Study on Parenting Issues of Newcomer Families in Ontario

Introduction to Final Reports

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Study on Parenting Issues of Newcomer Families in Ontario

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Joanna Ochocka
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Paul Anisef
Kenise Murphy Kilbride

Remembering Amina Malko

We had the privilege to work with Amina Malko. Her death was a great loss not only to our project, but to the field of immigrant settlement. We will well remember her commitment and dedication to improving the lives of new Canadians across this province.

A special thank you to OCASI for their sensitive and efficient response in carrying on the work despite this tragedy.

Table of Contents

Purpose of Study 5

Background to Study 6

Literature Review 6
- Challenges of Immigrant Parenting 7
- Supports for Immigrant Parents 10

Collaborative Structure 10
- The CREHS research team 11
- The CERIS research team 11
- Stakeholder based committee 12

Research Approach 14

Research Methodology 14
- PHASE I—Getting started 14
- PHASE II—Information gathering 14
- PHASE III: Analysis 17
- PHASE IV: Write-up and feedback 17

Process of Working Together 18

Framework for Understanding Immigrant Parenting 19

How the Following Reports are Organized 22

Study on Parenting Issues of Newcomer Families in Ontario

Introduction to Final Reports

This report documents the background and processes of an eight-month research study on parenting issues of newcomer families in Ontario. Funded by the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS), the study was carried out by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) and the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) and their partners.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the issues faced by immigrant parents within diverse ethnic backgrounds. The research also explored the supports and resources that could assist newcomer parents in addressing their parenting issues.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore the parenting beliefs and aspirations of newcomers within various ethnic groups (i.e., **parenting orientations**), and how these are put into practice (i.e., **parenting styles**).
- Explore the new parenting perspectives newcomer parents encounter when coming to Canada (i.e., **Canadian context**).
- Explore how newcomer parents have begun to adjust to their new context by making changes to their parenting strategies and relationships with their children (i.e., **modifications**).
- Explore the existing and needed types of supports and resources that help newcomer families adapt to their new Canadian context (i.e., **supports**).
- Explore how newcomer parents can contribute to other parents in Canada (i.e., **contributions**).
- Provide concrete recommendations for future action.

This exploratory study considered the perspectives of newcomer mothers and fathers who have been in Canada for less than three years, as well as key informants from various sectors. The study compared findings across twelve language groups, and across three distinct age groups of children (0-5, 6-13 and 14-18). It also explored differences and similarities among three urban communities (Toronto-large, Ottawa-medium and Waterloo-small) across the province.

Background to Study

In 1999 the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS) funded seven research studies to examine the needs of newcomer youth in Ontario. Focus groups with parents identified the need to look at parenting issues that newcomer families face when coming to Canada. Findings showed that, in many instances, the Canadian legal and cultural expectations associated with parenting differed from the child upbringing practices in the newcomer families' previous home country.

Based on these results OASIS issued another call for proposals in June 2000, to further explore the issues of immigrant parenting. The Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) submitted a proposal in partnership with the Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) and their partners, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO). On behalf of the partnership team, the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) was contracted by OASIS to complete the research between August 2000 and March 2001.

Literature Review

As we move into the new millenium it is important to reflect upon the many changes that have occurred in Canadian society, particularly those changes that have impacted on the structure of the family, parent-child relationships and issues that parents encounter while raising their children. Most social scientists agree that parents and children face a much-altered global world, one in which life course transitions are more complex and uncertain than in the past decades. It is also an environment where a greater awareness of options and the acquisition of new information skills are required for personal success (Anisef , Sweet & Lin, 1998).Thus, parenting constitutes a challenge for many families, particularly newcomer families who must also face issues of settlement and integration in a new society.

Families who arrive in Canada with their children face many parenting challenges. These begin from the point of deciding to relocate, and continue through the family members' actual physical entry into Canada. Consequently, one must take into consideration the settlement process of all family members, which includes making, negotiating, and sustaining a comfortable equilibrium between the social and civic positions of their respective societies and those of the Canadian mosaic.

Such a vast change in family lifestyle, coupled with the various socio-economic, racial, health, language and education related barriers that newcomer families are liable to face, make parenting issues much more significant to the overall well-being of both children and their guardians. The documentation of newcomer parenting skills, challenges, and supports related to settlement by settlement organisations, as well as in formal academic literature, seems to be limited. This brief literature review seeks to explore some of the themes surrounding **challenges** in immigrant parenting and immigrant parenting **supports**.

Challenges of Immigrant Parenting

Differences in child upbringing practices can exacerbate parenting issues, especially when families must adapt to new culture and legal expectations. Parenting, particularly within ethnic newcomer families, is frequently challenging, if not always daunting. It involves balancing considerations of many changing realities. Different societal expectations of what is appropriate for the various stages of child development intensify the challenges of parenting in a new society**.**

Data from the recently completed newcomer youth studies in Ontario emphasize the need to understand the parental issues that newcomer parents and guardians face when they come to Canada (CERIS, 2000; CREHS, 2000). In many situations, the Canadian legal and cultural expectations associated with parenting differ from child upbringing practices in the newcomer families' previous home country. The data show that isolation and lack of knowledge or understanding of the cultural realities in Canada are the main factors in creating parenting challenges.

