Parenting Challenges and Adaptive Strategies: A Qualitative Analysis of Asian Indian Immigrant Families in Canada

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DEDICATION

May the immigrant people scatter and enrich a new land with their culture, beliefs, and traditional practices!
Abstract

This study examined parenting challenges among Asian Indian immigrant families who migrated from a multicultural society to Canada and how they adapted to their new multicultural environment. I interviewed 19 Indian immigrant parents who have lived in Canada for more than 3 years, asking them to share their parenting challenges and the adaptive strategies they had used to integrate into the Canadian cultural environment. Being with a community of other Indian immigrants and/or members of the extended family played facilitated smoother transitions toward their new cultural environment. Traditional food served as an important bridge to their Indian traditions just as Canadian food served as a bridge to new cultural experiences. At the structural level, all the participants suggested that Canadian schools in the Niagara region should implement a more multicultural perspective. Participants highlighted the importance of family support, community support, and a willingness to accept new lifestyles and career choices.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Parenting can be a complex and life-changing cultural experience for immigrant families when they migrate from one society to settle in another. In addition to maintaining their cultural identity, immigrant families may face challenges pertaining to parenting their children in a new sociocultural environment that prioritizes a different set of parenting values (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). Parenting is a mix of what parents learned from their own childhood experiences and acquired cultural behaviours (Sanagavarapu, 2010). Differences between one’s childhood upbringing and one’s current parenting practices can exacerbate parenting stress (Janzen, Ochocka, Sunder, & Fuller, 2001). Parenting challenges may be felt by Indian1 immigrant families in Canada given the contrasting cultural values and expectations between Indians and the Canadian cultural mainstream (Jacob, 2017; Raj, 2015).

It may therefore be important to identify potential barriers that Indian immigrant parents face when they arrive in Canada and to recognize the efforts they make in transitioning to a new cultural environment. There is a need to understand these barriers (and accompanying opportunities), as recent increases in international migration are now the major source of population growth in Canada.

According to 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2017a), there were 7.5 million people living in Canada who had come through the immigration process: 1 in 5 persons in Canada was an immigrant. Population projections for 2012 to 2036 reveal that approximately 71% of the total population increase will come from international migration (Statistics Canada, 2017b). The Statistics Canada (2017b) report further adds that an increase in the death rate (i.e., the loss of the

1 In this paper, “Indian” refers to people from India and not Native Americans or Indigenous peoples.
baby boomers) and a low fertility rate among the local population highlight the significance of immigration; these trends will continue over the next 25 years. Therefore, international migration is a progressively more important strategy for sustained population growth and increase in human capital for Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Immigration also makes important contributions to a Canadian society that is multicultural and diverse, innovatively enriching Canada’s social, intellectual, and cultural heritage (Daya, 2016).

The results of the 2016 projections (Statistics Canada, 2017b), showed that Indians are currently the second largest and the fastest growing ethnic group in Canada. This recent Statistics Canada report showed that the number of immigrants from India rose 74% from 2001 to 2011, increasing from 314,690 to 547,890. The increase has made India the top source of Canada’s immigration, with Ontario their top destination. Ontario became the new home for 55% of Indian immigrants in 2001 and 57% in 2011. From 2006 to 2015, a total of 323,746 immigrants from India arrived in Ontario. Many of these new immigrants were young and accompanied by their families.

Indian immigrants often bring with them a strong sense of traditional cultural beliefs and practices (Sahoo & Sangha, 2010). They tend to hold on to core values such as family norms, child-rearing practices, and the relationship between parent and child, as well as the mother–father relationship; these are considered different from dominant cultural values (Jacob, 2017). Berry and colleagues have assessed the acculturation strategies of immigrants from diverse ethnic groups in North America and their works are cited in numerous studies exploring the impact of immigration on immigrants, including Indians, Chinese, Mexicans, and Africans (Berry, 2010; Berry & Hou, 2016). They found that, in contrast to assimilation, segregation, and marginalization, integration was the preferred acculturative strategy used by immigrants; Berry
and colleagues also stated a positive correlation between psychological well-being and using the integration strategy.

