment?

3) How did the experience affect significant others in your life such as your partner and children?

4) What thoughts have stood out for you during your experience with PDEP?

5) How did the experience affect you? What behavioural changes, regarding child discipline do you contribute to your experience with PDEP?

van Manen (1990) suggests that if the person being interviewed goes off topic or starts to generalize the experience, the investigator is to insert a question that turns the conversation back onto their experience: “Can you give an example?” or “What was that like?”

During the interview process the interviewees did not go off topic at all. However, much clarification was needed on both the researcher’s part and the
participants’ part due to language barriers. Terminology also was a limitation during the interview such as “aha” moment.

Subsequently, there was a follow-up for each individual where they were given a copy of their transcript to go over and revise if they felt they would like changes or retractions. The follow-up process varied over a few weeks/months depending on the individual’s and the researcher’s schedule. This was so that after the initial interview the researcher could go back to the participants and reflect on the interview transcripts with them. Both Hycner (1985) and van Manen (1990) write about the importance of reflecting with the participants, not only for a validity check (do the data accurately describe the phenomenon), but also to collaborate on deeper meanings and themes. Reflecting with participants is also referred to as member checking (Barusch et al., 2011).

Member checking is when the researcher has participants read their transcripts to comment on accuracy or omissions. In this case, participants were given copies of their transcript to read and edit. During the original interview the researcher told them that they would receive a copy via email or mail. Once they received their copy they had the opportunity to re-write or omit altogether some of their interview. Four of the nine participants made additions or clarifications to their interview transcripts.

3.4.2 Data storage.

Following the principles outlined in Creswell (2007), I handled data storage by backing up copies of interview audio files immediately onto my personal computer and backing up all the files to an external hard-drive once I returned to my home. I also
developed a list of the types of information gathered (audio recordings and transcriptions); protected the anonymity of participants by coding their names in the data; and uploaded data into an NVIVO program. My computer is password protected and locked away when not in use or files removed onto an external drive if the computer needs to be used for other means. Any files of the audio recordings and paper copies of transcriptions used were stored in my supervisor’s office in a locked cabinet once research ended.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2007) writes that, “regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports” (p. 141). As a registered social worker, it is also important that I have ethical safeguards in place when undertaking research as outlined in the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2005). Dudley (2005) suggests having the following standards in social work research: confidentiality, informed consent, monitoring the possible effects of the study on the participants and offering assistance (if necessary); involving research participants in decision making about the study and selecting researchers without a conflict of interest. I included in my consent form, and discussed at the beginning of the initial interview, a description of confidentiality. Confidentiality means that I will keep what they say confidential except for disclosure of abuse of either themselves or someone else, including children. I also asked them again in the follow-up meeting if they had any more questions regarding confidentiality.

Research commenced August 27, 2015 upon approval by the Research Ethics
Board (REB) at the University of Regina, of my research proposal. Following (REB) approval, an introduction letter (Appendix B), recruitment poster (Appendix C) and participant consent form (Appendix D) were sent to The Agency. The consent form covered the areas of informed consent, confidentiality, length of commitment, right to withdraw from study and any conflicts of interest (Moustakas, 1994). Individual interviews were used as the method of data collection (Appendix E). This is considered to be less intrusive than other approaches to data collection such as using participant’s journals as a method of analysis (Creswell, 2007).

van Manen (1990) cautions phenomenological researchers to be aware of the strengths and challenges of this method because it may have certain effects on the individuals involved, whether it is the researcher or the participants. van Manen (1990) writes, “phenomenological research is often itself a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact, and so on” (p. 163). I was conscious of maintaining a non-judgmental approach in order to minimize any possible negative effects of the interview on participants. If needed, I was prepared to offer support during and after the interview to the participant by offering debriefing services and connecting them to other community groups for support.

3.6 Limitations and Constraints

There are several limitations and constraints to this study that result in its inability to generalize the finding to a wider population. One limitation is that the present sample was recruited from one agency in a single Canadian city. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the results can be generalized to the entire population in Canada.
Another limitation was that English was, for quite a few participants, not their first language. This led to some difficulty understanding the meaning of the questions as well as expressing their answers. I did offer alternative words and prompts to encourage understanding. Those interviewed also provided the researcher with alternative words and prompts to heighten my understanding. Due to the language barrier between the researcher and participant, accuracy may be an issue. However, the follow-up procedures were put into place to help alleviate some of the constraints in language such as giving the participants an opportunity to read the interview transcripts and making any changes they saw fit. The participants may have also felt pressured to give the “right answers” due to most of them being newcomers to Canada, which I attempted to relieve at the beginning, starting with the consent form, by making it clear that my questions were to find out about their experience with the program.

Another limitation to the study is a gender bias towards female caregivers. Regardless of the recruitment being open to both mothers and fathers, it was only mothers who volunteered to be interviewed. Therefore, the experiences of fathers in the PDEP program may be different to those of mothers.

I have experience with the PDEP as a facilitator and trainer of the program and can share further insight into what is being said and how I interpret it. I did take steps to minimize participants perceptions of my relationship to the program in my letter to The Agency and in the consent form. However, they may have answered questions differently if a person independent of the program would have conducted the interview. I also took steps to limit my own bias by establishing rigour because I am so involved in the program, which I go through in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Data analysis

4.1 Analysis

Phenomenological analysis was utilized for the purposes of this study. This method was chosen as the most appropriate means of analysis because it seeks to find the essence of a phenomenon; in this case what is it about the program that contributes to parents changing their attitudes about CPP and punishment in general?

Dudley (2005) states that, “the overall purpose of qualitative methods is to search for new meaning or greater understanding of a phenomenon using inductive reasoning” (p. 271). Inductive reasoning begins with an observation. From the observation, patterns may emerge that develop into a hypothesis that can be further explored to find a conclusion or theory. This is different from deduction reasoning where one makes a hypothesis about something and then observes in order to confirm or refute the findings (Dudley, 2005). van Manen (1990) explains that phenomenological analysis is different from other content analysis in that phenomenological method does not specify beforehand what it wants to know from a text; it is rather “discovery oriented” and, “it wants to find out what a certain phenomenon means and how it is experienced” (p. 29). van Manen (1990) also subscribes to the idea that it is both easy and difficult; easy, in that we tend to see meaning in everything we do. It is difficult because the inquirer also has to reflect on the meaning, clarify that meaning, and explain what the meaning is of that lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological analysis has several approaches within the different schools of phenomenology. Nonetheless, they all describe the meaning of a particular experience through emergent themes found in the data (Reiners, 2012). As mentioned in chapter 3, I
utilized van Manen’s (1990) six themes for phenomenological research. The first theme is turning to a phenomenon that interests us, which in this case is the parenting program PDEP. The objective of PDEP is to decrease parental use of CPP. The second theme is to investigate the experience as we live it. As I know the program, through my experience of being a facilitator and trainer of the program, I was able to ask questions of the parents that would deepen my understanding about what it was about the PDEP program that affected their belief in CPP. The third theme calls on the researcher to reflect on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon. The following is a detailed account of how the analysis was conducted. I will discuss themes four through six later in the chapter.

Following each interview, the researcher saved the audio file onto a secured laptop. All interviews took place over three days. Each interview was transcribed verbatim using VLC media player, and a Microsoft Word document. Each document was then saved and labeled with a number to match the corresponding recording. A contracted typist, who signed the appropriate confidentiality form, in accordance with University of Regina protocol, accomplished half of the transcribing and the researcher transcribed the rest.

Once the interviews were transcribed they were then emailed or mailed to the participant for verification and confirmation purposes. This is referred to as member checking which contributes to the overall rigour of the study. Each participant had the opportunity to speak with the researcher about what they said and change, add or remove anything that they had said in the interview (Barusch, et al., 2011). Moustakas (1994) argues that the organization of data, methods, and procedures of phenomenological
analysis can only begin once the transcripts from the interviews are complete. Hence, when this process was complete, I was able to fully immerse myself in the reading and of the interview transcripts.