Parenting styles vary across cultures. When a family moves to a new country, challenges can arise as parents attempt to find ways to express their beliefs within a new and unfamiliar context. Some examples of issues newcomer parents face in child upbringing discussed in literature include the following.

Norms for children's socialization

Families who arrive in Canada from cultures that prize the close relationships among people and strong community ties, and who see inter-dependence as a way of fostering those ties, will have a different attitude toward the independence so valued by many Canadians (Clark, 1981). The norms for good behaviour arising out of these values will differ and cause some of the principal differences between newcomer families and the Canadian institutions with which they deal. Yet, this is just one of the many values with implications for cultural adjustment in parenting. It can be translated into minor problems, like difficulties between parents and child care staff, linked to toddlers' sleep routines, or major ones between parents and adolescents, linked to the role of parents in mate selection.

Disciplining

Disciplining children is identified as a common topic of concern for many immigrant and refugee parents. Johal (2000), in his preliminary oral history study of Indian immigrants from the state of Punjab, India, notes that parents disapprove of their children questioning parental authority. The Latin American parents in Kulig's study (1998) have voiced similar concerns, where children reportedly threatened to call the police if their parents administered corporal punishment. This was identified as a concern especially because of the ways that parents felt the misbehaviour of their children reflected badly on their families.

Cultural interpretations of parenting styles

While North American experts regularly identify parenting styles as authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive ("laissez-faire") and see the authoritative as the ideal because they believe it results in far fewer problems for children, observant researchers note that this will depend upon the culture of the family. People from a culture that traditionally mandates considerable respect for the authority of older family members may find that the authoritarian style of parenting in that community produces children who are as happy, successful, and well-balanced as any others (Hall, 1977; Levine, 1980).

Role changes

Immigration causes changes in family dynamics and relationships. Melpa Kamateros (1998), for example, discusses the changes that can occur in family roles as children of immigrants are pressed into the role of "social interpreters". This reversal of familiar ways of interacting can continue to be a parenting challenge even for families who have been in Canada for some time. Extended family support that families are used to having are often no longer there. Immigrant families are much more isolated and parents are pressured to play the roles of friends as well as parents.

Maintaining family ties

Maintaining family and community ties are also essential aspects of social life for newcomers in Canada. The inclusion of children in different kinds of family activities by East Indian parents is a case in point. Yoshida and Davies (1984), in their article on parenting practises, children, and physical and mental health, pointed out that: "Generally, children accompanied their parents, staying out as late as they did–it is an evening out with the children" (p. 5). The need for child care is met by extended family members. In the study by Kulig (1998), newcomer parent participants stated that the family was still the main focus of their lives since settlement, despite the changes in context (Kulig, 1998).

Maintaining cultural heritage

The value of keeping intact the family cultural heritage was cited as another area of concern. In the case of Somali parents, it was stated that there exists a "cultural conflict between the values of the parents and the value of the society in which they are growing up" (Coomarasamy & Shire, 1988, p. 59). East Indian immigrant communities studied by Wakil et al. (1981) describe a need for them to retain their cultural heritage as a rationale for not being completely assimilated. Living in Canada and being able to maintain the cultural heritage which parents and children bring with them from their countries of origin, is an issue of conflict to parents (Johal, 2000). For parents with older children, practices such as dating and children socializing with members of the opposite sex are issues of consternation. This is also applicable to the freedom of socialization of

young Latin American adults, especially women, who, their parents feel, need more protection (Kulig, 1998).

Expectations toward schools

One of the emerging themes in the area of parenting and parental contributions or expectations is the importance these parents see in the education provided to their children, and the desire for their children to make maximum use of the educational opportunities available to them in Canada. Parents from certain ethnic groups, such as Sri Lankan Tamil parents, tend to emphasise the importance of academic achievement (Coomarasamy & Shire, 1988). In a study conducted by Kulig (1998), parent participants from three Latin American countries described a keen interest in the educational services available to their children, which were denied to them in their countries of origin. With special reference to female children, the authors report on the female respondents who stated that "...things would be different for their daughters; they wanted them to go to school, to have an education and career" (p. 475).

Interactions with schools

The parents' concerns over their children's well-being at school is a salient one. Both Sri Lankan Tamil and Somali women experienced frustration in being unable to supervise their children's school work because of existing language barriers (Coomarasamy & Shire, 1988). Immigrants' reports of their children having experiences with discrimination and racism in the school system (which may, for example, take the form of children being placed back in school), is disturbing (Lilith Research Consultants, 1985). Bernhard et al. (1998) also found that Latin American parents experienced a sense of frustration about their children's schooling, and felt "left in the dark about problems" (p. 78).

Parenting expectations

Warren, Samuel, King and Yealland (1998) explored parenting expectations when they interviewed new Canadian adolescents. They found, for example, a great deal of cultural variation around parents' career expectations for their children, adolescents' willingness to talk openly with their parents about issues of sexuality, and the frequency of arguments with parents.

Transition in immigration

Sometimes, the conditions surrounding immigration itself can create parenting dilemmas, according to Warren et al. (1998). For example, in cases where the parents immigrate at different times and the family is separated (often true for West Indian families), or where one parent returns to the country of origin for large blocks of time (sometimes true for Chinese families) there may be challenges around re-connecting with fathers.