Due to the significant influx in recent times of Indian immigrants to Canada, it is important to study Indian immigrant families so that we can enhance our understanding of the family values, beliefs, and child-rearing practices they carry and the challenges they face as parents functioning in a significantly different culture. There is limited literature focusing on the impact of immigration on Indian immigrants’ parenting and the challenges they face while raising their children in a Canadian context. Indian immigrant parents may need assistance in their settlement process to help ensure a smooth transition. The goal of my thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of their parenting experiences in their new country.

However, to understand some of the traditional cultural values and beliefs accompanying Indian families that immigrate to Canada, it is important to begin by examining contemporary social life and family structure in India. In the following section, I highlight those cultural values that are emphasized in Indian tradition. This will provide some contextual insights about Indian immigrant parents’ experiences (discussed in the result section) in their new cultural context.

**Contemporary Social and Family Structure in India**

In terms of culture, there are perhaps few countries in the world characterised by such diversity of population as India; this diversity can be seen in regional languages, castes, religions, food, and so on (Sahoo & Sangha, 2010; Sondhi, 2017). Globalization and other contemporary economic changes have also added variety to Indian culture (Centre of Global Education, 2017).

Traditionally, family is one of the main socializing institutions of Indian society and serves as a primary agent in transmitting cultural values to the next generation. “Family and kinship provide the basis of the individual’s identity as well as facilitating continuity of culture.
and religion” (Choudhry, 2001, p. 378). Respect for elders and filial piety are other core components of the Indian family system. Parents and elders are given great importance because of their lifelong experience and worldly wisdom (Dutt & Kit, 2014). They are often consulted for advice and support, and for their guidance in resolving family problems and conflicts (Choudhry, 2001).

Decisions about children’s education, career choices, and marriage are made primarily by parents and elders (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010; Fouad, Kim, Ghosh, Chang, & Figueiredo, 2016; Jacob, 2017); children are expected to bring respect and honour to their family name by obeying their parents and elders (Jacob, 2017). Though these cultural practices are in transition, the majority of Indian families are still generally close-knit and characterized by respect for elders, social cohesion, filial piety, and a moral obligation to look after elderly parents (Jacob, 2017; Seymour, 2010; Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010).

In addition, family structure is based on a hierarchical (patriarchal) ladder, social interdependence, and the joint family system (Panda & Gupta, 2004). Hierarchy plays a prominent role in family and kinship. For example, men are considered superior to women, and senior relatives are respected by junior relatives. Younger siblings are expected to use respectful terms when addressing older siblings rather than calling them by name; the use of such terms is considered the norm (CGE, 2017).

Social interdependence is another important aspect of Indian culture and is encouraged through a common belief that solidarity with the group strengthens compliance and stability in family life and community (Jambunathan et al., 2000). An Indian family tends to emphasize family unity, promote social cohesion, and encourage mutual dependence, placing greater importance on collectivism than individualism (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Seymour, 2010; Tuli,
2012); this makes India a moderately collective society. “Indeed, family needs are perceived to supersede those of the individual. Collective identity is valued, and individualism is equated with self-centredness. This value system is kept alive through the socialization of the younger generation” (Choudhry, 2001, p. 378). In a collective set-up, family members feel intense emotional interdependence, empathy, closeness, and loyalty to each other (Bejanyan, 2015).

This brings us to one of the most essential aspects of an Indian family: the emphasis on a stable family life along with an extended or joint family system. The joint family is an integral part of Indian culture. It incorporates families living, working, eating, and worshipping together — functions that are all passed down through generations (Medora, 2007). This system often allows grandparents and other members of the extended family to share the responsibility for child-rearing with the biological parents and helps in cultivating socially accepted cultural behaviours in young children (Inman, Howard, Walker, & Beaumont, 2007). Child-rearing is not the sole responsibility of biological parents but rather a collective effort shared by extended family.

This traditional family system is further strengthened by incorporating religion and spirituality. Family and societal responsibilities are often carried out as prescribed in religious literatures, which provide guidelines and a framework for living life at a personal as well as social level (Choudhry, 2001; Fishman, Raval, Daga, & Raj, 2014; Medora, 2007). Religious and spiritual practices are consciously and unconsciously retained by Indian families living overseas (Baptiste, 2005; Fishman et al., 2014).