After each participant confirmed the transcripts, I read through each of them for the first time and wrote down ideas that materialized from the text. Smith and Osborne (2008) recommend using the left hand margin for annotating what is interesting and significant which was done throughout the entire analytical process. Once the first transcript has been read, Smith and Osborne (2008) recommend using the right hand margin to record sub-themes, which then become clusters of essential themes. It is during this time that I wrote down the sub-themes that I felt applied to each of the participant’s transcripts. The first transcript can be used to generate themes from subsequent transcripts or rather, set aside and start new themes upon reading the rest of the transcripts (Smith & Osborne, 2008). I applied the former, writing down words that came to mind during the first interview and deciphering whether they were compatible with the subsequent interviews.

Once this process was complete I uploaded the transcripts into NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software that is designed to organize and analyze data (www.qsrinternational.com, 2016). van Manen (1990) explains that there are three ways to categorize themes. The first approach is called the wholistic approach where the researcher looks at the text as whole and attempts to come up with a fundamental meaning or main significance. The second approach is called the selective or highlighting approach where the researcher reads the text several times and asks the question, “What statements or phrases seem particularly essential in revealing the
phenomenon or experience being described?” The researcher then highlights these statements. The last approach is the detailed or line-by-line approach, which is to look at every single sentence and ask what it reveals about the phenomenon. This process of finding essential themes is also known as phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

I used the wholistic approach to sort out what the essential themes were and then I used the selective or highlighting approach to break down the interviews into sub-themes in order to confirm my initial fundamental meanings. Two major essential themes emerged from a number of similar elements that ran across all nine interviews.

The essential themes that emerged from my review of the transcripts were: normalizing and competent. I identified that the parents in this group felt a sense of normalization when it came to parent-child conflict as well as feeling more competent in their parenting abilities. Once the wholistic approach was complete, I was able to read the transcripts for a second time and pull out the sub-themes that emerged using the selective approach (Figure 4.1). Through this reading, I was able to get a sense of what the commonalities were and what connected each interview to the research question. The sub-themes I continued to come across were: parent-child conflict is universal and normal; awareness around child development including brain development; learning about the ineffectiveness of punishment; being able to self-regulate (staying calm and control anger); being able to empathize with their children; and learning problem solving skills. It was these sub-themes that collapsed into two essential themes of normalization and competence, which were clearly identified but, although not surprising, as they are goals of what the PDEP program sets out to do.
Figure 4.1 Subthemes and Themes

Sub-themes

- Patience, Empathy and Problem solving, self-regulate
- Parent-child conflict Universal and normal
- Punishment is Ineffective
- Child and brain development

Themes

- Normalization
- Competent
I categorized each of these sub-themes into Nvivo as a node file. I then inserted significant statements from the interviews into the node files that best represented the sub-theme. Once I had the sub-themes sorted, I was able to go back to my initial fundamental meanings of normalization and competence and list them as my essential themes. Each sub-theme was able to fit the essential themes of normalization or competence. In the Nvivo program, I put the fundamental meanings or essential themes into files called sets. These sets became the essential themes for my qualitative study and how I came to find the essence of parents’ experiences in the PDEP program.

van Manen’s (1990) fourth theme of phenomenological research is describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting. I applied this theme by describing each sub-theme with parents’ descriptions of their experience. This was a difficult task as many of the sub-themes could mean two different things simultaneously or even be described as something else altogether (Figure 4.1.2.). Moustakas (1994) explains, “We can never exhaust completely our experience of things no matter how many times we reconsider them or view them” (p. 95). However, van Manen (1990) writes that, “Ultimately the concept of theme is rather irrelevant and may be considered simply as a means to get at the notion we are addressing. Themes give control and order to our research and writing” (p. 79). van Manen (1990) questions giving experiences themes because how others understand that experience depends on their understanding, or their conceptualization of the theme. In the current study, given the experience of the researcher, themes of normalization and competent may give the research structure but how others interpret the themes may be different from the researcher (van Manen, 1990).
Figure 4. Essential Themes

**Normalization**
- Parent-child conflict
- Punishment ineffective

**Competent**
- Empathy
- Problem solving

**Both**
- Child development and brain development
- Self-regulation
The fifth theme of van Manen’s (1990) phenomenological research is maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, which means choosing a phenomenon that deeply interests the researcher and identifying it as an, “experience humans live through.” The hope of this theme is that the researcher can maintain interest in the phenomenon for a long period of time and not get “side-tracked or engage in wishy-washy preconceptions” (van Manen, 1990, p. 33). I accomplished this task by choosing a phenomenon that I have a huge passion for and by grounding myself in my theoretical worldviews of structural social work and human rights. van Manen (1990) argues that, “human science research is critically oriented action research” (p. 154). He explains that, “to be oriented as researchers means that we do not separate theory from life, the public from the private” (p. 151).

Maintaining a strong and orientated pedagogical relation to the phenomenon applied to this research because of the strong and personal connection I have to the PDEP program. As a facilitator and trainer of the PDEP program and being a parent and a strong believer in social justice and human rights, I was really impassioned to explore the research question. I believe parents need support and that children have the right to be taken care of in an environment that respects their rights to security and well-being. Researching how a program might change the attitudes of parents who use CPP to not using CPP was an exciting prospect.

The last theme is balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole; how each part of the research connects to the whole (van Manen, 1990). I attempted to do this by considering the quality of the theme as suggested by van Manen (1990). He suggests that researchers determine the essential quality of a theme by
attempting to discover the qualities “that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomena could not be what it is” (p. 107). This is employed my using imaginative variation: Would this phenomenon still be the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon? Would PDEP be the same without the theme, normalization? Is the experience of normalization essential to the PDEP program? To test this theme I imagined if the experience of PDEP would still exist without the experience normalizing parent child conflict? Could one imagine being in PDEP and not feel the experience of normalization? Since it is a main objective of the program I would say that it is essential that a person experience normalization in the PDEP program (Durrant et al., 2014).

Next, I went through the same steps for competence. Competence means that one has gained the necessary ability, knowledge or skill to do something successfully. This too is essential to the PDEP experience as the program aims to enhance parent’s ability to solve problems and make educated, non-punitive decisions, rather than reactive, punitive decisions, based on information they have gained through the program (Durrant et al., 2014). As noted earlier, the program’s objectives are to:

1. To provide a valid and effective alternative to physical and emotional punishment.
2. To increase parents’ knowledge of children’s rights in a non-threatening way.
3. To provide concrete and constructive tools for resolving parent-child conflict.

The goals of these objectives are to: 1) reduce approval of physical punishment; 2) normalize parent-child conflict; and 3) strengthen parenting self-efficacy (Durrant et al., 2014).
4.2 Rigour

Determining reliability of interpretive methods comes with limitations because the researcher often has more background information that cannot be shared with the reader (Churchill, Lowery, McNally & Rao, 1998). In this case, I have experience with the PDEP program and can share further insight into what is being said and how I interpret it. I can negate some of the limitations by also following a set of criteria outlined by Lincoln (1995) as described in Barusch, Gringeri, and George (2011). The recommended strategies are:

● Prolonged engagement- where the researcher spends a sufficient amount of time with the interviewees, developing trust, relationships and an understanding of a variety of perspectives.

● Persistent observation- requires the researcher to identify elements within the experience that are most relevant and focus on them in detail.

● Triangulation- involves collecting data from multiple sources (interviews, observations, documents) to deepen understanding with the goal of combining multiple views to produce a stronger result.

● Peer debriefing- researchers disclose processes during the research to a disinterested peer to make obvious the researchers implicit biases.

● Negative case analysis- this is used to challenge emerging patterns rather than blindly accepting them.

● Member checking- having participants read their transcripts to comment on accuracy or omissions.