Supports for Immigrant Parents

Immigrant parents cannot thrive without access to the social support provided by neighbours, friends, extended family, and other community supports. Whether their parenting concerns are related to their experience as immigrants or not, there is some research evidence to suggest that new Canadian parents may have difficulty accessing parenting support when they need it. Some examples of these include:

- According to Weinfeld (1998) families who do not have relatives or friends from their community of origin living in Canada face a much more difficult challenge in adapting to life in Canada.

- Kamateros (1998) reports that fear of disclosure, resulting from negative experiences in country of origin or during the immigration process, can be a self-imposed barrier.

- Support services create barriers too. Julie Dotsch (1999) reviewed tools used to assess young children along a variety of dimensions and found that many are culturally biased. She advocated for an approach to assessment that is family driven, attentive to the need to address barriers such as language, culture, hours of service and waiting lists.

- Often, the primary language of children in new Canadian families is English, which means they not only speak but also think in different languages than their parents. Assanand (1998) feels that one way to help teens and parents understand the clashes they experience is to teach them about adolescent development, and how the same developmental need (e.g., a sense of self and identity) gets dealt with differently in different cultures.

- Some immigrant parents crave opportunities to discuss role divisions between fathers and mothers, family violence, and custodial issues in a safe and non-judgmental environment (Beauregard & Brown, 2000).

- Research reported by Green (1998) suggests that the post-traumatic stress experienced by refugee children is not dealt with well by current services, or by refugee parents. She sees the school as an excellent and under-utilized forum for intervention on this issue.

Collaborative Structure

This research study was a collaborative effort among several partners. It was an example of a successful partnering of an independent community research organization, academics (from two Universities), and non-profit organizations.

CREHS and CERIS were the lead organizations for the project. Joanna Ochocka and Rich Janzen from CREHS, and Kenise Murphy Kilbride and Paul Anisef from CERIS were the principal investigators. Both lead organizations contracted and hired researchers to carry out the research tasks under their responsibility.

The CREHS research team

The Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) is an independent, not-for-profit organization established in 1982. Located in Kitchener, Ontario, CREHS is overseen by a board of directors that includes academics, service providers, and consumers of health and social services. CREHS is a leader in participatory action research in Canada. It brings this leadership into its work on immigrant settlement and family support issues. CREHS's strength is in being able to meaningfully involve stakeholder groups in order to work toward a common purpose.

In addition to the primary investigators (Joanna Ochocka and Rich Janzen), the CREHS research team consisted of a Project Manager (Purnima Sundar), a graduate practicum student (Christina Fuller) and sixteen research assistants hired to recruit and conduct focus groups and feedback sessions.

The sixteen research assistants were hired on the basis of their verbal and written skills in English and one of the identified languages, their facilitation skills, and their familiarity with their local ethnic community in Waterloo Region. Facilitators received in-depth training sessions and ongoing support by CREHS throughout their involvement in the project.

The CERIS research team

The Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) was established in March of 1996 to study the settlement of immigrants into the economic, social, political and cultural life of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The purpose of its establishment by federal funds is to provide governments and non-governmental organizations with information that will enable them to design and implement the most useful policies in areas related to immigration and settlement. With centres in Montreal, Edmonton, and Vancouver, CERIS is a major component of Canada's participation in the international Metropolis Project. CERIS is a collaborative project governed by a Management Board that encompasses Ryerson Polytechnic University, the University of Toronto, York University, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, and the United Way of Greater Toronto.

In addition to the primary investigators, Kenise Murphy Kilbride (Ryerson Polytechnic University) and Paul Anisef (York University), CERIS employed a Project Manager (Etta Anisef) and additional researchers including: Vappu Tyyska (Ryerson Polytechnic University), Mehrunissa Ali (Ryerson Polytechnic University), Amina Malko and Laura

Maniago (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants) and Lillian Petroff (The Multicultural History Society of Ontario).

A large number of research assistants were also involved on the CERIS team. Twenty-four research assistants were hired by OCASI in Toronto and another 12 in Ottawa to conduct focus group interviews and individual interviews. Research assistants received in-depth training from OCASI, CERIS and CREHS, and ongoing support from OCASI.

MHSO recruited five interviewers to conduct key informant interviews. Student research assistants were also hired at York and Ryerson Universities to conduct the literature review and for data analysis.