In recent times, due to an influx of urbanization, industrialization, and globalization, the family structure in Indian urban areas is slowly changing as the ideal concept of family life is not widely followed in modern India (Seymour, 2010). Familial changes seen in power distribution,
marital norms, and the role of women (Chadda & Deb, 2013) are affecting child development and related child-rearing practices (Seymour, 2010). For example, more families are abandoning the extended family model and instead adopting the nuclear family model or a modified extended family system where the main caregivers for children are just the biological parents; they then play a key role in introducing traditional values, beliefs, and religion to their children (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Garimella, 2008). However, the biological parents in these nuclear or modified family systems often keep in contact with relatives and kin so that they can receive support from members of their extended family with child-rearing, financial assistance for childcare, household chores, and so on (Medora, 2007).

Evidently, a patriarchal system is not a thing of the past but is still reflected in modern nuclear families. This system is evident when the father supports the family financially and makes decisions on the education and career paths for the children, as well as on health care and other family matters. The mother, in this scenario, serves in the primary caregiver role for the children and maintains the daily household routines (Dyck, 2003; Martins & Reid, 2007). Although many Indian women have started working outside the household, it is still the primary responsibility of the mother to carry out the household duties and take care of the children; the father contributes less in a caregiving role (Chaudhary, 2013; Tuli, 2012).

Just as family and religion are important parts of Indian culture, food plays a prominent role in everyday life as well as in festivals and religious celebrations. In many Indian families, food is viewed not just as a way to provide energy but as providing the spice of life, reflecting the essence and experience of Indians at both personal and collective levels (Zaman, 2010). Food provides an opportunity for socializing with immediate family, relatives, and communities. Indian cuisines have absorbed influences not only from the ethnically diverse subcontinent but
from virtually every corner of the globe (Nandy, 2004). Another salient feature of Indian food is the varied use of spices to enhance the flavour of a dish as well as for healing purposes (Mangalassary, 2015; Srinivas, 2011). Traditionally, women do most of the food preparation; home-cooked meals are served to the members of the household (Goyal & Singh, 2007; Zaman, 2010).

Through the ages, the nature of food in India has evolved due to its connections with climate, culture, history, and geography (Mangalassary, 2015). Most of Indian traditional food consists of vegetarian dishes. The influence of Mughals (after the Mughal invasion) can be seen in Indian food as non-vegetarian dishes have become an important addition to culinary traditions (Nandy, 2004). Even European and Mexican cuisines have influenced the way Indian dishes have developed; for example, Continental food can now be found in India (Mangalassary, 2015; Srinivas, 2011). Fast-food culture is popular in present-day India, though it has begun to blend with the concept of Indian fast food (Goyal & Singh, 2007; Nandy, 2004; Srinivas, 2011).

The food choices of many Indian families have a significant affiliation with religion. Many followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism are vegetarian, in part because of a doctrine of noninjury or nonviolence (Srinivas, 2011). In these traditions, abstinence from eating meat stems from the belief that one should avoid harming other living creatures. Despite religious food restrictions, dietary practices do vary among those who practise the same faith, due either to there being different branches or denominations of a religious group or to individuals' or families' own degree of orthodoxy and religious adherence (Srinivas, 2011). For example, in Jainism, abstinence has been extended to include the non-consumption of onions and garlic.
It is estimated that by 2050, India will become the world’s most populous nation, surpassing China (CGE, 2017). This will cause a further decrease in the land–population ratio over the intervening period, which may result in a decrease of natural resources, including forests, farmland, and water tables (Gosling, 2013). Previous increases in population and the reduction of available resources have led to unemployment, poor living conditions, a more competitive environment (CGE, 2017), and problems of corruption and favouritism (Walton-Roberts, 2003). These are a few of the factors that contribute to Indians choosing to emigrate to foreign countries. Other factors include their perceptions that more employment opportunities, better working conditions, and a higher standard of living will be available (Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005; Daya, 2016; Naujoks, 2009).