Other strategies include thick description, audit trail, and reflexivity. Thick
description is keeping a detailed account of the researcher’s work so that readers can judge the reliability of the methods used. An audit trail is a record of steps taken in the research process from beginning to end that includes why decisions were made by the researcher (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011). Reflexivity is a continuous process of self-reflection that researchers employ in order to reduce any bias concerning their actions, feelings and perceptions during the research process (Anderson 2008; Darawsheh, 2014). Studies show that reflexivity can be used both as a tool to guide the research process and to limit the bias of researchers and their subjective influence on the research (Jootun et al, 2009; McCabe & Holmes, 2009; Lambert et al, 2010). Darawsheh (2014) explains that, “Researchers who subscribe to the interpretive view of reflexivity concede that the subjective influence of researchers is inevitable, especially during data analysis” (p. 567). To establish rigour, I have engaged in the following strategies: member checking, reflexivity, thick description and an audit trail. It is recommended that qualitative researchers use at least two strategies for establishing rigour (Lincoln, 1995; Creswell, 2007; and Barusch et al., 2011).

Member checking was carried out after the initial interviews were held; participants received a personal copy of their transcript. This was so they could edit out any comments they did not want included, add more information that they left out during the interview, and verify the information that was transcribed. Reflexivity was conveyed throughout the research process. Reflexivity is important because it allows the researcher to recognize their social location and emotional response to the data (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). I am very closely connected to the research question because I am a facilitator and trainer of the PDEP program. I continuously questioned my interpretation
and decisions by reflecting on my assumptions. Although, as Giorgi (1985) points out, “meaning units exist only in relation to the attitude… of the researcher” (p. 15).

With each theme, I made decisions based on the participant’s confirmed accounts of the program and attempted to avoid bias by reading other research in the areas of parenting education, newcomers and CPP. Thick description and audit trail were also used during the research process. This was carried out by including a detailed account in my writing and keeping record of how and why I made decisions throughout the entire research process. Additionally, my academic supervisor and I went through each interview transcript together to pull out relevant quotes and to verify themes.

Barusch, Gringeri, and George (2011) argue that not all-rigorous research is good research but that good research should be evaluated on its relevance to the profession of social work and the impact it will have on social justice. Findings in this study are consistent with others who have studied parenting education programs. PDEP has also kept records of quantitative data that substantiate my findings about PDEP. In the end, “the value of the findings depends on their ability to help others gain insight into the ever mysterious realities of human life” (Churchill et al., 1998, p. 83).
Chapter Five: Findings and discussion

5.1 Context

Within this section, I will briefly introduce parents and demonstrate how I interpreted the themes that emerged. Though all parents interviewed experienced the themes of normalization and competence, each parent had unique nuances to their individual experience. All nine parents who participated in the research described here took the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) program between Spring 2013 and Spring 2015. Of the 9 participants, 8 described themselves as newcomers to Canada. All the parents interviewed were mothers with 1 to 5 children ranging in age from infancy to adults with their own children. All the parents have been given pseudonyms.

Patty, a mother of a teenage daughter, said that she was more relaxed after taking the PDEP program, “I am more relaxed and I trust more in what I did at the moment.” Another mother, Deedee, with two teenage sons noted that PDEP not only helped her with her own parenting but in her work; she works in a daycare. Empathizing and listening more to her children was what Minnie, a mother of three, learned after taking the program, “He is a child…he needs empathy, he needs respect…we need to listen and respect him and to build his confidence.”

Maria, a mother of two small boys, said that before the program she had problems with her children but didn’t know how to deal with them as well. Henrietta has five children, including twins, and said that the program has helped her become more patient and stay calm. What stood out to Emily, a mother of two, were the stages of development and how much they contributed to children’s behaviour. She really enjoyed
the program, taking it three times, and shares what she has learned with her husband and friends. One of the parents, Irene, is also a grandparent. Irene said the program changed her “drastically” and explained that she is treating her granddaughter differently than she treated her daughter. Another mother, Nel, while still being a visible minority, identified as being from North America and realized through the program that parents throughout the world have the same parenting struggles. The last parent, Louise, said she puts the PDEP book on her bed stand so that it reminds her to use positive discipline with her children.

Every parent that I interviewed said they liked the PDEP program. Many of the parents interviewed said they were happy they took it, “I think it is a good program. I took lots of programs for my kids but this program, I don’t know, I feel that we need it” (Minnie). All of the participants noted a personal change in attitude and behaviour from their experience with the program. Among those that were interviewed there was a strong belief that other parents should take the program, “Yes I want to say every parent should need to learn positive discipline. It is not only good for kids it's also good for their future as well. From the beginning, if we apply positive discipline it would be helpful for their future life” (Maria). Another parent (Henrietta) said something very similar,

It’s good, the overall picture – it is wonderful, good, useful, helpful and I encourage like, every mother or every couple or parents, even before having children to take the course just to make them ready when they have babies and give them the picture of, ok, this is what we are going to see in this stage. This is how our kid will look like in this stage and I encourage couples and parents to take this course.
One of the parents mentioned that she was very grateful for the program because of everything she learned. She said she could also apply it in her workplace.

Throughout the interviews, specific themes emerged that were not mutually exclusive of each other. This is common in phenomenology because themes can mean two different things simultaneously and, as mentioned in Chapter Four, van Manen (1990) explains that themes are really just a means to give research structure. The interpretation of the themes were not only from the description of the parent’s experiences as they appeared, but taking into consideration the underlying conditions that accounted for the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

In the quest to find, “what is the difference that makes the difference? ” two themes emerged, normalization and competence. These themes were to me, compatible with the goals of PDEP. The PDEP goals are: 1) reduce approval of physical punishment; 2) normalize parent-child conflict; and 3) strengthen parent self-efficacy.

5.2 Themes: Normalization and Competence

The themes of normalization and competence reoccurred quite frequently throughout the data in relation to the goals of the program. Normalization appeared many times when it came to learning about child development, how other parents feel, and self-regulate. Through this process parents began to understand that what they were going through was normal, that parent-child conflict is normal and that their child’s behaviour is typical of their age. This allowed them to take the time to manage their emotions and empathize with their child when they were reacting in a negative way, thus reducing their approval of physical punishment, normalizing parent-child conflict and increasing parental self-efficacy.
The theme of competence materialized more as a means to capture the skills and knowledge that parents acquired during the program. The acquired skills and knowledge contributed to feeling more confident in their parenting abilities and increasing their self-efficacy. Learning about child development, self-regulation, problem solving and developing empathy and patience, all lent themselves to the parent’s increase in their sense of self efficacy.

A previous quantitative study on the effectiveness of PDEP found comparable results (Durrant, et al., 2014). Results from this study showed that by post-test parents’ subjective norms about parent-child conflict had significantly increased. This means that by the end of the program they believed conflict between parents and their children was normal. It was also apparent in the study that parent self-efficacy had increased. At post-test, 98.4% of the parents’ believed they had the skills to be a good parent, which had gone up from 90.4%. Additionally, at the post-test, 81.7% of parents believed they had the skills to solve parenting challenges, which went up from 61.2% (Durrant et al., 2014). It is through the goals of the PDEP program that I will also explain my findings.

5.2.1 Goal one: reduce approval of physical punishment.

The first goal of PDEP is to reduce the approval of physical punishment. The goal is for parents to change their attitude from one that approves the use of corporal or physical punishment and other punishments such as yelling, time outs and groundings, to discarding the use of punishment completely. Alternatively, the PDEP program instills approaches to teaching children, which is discipline not punishment. Punishment, on the other hand, is designed to correct behaviour through suffering (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

According to the theory of planned behaviour, described earlier in Chapter 1,
when one believes that a particular behaviour will produce a particular outcome it will determine a positive or negative evaluation of that behaviour (Durrant et al., 2014). In other words, if we believe children need punishment in order to learn, then we develop a positive attitude toward physical punishment and will more likely use it (Durrant, et al., 2014; Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Every parent interviewed had a reduction in their approval of physical punishment and other forms of punishment. Parents attributed this change to many aspects of the program.