Stakeholder based committee

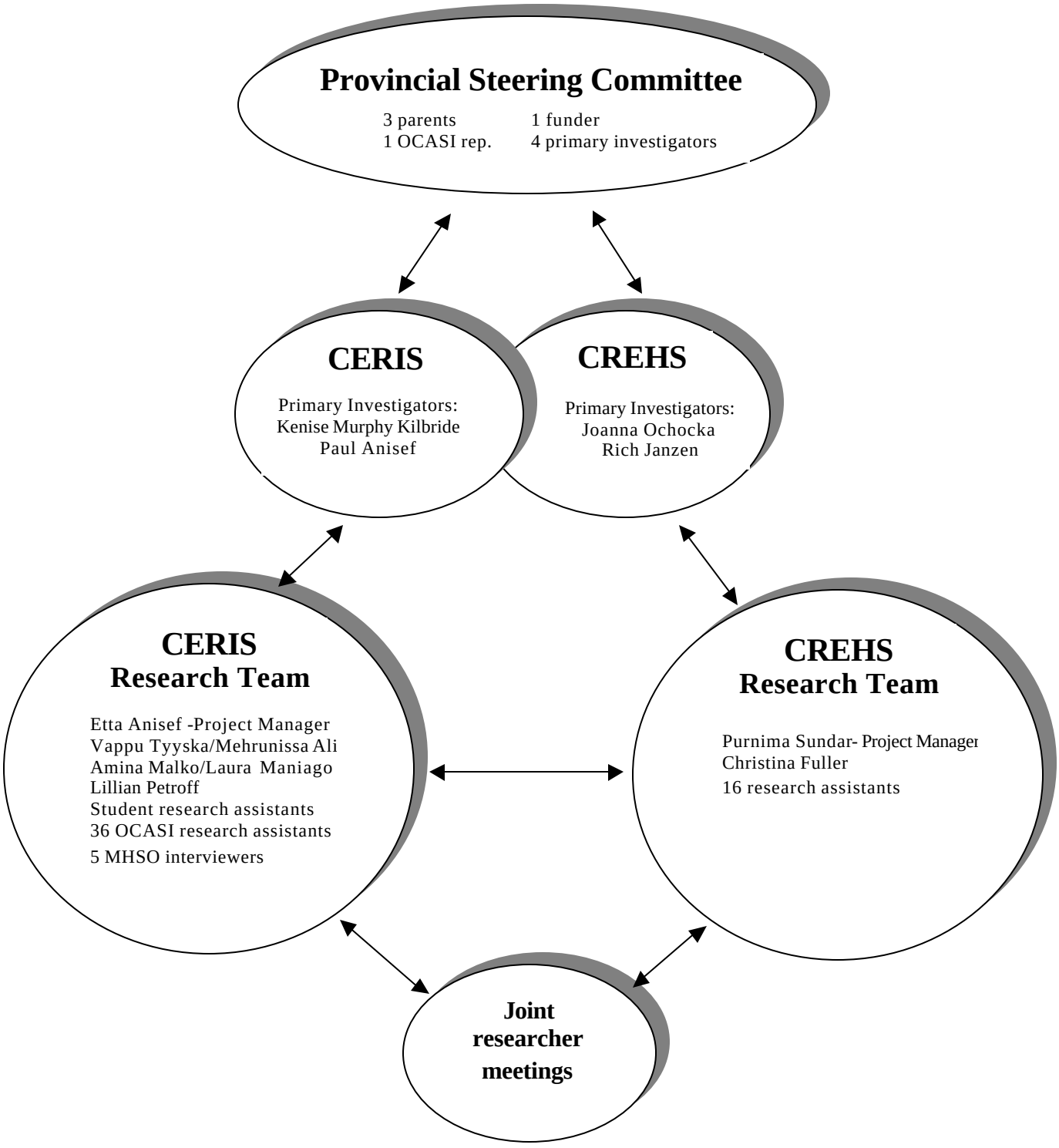
The research project was overseen by a nine-member stakeholder based committee. The role of the stakeholder steering committee was to provide overall guidance to the project and to develop the study's final recommendations.

Our past community-based research experience has taught us about the importance of having a stakeholder committee guide the research process. In a sense, the committee represents a mini-laboratory of the broader community where the challenges of a new strategy can be played out and tested before implementation. Facilitating such a group also creates momentum and increases the likelihood that findings will be acted upon.

This committee met three times during the life of the project. Two face-to-face meetings were held; once near the beginning of the project, and once near the end. A teleconference was also held during the middle of the project. The committee consisted of immigrant parents, the funder, a representative of OCASI and the primary investigators. Steering committee members included:

- Connie Sorio, Toronto parent
- Daniela Seskar-Hencic, Waterloo parent
- Malika Cherif-Malik, Ottawa parent
- Isabel Mahoney, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Rebecca Dale, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Joanna Ochocka, Centre for Research and Education in Human Services
- Rich Janzen, Centre for Research and Education in Human Services
- Paul Anisef, Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement
- Kenise Murphy Kilbride, Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement

Structure of Project



Research Approach

This study used **qualitative** methods to gain rich and deep insights concerning the knowledge and practices newcomer families employ with respect to parenting and child rearing. It allowed parents to tell their stories and thereby captured parents' experiences within and across ethno-specific groups. The use of a triangulation of methods that includes conducting key informant interviews, focus groups, and individual interviews strengthened the credibility of the study (Patton, 1990).

The study also used a **participatory** and **action-oriented** research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord, 1998). By this we mean that the project involved, in various ways, the groups of people who have a stake in the issue of immigrant parenting (i.e., immigrant parents, family support programs and immigrant service providers). The research partners and steering committee members will oversee the research process, review all written summaries and reports, and develop recommendations. All research participants will receive feedback (written or oral) of project findings.

Research Methodology

Our workplan included four phases over an eight-month period. Each of these phases is described below.

PHASE I—Getting started

The first phase of the study dealt with project planning. Specifically it involved forming the research teams, developing protocols and analysis framework, and forming a project steering committee. Phase I ended with the first project steering committee meeting held in Toronto. The agenda included developing principles for working together, finalizing the project workplan, and providing feedback on all interview protocols.

PHASE II—Information gathering

The methods used to gather information included:

Literature review: A postdoctoral student undertook an extensive review of the literature on cross-cultural parenting issues, and specifically on parenting issues related to the identified ethnic groups. The review included scholarly, and government and community-based literature within and outside of Canada. The literature review also helped to refine the interview instruments for subsequent stages of the research.

Key informant interviews: A total of 24 interviews were held in Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo. The purpose of the key informant interviews was to understand the main parenting issues immigrants face and their existing supports from the perspective of service providers, academics and policy makers.

Key informants were identified by the project partners and by the steering committee. Efforts were made to recruit participants from a variety of perspectives: legal, health and mental health, education, welfare, family support, and settlement.

Focus groups with parents: A total of 50 focus groups were held in three sites across Ontario (Toronto, Ottawa, and Waterloo). Half of these groups were with mothers only, and the other half with fathers only. Each focus group was held with one of the twelve targeted language groups, and included parents with children ranging in age from infancy to 18 years old. Efforts were made to recruit parents with children of varying ages.

A total of 24 interviews were held in Toronto, two for each language group in the study (one with mothers and one with fathers). Another 14 groups were held in Waterloo (representing mother and father groups in seven languages) and 12 in Ottawa (representing mother and father groups in six languages). All 12 language groups were represented across Ottawa and Waterloo. Although facilitators fluent in the identified language conducted the interviews, all interview findings were subsequently summarized into English for analysis.

The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the main parenting issues immigrants face and their existing supports from the perspective of immigrant mothers and fathers. Two pilot groups (one with Polish mothers, one with Polish fathers) were held to test the protocol. Protocol questions matched the objectives of the study and included questions about:

- parenting orientation (beliefs and values)
- parenting styles (putting beliefs and values into practice)
- Canadian context (similarities and differences in parenting between home and new country)
- modification (parenting and family relationship changes since coming to Canada)
- parenting supports needed and used by immigrant parents
- contributions of immigrant parents to other Canadian families.

Focus group participants were recruited in two ways. Some participants were recruited through local service providers, while others were recruited through less formal networks. Informal recruitment strategies included the facilitators' own networks within their community, friends and family of participants, ethnic businesses, advertisement in media, ethnic clubs/associations, places of worship etc.

Distribution of Focus Groups Across Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo Region

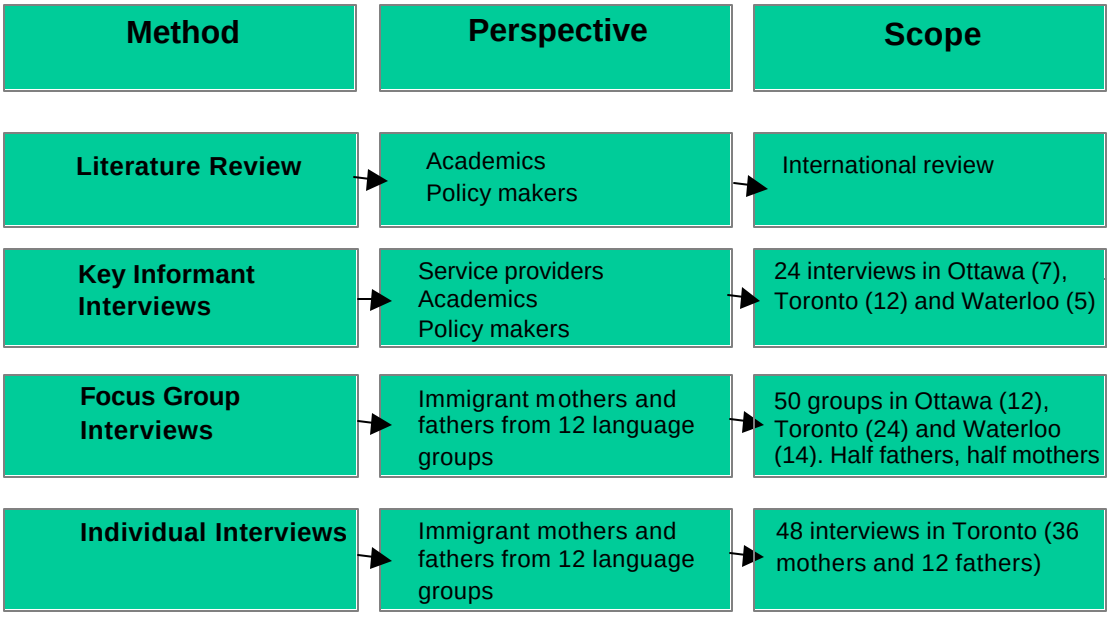
Two focus groups were held for a given language in each site; one with mothers only, the other with fathers only

Toronto	Ottawa	Waterloo Region
China-Mandarin		China-Mandarin
China- Cantonese	China- Cantonese	
Sri Lanka-Tamil	Sri Lanka-Tamil	
India- Gujarati		India- Punjabi
India-Punjabi	India- Gujarati	
Filipino-Tagalog	Filipino-Tagalog	
Afghanistan-Pashtu or Dari		Afghanistan-Pashtu or Dari
Iran-Farsi		Iran-Farsi
Central America-Spanish		Central America-Spanish
Somalia-Somali	Somalia-Somali	Somalia-Somali
Russia-Russian	Russia-Russian	
Former Yugo.-Serbo-Croatian		Former Yugo.-Serbo-Croatian
N=24	N=12	N=14

Individual in-depth interviews with parents: In order to achieve greater insight into any differences among the three children age cohorts (0-5, 6-13, 14-18), a total of 48 individual interviews were held with parents in Toronto. Parents were those who had been most insightful about the issues pertaining to the specific age groups in the focus groups. Protocols were developed after focus groups were held.