**Normalization.**

Of the parents interviewed, 6 of the parents shared that they previously normalized other forms of punishment such as time-outs, taking toys or privileges away or yelling at their child. As one parent noted, “During the beginning, we participants shared that it is okay to give a time out. But now I would put myself in the kids position and think from their perspective” (Irene). However, a factor that appeared to influence the change in attitudes was attributing a child’s behaviour to the normalization of typical development and considering how the child feels. All but 2 of the parents interviewed indicated that learning about child development became a consistent factor for the reduction in the approval of punishment. This parent also shared, “I used to not treat my own daughter the way I am treating my granddaughter because I am now more aware of developmental stages and function of the brain. I am aware that each one’s temperament [is] different and it is okay to be like that” (Irene).

Another factor that reduced the approval of punishment that 6 of parents mentioned was learning about the effects of punishment. “Punishment shames your child. It doesn’t necessarily help train or shape a child’s ability… I guess punishment is
short-term – it doesn’t help with the long term” (Nel). Through research, we know that punishment is not effective for learning in the long term (Durrant, 2013; Gershoff, 2002; Gershoff & Grogan-Taylor, 2016). Learning about the ineffectiveness of CPP created a shift in the participant’s thinking regarding physical punishment and they reported that they were less likely to use this action. The program also created a shift in their normative beliefs (what other people expect them to do) by reducing the social pressure to use physical punishment and other forms of punishment after they realized the detrimental effects.

**Competence.**

All of the parents spoke of the new information or skills they learned in the program that reduced their approval of physical punishment and other forms of punishment. Learning about how their children feel and the negative effects of punishment was mentioned in all but 3 interviews. Louise said, “I think this program is very useful for the parents because they let us understand that children of different ages have different characteristics. Then we can choose the better way to help them instead of punishment. Punishment is not useful”.

Many of the mothers described how they would feel angry or get mad at their children. This happened most often when their children did not do as they said. Part of the PDEP program explores how the brain works when we become angry or mad. The parents in this study all agreed that this knowledge helped them to consciously control their emotions. They attributed learning how to control their anger and to remain calm to their experience in the program.

As noted, one of the modules in the PDEP program explains to parents how the
stress response, or anger response, in the body works. The response is similar for children and adults. The program illustrates the process through a video presented by Dr. Daniel Siegel. Siegel uses his upright hand to demonstrate how the brain stem (your wrist) and the base of the brain (lower part of your palm) are the sensory part of the brain otherwise referred to as the fight, flight or freeze responses. Siegel explains that the thumb represents the limbic system or feeling brain, which works with the brain stem to generate human emotions and impulses. These impulses are fed up to the brain from the body and our pre-frontal cortex, also known as our thinking brain, allows us to pause and make decisions.

In the hand model, the fingers folding over the thumb and palm of the hand represent the pre-frontal cortex. When the thinking part of our brain disconnects from the feelings part of our brain we can react in ways that can be scary. Siegel calls this “flipping our lid.” What he teaches is that when we know this about ourselves, we can tame our emotions. If a person feels himself or herself getting upset, they can put a name to what is happening and take some time to calm down before reacting.

One parent shared her experience about learning to calm down; “I am easily, like easily, get angry or mad. Since positive discipline . . . I always take a breath just to relax myself and sometimes if I am angry I will walk and calm myself” (Deedee).

This stress response happens to humans of all ages. However, executive functioning in adults is typically much more developed than it is in children allowing adults more control over their responses. Executive functioning is the term used for various capacities of the prefrontal cortex that include planning, working memory, attention, inhibition, self-monitoring, self-regulation and initiation (Goldstein, Naglieri,
Princiotta, and Otero, 2014). In a parent – child relationship, it is the parent who needs to demonstrate this to a child so that the child, along with the adult, can also learn how to self-regulate. This learning module was very powerful for parents because it gave them reason to pause before they reacted negatively to their children and taught the parents patience. Another parent also indicated this change, “I became more patient and now I like, am training myself in some situations to just stay calm and think” (Henrietta). The act of staying calm, self- management or self-regulation is a positive outcome in many parenting programs (Kennett & Chislett, 2007; Ponzetti, Jr., 2016; Sanders & Turner, 2016).

When parents understand child development better it has been shown to increase their confidence, which leads to positive and warm parent-child interactions (Oldershaw, 2002; Kennett & Chislett, 2007). One parent mentioned that she used to attribute some accidents, such as dropping a toy, to the child’s bad behaviour but after taking the program, she understood that children develop at different stages and at times they are not as ready for certain tasks. Another parent repeated this sentiment, “That was helpful for me that I know how to deal in that situation. Because when I talk with my facilitator and asked about these kinds of situations then they told me how to deal with kids and their mental state. I tried to do that and that was helpful for me” (Maria).

Parents’ comments support the findings of researchers who found that when parents have age appropriate expectations of their children they are less likely to respond with punishment (Ateah & Durrant, 2005; Dix & Grusec, 1985; Sanders & Morawska, 2014). One mother described her transformation this way:

My little son is 6 years old. He always throws the toys all over the house and
never finishes. It make me angry and shout at him. I force him to tidy up the toys then he can go to sleep. He cry and unhappy. Both of us angry. But he still like this next day. I always thought that he does not listen and not obedient before I join this program. But now, I can understand his behaviours. So I try sitting and talking with him, tell them the reason for my request. Then I tidy up the toys with him every day. Keep doing for few weeks. He can tidy up toys himself before he go to bed every day. Both of us very happy (Louise).

Further to learning about child development, parents learned about brain development, what is considered normal behaviour and how they can help their child during the different stages. “So in this program, what I did learn was the state of child brain 0-18 months, 2-4 years, 5-6 years and onward... that time my son was 4 years so then I realize how to encourage him from his brain level” (Maria).

Learning how to problem solve is emphasized throughout PDEP because it helps to determine and understand why a child may behave a certain way. It also gives parents a framework so that they can respond in a thoughtful way rather than reacting in a negative way. Over half of the parents who were interviewed made mention of this program goal as being important. I identified it as demonstrating increased competence. The approach that is taught in PDEP is first to think about the long-term goals that the parent has for their children as they grow up – what personal qualities or characteristics a parent hopes can be instilled in them. The next step is to think about the child’s age and stage of development. Parents are then encouraged to empathize with how the child might be thinking or feeling at this age and stage of development. The next step encourages parents to think about how to approach the problem with warmth (love) and
structure (information and guidance).

This approach to problem solving helps to focus the parents on their future goals for their children. As one parent noted, “the most important thing about [the program], that is problem solving [and] my long and short term goals and how these things affect on my kids” (Maria). Another parent explained that she is able to problem solve with her son, “when he has a problem, for example my son now he started grade 1 so sometimes he has problem with other kids. So I say talk with me and I explain to the problem and resolve it, for example I talk to him and talk to the teacher” (Minnie). Problem solving skills are another common outcome that results from parenting programs (Kennet & Chislett, 2007; Skrypnek & Charcun, 2009; Sanders & Turner, 2016). The parents who were interviewed found that once they knew the information on child development, which includes brain development, they could empathize with their children better and figure out, with them, how to solve the problems, thus reducing the use of punishment.

Nevertheless, one parent (Nel) felt that the program never really addressed discipline or told her what she was supposed to do:

Every time I wanted to know what are we supposed to do. What are we doing, you know and waiting all class and nothing came up and it was supposed to be later on and I am still waiting to figure out, okay, what I am supposed to do? I don’t even know if I got my question answered about the disciplining part.

This question demonstrates the difference between behavioural programs versus programs based on problem solving approaches. Approaches to problem solving do not tell parents what to do in a given situation. Instead, parents are encouraged to reflect on what is happening, relate it to other experiences they may have had and then to apply
their observations to the situation (Kennett & Chislett, 2007). Problem solving is not an easy task but once learned it is a life-long skill that can guide a person through many situations (Kennett & Chislett, 2007).

5.2.2 Goal two: normalizing parent-child conflict.

The second goal of PDEP is normalizing parent-child conflict. It aims to demonstrate to parents that their conflicts with their children are not unique but rather a very normal part of the parent-child relationship. Normalizing parent-child conflict also normalizes how parents internalize their self-efficacy or skills as parents, and child behaviour. Quite often the behaviour that incites conflict is actually normal development taking place. Most parents have doubts about their parenting abilities and regardless of parenting being fun and joyful there are also many challenges. The parents I interviewed were no different.

Normalization.

All the parents interviewed shared how parenting is difficult and how they have found themselves in situations where they do not know what to do. “We are very good parents but in moments we don’t know what to do with my daughter… now it is more relaxed. Still it is not easy to understand what [is] happening with her… so some moments is hard” (Patty). This parent explained that the difference the program made was not that it changed her mind on punishment, as she already did not believe in physical punishment, but that she felt the experience recognized what she was going through as a parent.

Normalizing the realities of parenting is an important element in many parenting groups. It is the great equalizer and demonstrates how many of the difficulties a parent
faces are normal and universal. There is no perfect child, family or parent. One parent shared her story about how taking part in the program reduced some of the challenges:

I feel very positive in that time [Program] because what I feel that someone is with me who can listen [to] me. I express my feelings about kids because at that time I only had one kid and you don’t know when you have first child. They [Facilitator] ask what happened last week, how you feel, I express my feelings, so I was very relaxed. That someone is here listen to me and understand what I am trying to say (Maria).

Another parent described the experience of normalization as helping her to relax and take some comfort:

For me it was different then... because I feel only the bad situation happen only to me. But I know everybody have the same... You know the program say... okay ‘this is what happened to you, this is what it means and in the moment... you can say okay...this is what happened, it is more relaxed for me’ I feel my daughter was a beautiful, nice girl and then she came a teenager and what can I do? What a big help to say to me okay... this is what happened to everybody, this is the normal because as parents all the time we say: I am good? No? I don’t know (Patty).

Realizing other parents felt the same way, regardless of country of origin, also normalized the experiences of parenting for this group of parents.

There were new immigrants from all over the world. They had the same parenting challenges that many face every day. So what we are dealing with is not unique but rather universal. So we shouldn’t shy away from the challenges but we need to come together to share, learn and grow... they all had similar struggles that I
am facing or people in my circle of existence face. So, it is not just unique to this city or a North American way, its global” (Nel).

Another important aspect of normalization has to do with understanding child behaviour. Many parents believe they are the only ones facing challenging behaviours with their children when in fact everyone faces challenging times. The isolation parents feel and lack of understanding is noted by Ponzetti (2016) when he states that, “numerous myths and misconceptions [that] persist about parenthood [are] complicated by the lack of sufficient and reliable guidelines for effective parenting” (p. 3). It is more advantageous for parents to come together and learn from each other so that they can demystify the myths about parenting and child behaviour.

Parent-child conflict often comes from parents not being sure of what is typical child behaviour and then not knowing how to address the behaviour. Ponzetti (2016) writes, “Although childbearing may appear instinctive, childrearing is not” (p. 3). As a society we take the role of parenting rather lightly and leave it to traditional practices passed down from one generation to the next (Ponzetti, 2016). Ponzetti (2016) also argues that, “modern parenting is too demanding and complex to undertake merely because one was a child once” (p. 3). When parents acquire the knowledge of child development and what is “normal” child behaviour they can learn positive ways to approach conflicts rather than use punishment.

**Competence.**

Normalizing the struggles of parenting and child behaviour is also important for parents because it informs them that they are not the only one experiencing the difficulties that come with parenting. When parents understand that all parents face
challenges, it changes their outlook on parenting and increases self-efficacy. Six of the parents acknowledged that normalizing the struggles of parenting helped them to feel better about what they were doing in their role as parents.

Another self-assurance for parents is finding out that certain behaviours are typical for the age of their child. It is not that their child is misbehaving but that they understand more about the world around them. When parents know more about child development, they gain skills that help them to figure out what their child is going through. Once they have this information they can teach their children more appropriately rather than using punishment. Of the parents interviewed, all but one shared how learning about child development prepared them for their child’s behaviour. One parent described that in the past she would think that, “when they change their behaviour, I thought, like, what happened to this kid? What happened? Why they do this? But now I understand, if they change behaviour… I understand that it could be the age, the development” (Emily).

5.2.3 Goal three: strengthening parenting self-efficacy.

Strengthening parent self-efficacy is the last goal of the PDEP program, which involves parents believing that they have the “ability to exert control over one’s own motivation, behaviour and social environment” (Carey & Forsyth, 2016). The element of parental self-efficacy was achieved through the process of normalizing child development, child behaviour and parent-child conflict as well as gaining a variety of skills while in the program.

Normalization.

Parents gained information through the program that they did not know before.
This knowledge was quite powerful because it influenced the way they parented their children. All but 2 of the parents discussed how learning about child development prepared them for the different stages of development. Because parents were more prepared about what to expect they did not get overwhelmed when their child’s behaviour changed. They realized that when behaviour changed it had to do with development and not due to their child being “bad.” One parent said, “You know . . . before I didn’t know that the ages, the ages of the kids like when they are 6 months when they are two or three years and when they are 5 or teenagers I didn’t know the age makes them behave the way they do” (Emily). This not only normalized child behaviour but also gave parents the confidence they needed to deal with certain situations.

**Competence.**

The theme of competence came from the strong sense of skills, abilities and knowledge the parents gained from the program. When asked how she had changed, one mother said, “Before I had problems but I don’t know how to deal with them…[But now] I realized that things are not too hard, we just [need] to know how to apply them” (Maria). This sentiment was not unique. All of the parents interviewed felt that after the program they were more equipped with what to do when problems arose with their children. This gave them the confidence to make decisions without using punishment.

When I came to positive discipline like that day I like I spend the day I am confident and I am happy at that day [more] than the other days, and like I am, I deal very well with my kids at that day, especially the day taking the positive discipline. That is why I took program, like 3 times, cause I like it, it helps (Emily).
Learning about child development has also been associated with an increase in parental confidence (Crill Russell, 2003; Kennett & Chislett, 2007; Sanders & Mrawska, 2014). All of the parents who were interviewed shared how they knew more about child development, which made them more prepared to deal with situations that arose. One of the parents recalled how she was stressed before taking the program because she didn’t understand some of the behaviours her children were showing. She said her behaviour changed because,

Before I was stressed because when I had my first baby and now she is 3 and now my second one is this baby she is 2. Um, like I was when they cry or when they do something like when they climb on the sofa on the t. v. like that. I was very stressed because I didn’t have any experience before or any courses I didn’t take any courses, so I was very mad at them, and why do this? Why they don’t listen? And they were very small why don’t they listen to me. But now I understand and I am good with them now (Emily).

Learning how to be patient and relaxed were skills that the majority of the parents attributed to taking the program. One of the parents stated that it changed parenting practices for both her husband and herself, “My husband and I think we (feel) the same, we more relaxed, more relaxed. I am more relaxed, you know, and I trust more in what or what I did at this moment” (Patty). Another parent had a similar experience, “I became more patient and now I, like, am training myself in some situations to just stay calm and think” (Henrietta).

5.3 Essence

The last step in phenomenology is to uncover the essence, which can be defined
as, “the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is” (Husserl, 1931, p. 43). Quite simply, the essence is the common experience of several individuals who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Understanding the common experience of a phenomenon can provide professionals, such as social workers, therapists, teachers, and policymakers, with valuable knowledge about the people they work with (Creswell, 2007). Understanding the essence of PDEP will afford those who are proponents of the program to provide evidence to policy makers and funders to illustrate how and why the program works.