Three interviews of mothers per ethnic group were conducted, one for each age cohort. This was done on the assumption that mothers work more closely with children and will have more details of parenting experiences to share. Fathers, however, have serious parenting concerns as well, even if they are not so extensively and intensively involved in parenting. Therefore one father per ethnic group was interviewed. This father was one who had at least one child aged 15 or older, so that the parenting issues of all ages of children were reported on at least retrospectively. Because gender-specific issues were important to the research, parents selected for the individual interviews were those with both sons and daughters.

Summary of Information Gathering Methods



PHASE III: Analysis

Each of the above methods were analyzed independently, but using a common framework of analysis. Research team members responsible for the data collection of a particular method were responsible for the analysis of information within that method.

The analysis framework included noting similarities and differences along the following dimensions:

- fathers and mothers
- age of children (0-5, 6-13 and 14-18).
- language group
- gender of children
- site (large, medium, small urban area)

PHASE IV: Write-up and feedback

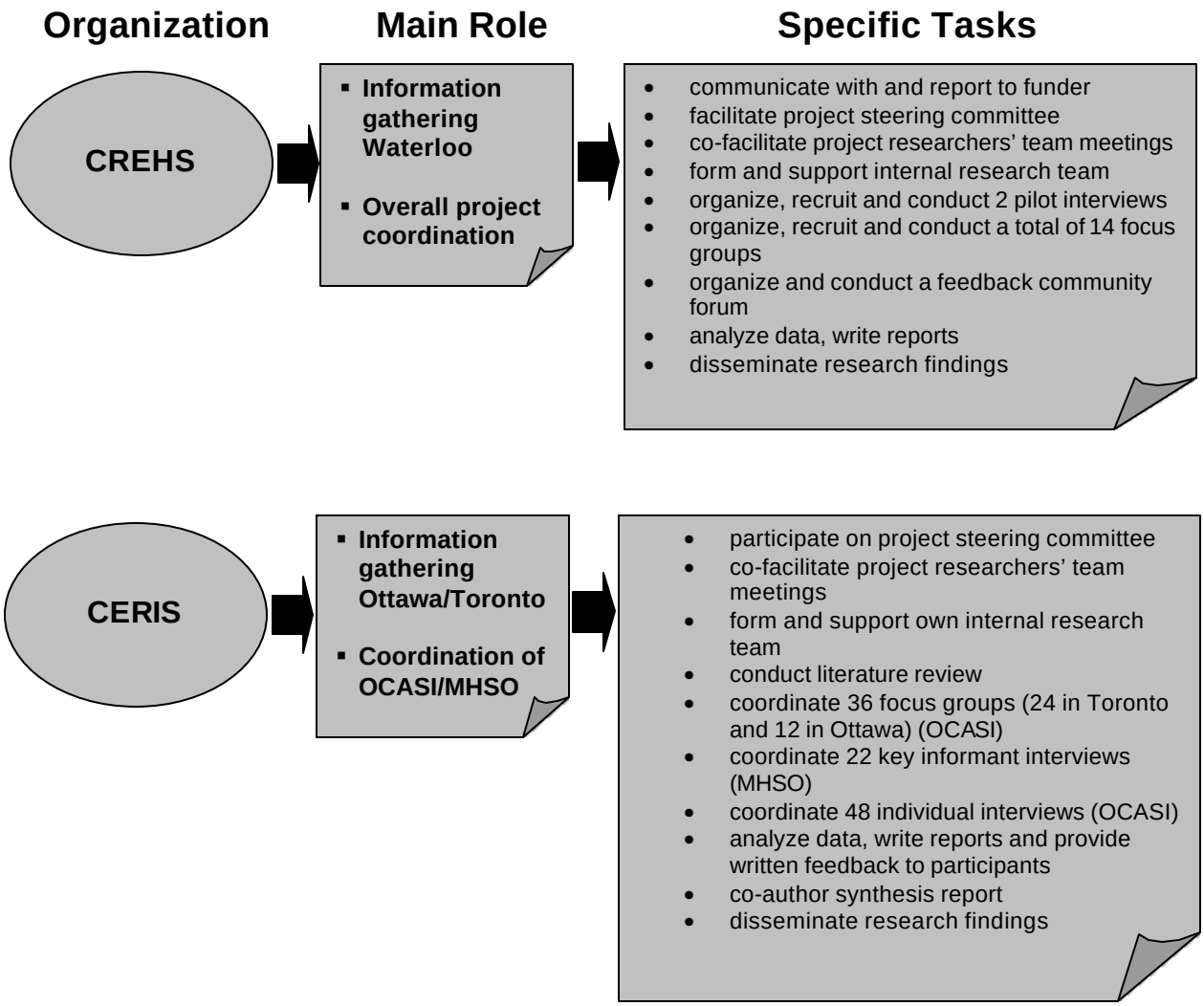
Five draft reports were written for each of the methods used in the study (literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups in Waterloo Region, focus groups in Toronto/Ottawa, and individual interviews in Toronto. The compilation of draft reports was then shared among research partners and steering committee members for review and comment. A synthesis of recommendations was then developed at a joint researcher's meeting and further refined at the final steering committee meeting.