5.3.1 Empowerment

It was through the themes of normalization and competence that parents were able to make change and feel better equipped as parents. Thus, the essence of empowerment emerged (Figure 5.3.1). The concept of empowerment refers to, “the act of acquiring a critical awareness of one’s situation and an increased capacity to act on that awareness” (Lundy, 2011, p. 168). The critical awareness for these parents was gaining a better understanding of child development and behavior and with that awareness, becoming aware of the negative effects of punishment in all its forms as well as now being able to act on that awareness with the new skills they gained. One mother powerfully shared her experience of increased awareness from being in the program, but pointed out that it takes work:

I enjoyed it, actually, because playing a role, being a good role model at home with the children, which is a little bit hard for us because, okay, we are an adult. We have already been raised; we have our values and ways. So now to be an excellent or a good role model in front of my children I have to control myself
first. You know or at least try to minimize the negative things that I used to do because I didn’t want to shout to my children. I don’t want them to take it from me. I actually, honestly, I think this is the hardest part for us because sometimes you just act without thinking. This is how you are, like, you know, normally. Then I realize I shouldn’t do this, I have to think before but, you know, I couldn’t, this is me. So yes, I feel I need to work on this part actually (Henrietta).

Henrietta’s comment illustrates how empowerment helps a person to “gain a greater degree of control over his or her life through personal and social change” (Lundy, 2011, p. 168). When a person gains this ability they believe they can make a change in the world, however big or small. That confidence, gives them power. As described in the themes, all of the parents mentioned a positive change in their life because of the Program. One parent movingly describes this transformation:

It is the best informative program that I participated in. As I told you my whole persona has changed. This program has affected my entire relationship with my husband, my child, my grandchildren, my friends and all. The positive discipline is not only affecting one relationship it is the whole gamut of relationships. It can be your co-worker; it can be anybody. I have learned many things; I owe so many things (Irene).

Many of the parents said that the program should be made available and taken by all parents. This type of statement lends itself to the notion of empowerment because they not only saw a personal change in themselves but also want to see a societal change take place because of it.
Figure 5.3. Subthemes, Themes and Essence

Sub-themes
- Patience, Empathy and Problem solving, self-regulation
- Parent-child conflict universal and normal
- Punishment Is Ineffective
- Child and brain development

Themes
- Normalization
- Competent

Essence
- Empowerment
6.1 Significance to social work

Social work research is not simply about pursuing new knowledge; it is about promoting social justice and serving humanity (CASW, 2005). This research undertaken here is significant to social work education and practice for a variety of reasons that include:

- Upholding the code of ethics through theories and approaches that are in line with the code of ethics.
- How to use critical theory in practice and research.
- How we work with children and families.
- Violence prevention.
- Advocacy.

My research is strongly aligned with the CASW Code of Ethics (2005) and the values and principles it is dedicated to uphold. The CASW Code of Ethics (2005) states that, “Social workers are committed to human rights as enshrined in Canadian law, as well as in international conventions on human rights created or supported by the United Nations” (p. 3) and that, “social workers advocate for equal treatment and protection under the law and challenge injustices, especially injustices that affect the vulnerable and disadvantaged” (p. 5). Therefore, as a profession, we must use practices, offer programs and advocate for programs that reflect these beliefs. A social worker’s commitment to human rights is a requirement of the job, therefore we should advocate for programs that help us meet this commitment.

PDEP is one such program. PDEP is the only parenting program that highlights
children’s rights, making it an appropriate program for social workers to become aware of in their practice. Watkinson and Rock (2016) argue:

To this end social workers are obliged to support the development of legislation and other policies which prohibit its [CPP] use in the home, school and community at large; engage in research which can promote evidence-based policy initiatives regarding the elimination of corporal punishment; educate local and international communities of the many problems associated with child physical punishment and offer evidence based alternatives to its use (pp. 94-95).

The research in this study is also significant because it illustrates a practical way to use critical theory in application. By implementing structural and human rights based approaches into social work, we are practicing critical theory (Creswell, 2007; Salas et al., 2010). Salas et al., (2010) explain that this “provides a framework for understanding how the social order runs, what place and role each of us has within it, the effect the system has on us, and what we can do to change it” (p 92). Additionally, both the structural and human rights approaches are in accordance with the CASW Code of Ethics (2005), which is important in maintaining our integrity as a professional practice. Structural and human rights approaches are also imperative to our practice because of the framework they both provide in our work. Quite often social workers support individuals who have competing rights as well as assist those who are affected by the conflicts competing rights bring about (e.g., land claims, treaty rights, parental custody) (CASW, 2005; Ife, 2012; Salas et al., 2010).

According to Salas et al. (2010) there are certain criteria for practicing critical theory. Some of the criteria include examining the factors that contributed to the issue
(historical, cultural), considering who is in power, engaging in self-reflection in regards to the issue, and realizing that from greater awareness comes action. As a social worker, choosing the topic of PDEP for inquiry is practicing critical theory. The very topic of PDEP enlightens us to the current social order on how we treat children (contributing factors). The PDEP program asks parents and professionals to self-reflect on how they learned to parent (who is in power and self-reflection) and then teaches through comprehensive research on child and brain development that there is a more effective way to parent (action).

Most importantly, the research is significant because it proposes a way to prevent violence and work with children and families in the way that is true to our practice. Due to social work’s strong link to working with families and violence prevention, specifically within child welfare agencies, learning about programs that prevent violence is very important to our profession. Child welfare is considered to be a special area of practice within social work and has a long history in the profession (Children’s Association of Children’s Aid Societies, 2010). The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) (2005) website describes social work within child welfare agencies as:

Social workers in child welfare agencies are involved with the planning and delivery of a variety of services for children and families, such as family support, residential care, advocacy, and adoptions and foster care programs, as well as child protection. The social worker’s task is to understand a variety of factors related to the child, the family, and the community and to balance the child’s safety and well-being with the rights and needs of a family that may be in need of help.

Due to the relationship social workers have in child welfare, PDEP is an important
approach to use with families in preventing violence from happening in the first place. The CASW Code of Ethics (2005) states, “social workers uphold the right of every person to be free from violence and threat of violence” (p. 5). How social workers approach conflict within families greatly impacts how they assess the child’s needs and/or family needs. Training in programs like PDEP could help social workers prevent many family conflicts from happening. The PDEP program is different from other parenting programs that social workers offer in that it is based on parents learning about child development and it is not behaviour modification. Additionally, when other programs focus on developmental growth they are limited to the early stages of development and do not span infancy to young adult. Moreover, many parenting programs currently offered in Canada are for targeted families and not all families, which greatly reduces the impact of the prevention of violence because it is assumed that only certain people need parenting programs. Last, my research can be used as a vehicle to advocate for universal, positive parenting programs that empower parents and promote child well-being as well as children’s rights.

For me, as a social worker and parent, this research is significant because I truly believe the personal is political (van Manen, 1990; Carniol, 1992; Lundy, 2011; Moreau, 1990; Mullaly, 2002, 2007). Mullaly (2002) says that, “if in our personal lives and in our social work practice, we assist in making oppression acceptable by helping people to cope with it or adjust to it, we not only fail them, we fail ourselves and we become part of the problem” (p. 211). These are the words I try to live and work by. If I do not try to educate others about the negative impact all forms of punishment have on children and how it impacts the relationships they have with their parents, caregivers, their potential
children and other people in society, then I am not doing my job. Subsequently, if I do not become part of repealing sec. 43 of the Criminal Code by educating others then I am contributing to the problem of violence in our society, the very thing I am working against.

6.2 Directions for future research

Possible areas of future research for those interested in parenting education programs are to include fathers’ perspectives by recruiting fathers more intentionally. Fathers have a very important role in their children’s well-being, which is predicted by the quality of the relationship they have with the mother (Pruett, Kline-Pruett, Cowan & Cowan, 2016).

Another area would be to look at children’s perspectives to determine what changes they see as a result of their parent’s involvement with PDEP program. Regardless of whether parent’s attitudes have changed against using CPP this does not mean that their behaviour has changed. Having the experiences of children included in the research would shed some light on whether the program also shifted the parents’ behaviour.

An additional area of research would be to include how parenting education programs such as PDEP effect parents’ attitudes over time. As time passes do parents’ attitudes shift back to believing CPP is an effective approach? This would be important for understanding whether parents need ongoing support or if one-time parenting programs are sufficient in supporting parents and children.

Future research could also include learning whether this program meets the criteria of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) recommendations to provide
Aboriginal families with culturally appropriate parenting programs.

6.3 Recommendations

During this research there were many recommendations generated from the participants involved as well as recommendations that arose from the research itself. One such recommendation was that every parent should take this program before they have children and that it should be part of our education curriculum. One of the participants (Irene) felt very strongly about the program becoming part of a National initiative:

I think there should be some such method that every parent or caregiver, or whosoever is looking after the newborn or the children, should be made a part of this curriculum. I don’t know whether it can be possible to introduce this PDEP program in the university like any other program such as skill developmental program because if we want to be a chartered accountant we can go to accounting college we can take that course. We want to be an engineer we can take that course. But when we are becoming a mother, which is so, so important, and we are the one who are bringing the future architect of our future Nation we do not know how to groom them. So I am of the view, that this program should be carried out in every daycare, workplace, in hospital, wherever, you can implement. So that everyone gets a chance to know about the program. It should be made available to everyone.

Another recommendation brought forth by the participants is that PDEP is an important program for newcomers to participate in because children are viewed differently in Canada and Canadian culture is different from their country of origin. Even though this program is universal and has been delivered in over 33 countries, the parents
seemed to believe it was a Canadian program. Therefore, it is important for facilitators of the program to ensure that parents understand that PDEP is not a Canadian program or a western program; PDEP is a program that embraces children’s rights regardless of culture or religion.

Nevertheless, it is also important for newcomers to learn about the law and children’s rights within the Canadian context. Two of the parents mentioned that they did not know about children’s rights before the program. Educating parents early and often about children’s rights and the law in Canada would be beneficial, not only to newcomers but to all parents. This could be accomplished by providing this information when newcomers first arrive in Canada along with information about where they could locally access the information or parenting groups. For parents who are not newcomers, information on children’s rights could be included in pre-natal classes and in the package new parents receive in the hospital.

All the parents found out about the program through other programs they were taking, mainly English as an Additional Language (EAL) class. This can be a challenge, not only for program facilitators to recruit participants but also for parents. If parents are only finding them when they need them it is quite often when they are struggling. Therefore, another recommendation would be to ensure that parenting programs are readily available to everyone and that there be consistency in when and where they are offered and advertised.

Knowing where to find a parenting program is very important but it is also important to know about child development before one becomes a parent or at least early on in the parenting journey. When parents know what to expect from their children at
certain stages they are less likely to believe that it is bad behaviour. One parent couldn’t believe that being university educated did not prepare you for being a parent or knowing about child development “After I know developing for the brain take 25 years. Oh, my gosh, she is still young (my daughter). And we didn’t know, I was in university in my country I studied and I did not know about this we didn’t have the information. This is what changed for me” (Patty).

If we want to prevent child abuse, child injury, mental health issues of both parents and children then we need to be more intentional with parent education and other prevention programs. The parents who were interviewed indicated many times that child development was crucial when it came to empathizing with their children and problem solving. Therefore, another recommendation would be to ensure that all parents receive more information on the stages of child development.

There are numerous challenges when providing parenting education including parents not feeling comfortable in an agency setting or that parents are not able to leave their home because of transportation or childcare barriers. When parents are not able to come it does not mean that parents do not want to be there or are not interested in the information. Some programs are able to accommodate one-to-one programming by visiting parents in their homes. One parent expressed how much this helped; “I want to participate in this because there was a big attraction for me that they came at my home and also gave me childcare” (Maria). Therefore, it is important that programs are flexible to parents’ needs and provide many ways to learn the information or get involved.

Another subject that came up was the reality of how parent-child conflict challenges continue and that ongoing support is needed. This was revealed in many of
the conversations with the parents. One parent said, “For me, I put this book on my bed stand. Let this book remind me to use positive discipline to live with my children. But you know it is difficult for me because my character is very impatient. But I deep breathe and try” (Louise). Another parent said, “I think I still need more you know maybe because not enough but yes it was like when you have a bad day and then you feel okay ooh, but still a bad day but not very heavy like before, before was pretty heavy” (Patty). Similarly, another parent shared this sentiment, “At the time it was helpful than you forget about, you know, you sort of get back to your old ways” (Nel). Another recommendation would be for parents to receive ongoing, universal parenting support. Parent support could be accessed through different mediums such as groups, one to one, lunch and learn sessions or handouts.

Due to newcomers being a targeted group for parenting programs, it is very important for practitioners in Canada to educate themselves on the various cultures the people they work with come from, as well as the risks and protective factors that contribute to child maltreatment and CPP. This is especially true for social workers, medical practitioners and those who work in the education system because these three professions are often closely tied with reporting to child welfare for maltreatment and abuse.

Finally, as previously mentioned in how significant PDEP is to social work and preventing family violence, it is recommended that all practicing social workers and child protection workers obtain training in PDEP or at the very minimum, a strong understanding of children’s rights and positive parenting approaches.
6.4 Conclusion

This study explored the lived experience of parents who participated in a PDEP program. All the parents interviewed enjoyed the PDEP program and noted a personal change in their attitude and behaviours when it came to CPP and punishment in general. The PDEP program sets out to: 1) reduce approval of physical punishment; 2) normalize parent-child conflict; and 3) strengthen parent self-efficacy.

The essence of the PDEP program is to empower parents through normalization and competence. By normalizing the parenting experience, PDEP instills onto parents that what they are going through is typical, that parent-child conflict is normal and that their child’s behaviour is not unusual for their age. Through the process of acquiring the new skills of problem solving and developing empathy and patience, PDEP imparted competencies onto parents. This empowered parents to make educated decisions about how they were going to teach their children through the different stages of development and to feel more confident in their parenting abilities.

It seems naïve that we assume parents know how to parent and that we do not provide support and education before people have children. We cannot assume that just because there is increasing evidence against the use of physical punishment, which demonstrates that physical punishment predicts long-term negative developmental outcomes for children, that it is not still common for parents to use physical punishment (Boutwell et al., 2011; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Hecker et al., 2014; Lansford et al., 2014; MacKenzie et al., 2012, 2013; Maguire-Jack et al., 2012; Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007; Scott et al., 2013; Sheu et al., 2010; Tomodo et al.,
2009). According to UNICEF (2014), parent’s use of physical punishment is still happening to 80% of the world’s children.

We also know that the belief in human rights is not strong enough to provide sufficient cause for governments to take action (Smith & Durrant, 2011). Out of the 206 recognized states of the United Nations 155 have yet to abolish physical punishment in all its forms.

Currently, there is no large-scale primary prevention program in Canada specifically directed toward the elimination of CPP (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Primary prevention programs are initiatives that are directed at the general population to educate the public around the underlying causes of an injury or disease and to reduce the incidence of it (Meston, 1993; Ateah & Durrant, 2005). An example of primary prevention would be a public media campaign around the negative effects of CPP. Although, this has recently happened in Ontario during September 2015, it did not roll out to the rest of the Country. It was initiated by Best Start/ Meilleur Départ by Health Nexus Santé, an Ontario based resource centre with a focus on maternal, newborn and early child development, with the objective to, “reduce the prevalence of physical and emotional punishment of children from birth to age six” (Best Start/Meilleur Départ, 2015).

As mentioned earlier on, there are some prevention programs that exist regarding discipline practices with children, however, they are usually available for a fee to parents or they have targeted certain parents who may be at a greater risk of abusing their children (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Targeted parents usually are under one or more of the following: single, young, economically disadvantaged, or socially and/or geographically
isolated (Ateah & Durrant, 2005; PHAC, 2016).