A written summary of research findings was given to research participants. A community forum was held in Waterloo Region as an additional method to feedback information to all focus group participants collectively.

Process of Working Together

At the beginning of the project the research partners recognized that a project of this scope and under very tight time lines required careful planning. As a result, careful effort was made to clarify responsibilities of the various research partners, and to develop a comprehensive communication strategy throughout the project. These efforts helped to facilitate effective implementation of the project.

Specific roles and responsibilities among research partners were determined at the onset of the study. A formal partnership agreement was developed between partners. The two lead organizations (CREHS and CERIS) divided their responsibilities as outlined below.



Communication between research partners was also very important. The project communication strategy included the following:

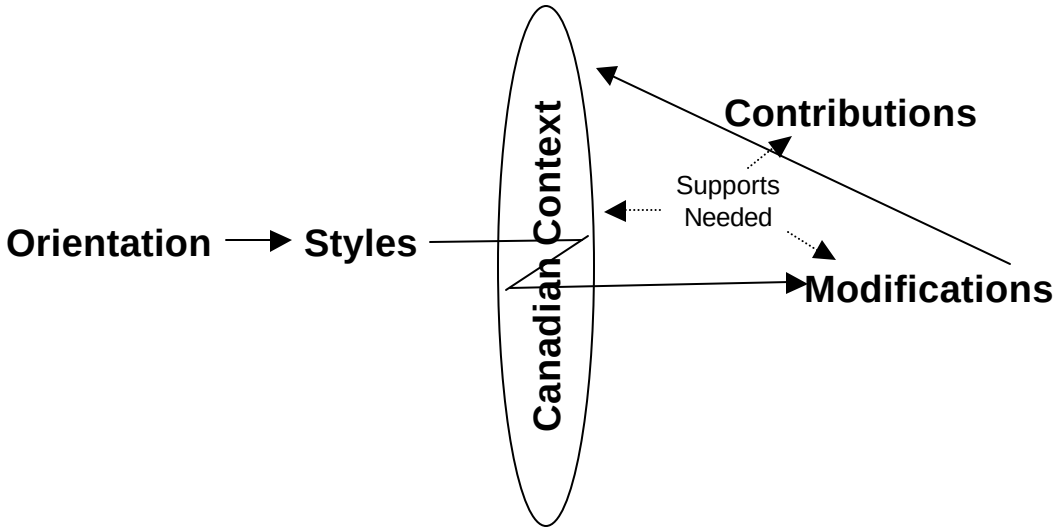
- ✓ Regular email contact among primary investigators and project managers throughout the project.
- ✓ Bi-weekly teleconferences among primary investigators and project managers throughout the duration of the project.
- ✓ Bi-monthly face-to-face joint researcher meetings with all research partners.
- ✓ Bi-monthly steering committee meetings (2 face-to-face and 1 teleconference)
- ✓ Posting project documents on a website developed specifically for this project.

Framework for Understanding Immigrant Parenting

Understanding parenting issues is complex. It is even more complex in the context of immigration. The danger of developing any framework for immigrant parenting is in its oversimplification of this parenting process. The diagram below shows what we have come to see as the main components of immigrant parenting (note that each main component corresponds to one of the study's objectives).

The framework for understanding issues of immigrant parenting was developed by the study team after an initial review of parenting literature. It was later refined by the analysis of data collected through the study. As such, the framework builds on existing parenting models but it greatly expands and adapts these models into the immigrant context.

A Framework for Understanding Immigrant Parenting



The framework begins with *parenting orientations*. Orientations are the beliefs, biases and values that form a parent's expectations for their children's behaviours and hopes for their children's futures. Parenting orientations include the values parents want to pass on to their children (what makes a "good" child), the qualities that parents should adopt (what makes a "good" parent), and the aspirations or future goals parents have for their children.

Parenting styles are the implementation of parenting orientations. Parenting styles include the ways that parents relate to and interact with their children. In other words, parenting styles are how people go about doing parenting; how they shape their children and the relationships they build with them.

The *Canadian context* is an intervention, or filter, potentially impacting the parenting orientations and parenting styles of newcomers. As new Canadians, immigrant parents have entered into a new context. Our interest in this study was to understand what immigrant parents perceive to be the Canadian way of parenting. These ways of parenting might be similar or different to the ones that they themselves hold.

Parenting modifications are the changes that immigrants make in their parenting orientation and styles as a result of living within the Canadian context. When people move to a new place, they often find that they have to adjust to new ways that are different from their home country. The participants in this study have lived in Canada for three years or less. This relatively short period of time limited the understanding of parenting modifications that might be made over a longer period of time.