Many programs that attempt to reduce physical punishment often will provide parents with a list of alternative methods and strategies (time-outs, taking toys/belongings away, and grounding) (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Knowledge of alternative methods to CPP does not reduce the occurrence of its use (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). Programs need to actually target parent’s attitudes towards CPP with the aim of reducing it as well as providing parents with information on child development and problem solving skills (Ateah & Durrant, 2005; Pinheiro, 2006).

Smith & Durrant (2011) identify that change will not occur without political will. In the past Canada was in an optimal position, as were the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, to create societies fit for children because of their wealth and political power (Smith & Durrant, 2011). However, they have not yet used that power to benefit the rights and lives of children as they still have not abolished physical punishment in all its forms (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016).

Canada now has the opportunity to be a leader since the current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, has pledged to fulfill all 94 ‘Calls to Action’ put forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Smith & Boutilier, 2015), which includes the repeal of Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada, and that all levels of government develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

By exploring parent’s experience of PDEP, this study has found that parents want more information on how children develop and how to be good parents; parents want to
feel empowered, not incompetent. Parents want support and often just don’t know where to find it or are scared because of the stigma our society has placed on those who reach out for support. Parenting is one of the most important endeavors in society and yet we leave it to chance that children will turn out okay. As a society, we cannot continue to echo the past; we need to invest in parents and their families by providing universal, positive parenting education programs. Children have the right to better and so do their parents.
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Appendix A


Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 18

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the
development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

**Article 19**

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

**Article 28**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering
financial assistance in case of need;

c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.
Appendix B

Recruitment poster

Faculty of Social Work
University of Regina

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR STUDY REGARDING
Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study with the aim of understanding the experiences of parents who have participated in a Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program and as a result, have indicated a reduction in their approval and usage of physical punishment on children.

Your participation would involve:

- 2 interview sessions
  - One in person (60-90 minutes).
  - One by telephone to verify information given at the interview (60 minutes), if required.

Transportation and childcare will be provided, if needed, to attend the interview. A gift certificate of $10 will be provided in appreciation for your participation.

**Participation is voluntary.**

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:
Tanis Shanks
Graduate Student
at
306-220-1341 or
Email: shanks2t@uregina.ca

This study has been reviewed and received approval through the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina.
Appendix C

Consent Letter

University of Regina
Faculty of Social Work
153-111 Research Drive
Innovation Place
Saskatoon, SK S7N 3R2
Phone: (306) 664.7370
Fax: (306) 664.7131

Project Title:
Exploring the core phenomena of Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting

Researcher:
Tanis Shanks
Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina.
Cell: 306-220-1341
Email: shanks2t@uregina.ca
Tanis Shanks is a registered social worker with 10 years of experience working with parents and children in various capacities including childcare, parent education, facilitation, mentorship, program development, administration and supervision. For the past 5 years, parenting program education including Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) has been the focus of Tanis’ work. Tanis has facilitated PDEP parent groups in Saskatchewan and currently trains others to facilitate PDEP programs in Saskatchewan.

Academic Supervisor:
Dr. Ailsa M. Watkinson
Faculty of Social Work
Ph: (306) 664-7370
Ailsa.Watkinson@uregina.ca

Purpose and Objective of the Research:
● To understand the experience of parents who have participated in a Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting program and as a result, have indicated a reduction in their approval and usage of physical punishment on children.
● To understand what it was about Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting that contributed to this change.
● To use this information to advocate for parenting programs
Procedures:

- The research will be conducted through an interview that will take between an hour and an hour and a half (1 hour to 1 hour ½).
- The interview can occur at a mutually chosen location.
- I will provide you with transportation, childcare and a $10 gift card for your participation in this study.
- The interview will be recorded with a data recorder and later transcribed into writing.
- Once your interview is transcribed it will be shared with you so you can see if it is accurate. A second conversation via telephone will be scheduled after you have received your interview transcripts, to verify or make changes to your interview transcripts if required.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Potential Risks:

It is unlikely that you will face any risk, such as stress or anxiety, however should you feel the need to speak with anyone, a debriefing session will be made available to you through Mosaic-Newcomer Family Resource Network.

Potential Benefits:

- There will be no direct benefits to the participants; however, the final results will be shared with you, if interested.
- To understand and identify what it is about the PDEP program that makes a difference in changing parent’s attitude and usage of physical punishment on children.
- To identify what information parents want regarding parenting and physical punishment.
- This research will be made available to those responsible for funding parenting programs.

Confidentiality:

- The identity of participants will be kept confidential.
  - The data recording will not include any names. Before interview takes place researcher will ask interviewee’s to not say any names but if they do they will be deleted from transcripts.
  - As the data is being transcribed your name will be replaced with a numbered code.
  - Your contribution to the written research will be anonymous.
  - There will be no record connecting you or your family to this research.
The only limit to this guarantee of confidentiality is the disclosure of any criminal activity, including child abuse, whereby there exists an obligation to relay this information to the authorities.

Storage of Data:
- The recordings of our interviews will be stored on my own personal computer and in my personal backup file. This will only be accessible to me and password protected up until the research has been completed. The audiotapes will be stored on my person during travel and then stored at the University of Regina, Faculty of social work, Saskatoon campus in a locked storage unit.
- Once the research has been completed, the data will be removed from my computer. It will be kept in my supervisor’s office under lock and key for five years and will then be destroyed.
- As mentioned above, the only reference to you will be through your numbered code.
- The only other person who may have access to this data is my academic supervisor.

Right to Withdraw:
- Your participation is voluntary and you need answer only those questions that you are comfortable with.
- You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, and without explanation or penalty of any sort up until two weeks after the second interview takes place. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.
- Should you wish to withdraw for any reason the data you have provided to the point of withdrawal will be destroyed by electronic file deletion and shredding hardcopies.

Follow up:
- A final copy of this research study can be made available to you. To obtain results from the study, please call 306-220-1341 or email shanks2t@uregina.ca.

Questions or Concerns:
- Contact the researcher, Tanis Shanks, or the Academic Supervisor, Dr. Ailsa M. Watkinson, using the information at the top of page 1
- The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has approved this project on ethical grounds (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call Toll Free: 866-966-2975.
Consent
Your signature below indicates:
- You have read and understand the description provided.
- Have had an opportunity to ask questions and your questions have been answered.
- That you consent to participate in the research project.
- That a copy of this Consent Form has been given to you for your records.

___________________________         _______________________
Name of Participant         Signature         Date

___________________________         _______________________
Researcher’s Signature         Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and the researcher will take a copy for their records.
Appendix D

Interview questions

Researcher: Tanis Shanks
Faculty of Social Work University of Regina.
Cell: 306-220-1341
Email: shanks2t@uregina.ca

Interview questions:

1) Tell me how you came to be in the PDEP program?

2) What about the experience specifically changed your attitudes toward physical punishment and punishment in general? Or rather, did you experience an “aha” moment?

3) How did the experience affect significant others in your life such as your partner and children?

4) What thoughts have stood out for you during your experience with PDEP?

5) How did the experience affect you? What behavioural changes, regarding child discipline do you contribute to your experience with PDEP?
Appendix E

University of Regina Research Ethics Board Approval Form (REB)

Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Tanis Shanks
1330 Conn Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1

DEPARTMENT
Social Work

REB#
2015-103

SUPERVISOR
Dr. Alisa Watkinson — Social Work

FUNDER(S)
Unfunded

TITLE
Exploring the Core Phenomena of Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting

APPROVAL OF
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review
Letter to Mosaic – Newcomer Family Resource Network
obtaining approval
Recruitment Poster
Consent Form
Interview Script

APPROVED ON
August 27, 2015

RENEWAL DATE
August 27, 2016

Full Board Meeting
☐

Delegated Review
☒

CERTIFICATION
The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a renewal report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:  http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html

[Signature]

University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
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Telephone: (306) 585-4775  Fax: (306) 585-4893  research.ethics@uregina.ca