Parenting contributions are those ways in which immigrants contribute to an understanding and practice of parenting within Canada. The immigrant settlement process has frequently been described as a reciprocal relationship between immigrants and the host society (e.g., Bourhis, 2000). This "two-way street" understanding of settlement acknowledges that immigrants not only adapt to their new home, but that they also influence and shape this society.

The final component in our framework deals with the *parenting supports* available and needed for immigrant parents. We will argue that parenting supports are needed to help immigrant parents understand and settle within their new Canadian context, to help them through the process of parenting modifications, and to help encourage mutual exchange around parenting issues between immigrants and other Canadians.

The diagram below shows how each of the main components described above are influenced by contextual factors. Understanding immigrant parenting requires such a dynamic model that acknowledges that perspectives differ across cultures and across individuals, even within similar cultures. These perspectives also change as individuals and groups evolve over time through contact with other influences.

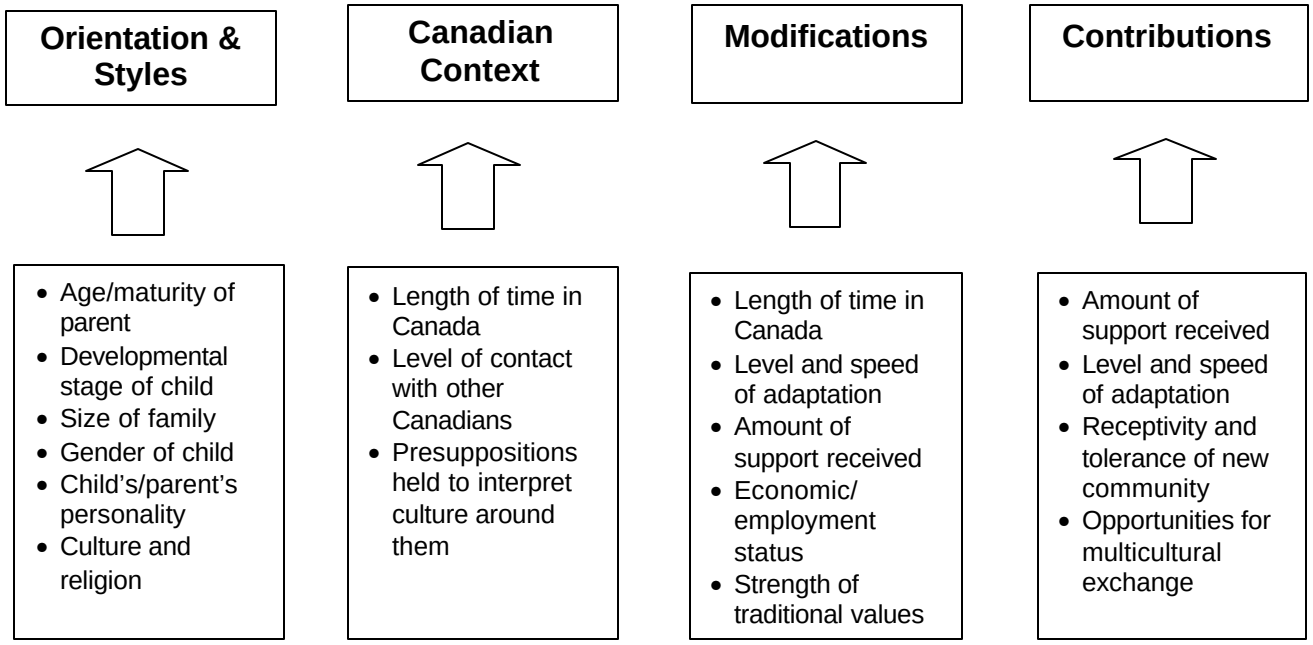
So, for example, newcomer parents may have very different parenting orientations and styles depending on such factors as their maturity as a parent, the number, age, gender

and personalities of their children, as well as their cultural and religious backgrounds. When coming to Canada, immigrants may perceive the Canadian context differently. These perceptions are influenced by such factors as how long they have lived here, how much contact they have with other Canadians outside of their own cultural group, and the worldview or presuppositions they hold that help them to interpret the world around them.

Similarly, there are influences determining to what extent individual immigrants modify their ways of parenting. Examples could include their length of time in Canada, how quickly they adapt to Canadian society, the amount of support they receive as parents, the economic stability of the family, and the strength of their traditional cultural and religious values.

And finally there are factors influencing to what extent individual newcomers are able to contribute to the understanding and practice of parenting within Canada. Examples of these are also listed in the diagram below.

Factors Influencing the Components of Immigrant Parenting



How the Remaining Reports are Organized

In addition to this introductory report, this study has produced another six reports. Five reports summarize the information from each of the study's research method (i.e., literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups in Waterloo Region, focus groups in Toronto/Ottawa and individual interviews). These five reports situate themselves in the framework of immigrant parenting described above.

While each report deals with a unique source of information, an effort was made to have consistency in how these are reported. Each report therefore includes the following sections:

- Purpose
- Methodology
- Findings and interpretations
- Conclusions

The final report provides overarching conclusions and recommendations based on the information from previous reports. These recommendations are based on a synthesis of the main conclusions of the five other reports. The final recommendations were refined and approved by the project's steering committee.