**Indian Canadians at a Glance**

Today, Indian immigrants (also known as East Indians or Indo-Canadians) are one of the most diverse ethnocultural populations of Canada. In Canada, data show that many Indian immigrants arrive in the country under either the family class category or the skilled worker category (Walton-Roberts, 2003). In some cases, a family settles first and is later joined by extended family or relatives, who may provide additional support to the primary caregiver of the family. Indian immigrant families tend to maintain a traditional family structure after their immigration. For example, in 2001, 24% of seniors of East Indian origin lived with their relatives, such as the family of a son or daughter (Lee & Edmonston, 2013). Indian immigrants are mostly professionals, skilled and technical workers, or entrepreneurs (Agarwal & Lovell, 2010). In the last two decades, the proportion of family class immigrants has declined significantly. Conversely, the proportion of skilled workers with advanced educational qualifications and proficiency in English has grown substantially due to changes in Canadian
immigration policy (Agarwal & Lovell, 2010). There is also a growing number of Indian-Canadians actively engaged in Canadian politics.

**Rationale for my Study**

Research documenting the experiences of immigrant families is of great importance to global societies like Canada and the United States. Several studies have explored different aspects of Indian immigrant families’ cultural experiences in America, including parenting experiences, expectations, achievements, and well-being. It is noteworthy that information on this recently increasing trend of Indian immigrant families settling in Canada, especially within Ontario, is limited.

Therefore, my study aims to identify and understand the importance of the traditional parenting values, beliefs, and developmental goals of Indian immigrant parents in Canada (see “Parenting Orientation” in Chapters 4-6) and explore some of the parenting challenges that Indian immigrant parents face due to their tradition-influenced parenting practices that are significantly dissimilar to local ones (see “Parenting Styles and Canadian Context” in Chapters 4-6). I try to identify the adaptive strategies that Indian immigrant parents use to reconcile cultural conflicts when living in Canada and the impacts of such changes or adjustments on their child-rearing practices (see “Parenting Modifications” in Chapters 4-6). My thesis also documents Indian immigrant parents’ analysis of existing resources and their preferences for types of supports and resources, particularly in the context of cultural integration (see “Recommendations” in Chapters 4-6). Finally, my thesis presents suggestions by Indian immigrant parents that opine for cross-cultural parenting dialogue between immigrant parents and local Canadian parents (see “Parenting Contributions” in Chapters 4-6) should be provided, along with a more multicultural approach to services aimed at helping newcomer immigrant
families achieve a smoother transition to Canadian culture without completely shedding their traditional family values.

Furthermore, my study delves into the child-rearing practices and developmental goals (such as education, character formation, health, happiness, and success) that Indian immigrant parents exercise or prioritize in raising their children that may differ from local cultural expectations. This information may be useful for educators in classroom settings when dealing with Indian immigrant children and would aid those who provide Indian immigrant families with a range of services related to parenting and childcare, such as counsellors, health professionals, and social service providers.

**Why a Specific Focus on the Indian-Canadian Integration Process?**

In “terms of economic progress and educational achievement”, the “Indian diaspora” has been a very successful immigrant group in both the United States and Canada (Chand, 2012, p. 8). Chand documented the experiences of the Indian diaspora in the United States and Canada and found differing integration outcomes. He argued that there is a difference in the acculturation policies of the host countries. Since immigration is an important driving force to sustain population growth in both the United States and Canada, integrating immigrants into mainstream society is crucial (Chand, 2012). The success or failure of their integration process depends on the dominant community’s attitude towards acculturation.

The United States has historically been seen as a “melting pot”, with the American preference being for assimilation, whereas Canada’s official policy has been multiculturalism (Chand, 2012; Sahoo & Sangha, 2010). Multiculturalism is seen to be a defining feature of the Canadian national identity that promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and an open attitude and
tolerance towards immigrants (National Post, 2011; Ng & Metz, 2015). According to Kymlicka (2012):

Multiculturalism arguably works best when it is genuinely multicultural — that is, when immigrants come from many different source countries, rather than coming overwhelmingly from a single source country. In Canada, for example, immigrants are drawn from all corners of the world, and no single ethnic group forms more than 15 percent of the total immigrant intake. In the United States, by contrast, because of the income disparity with its far less wealthy neighbor, 50 percent of immigrants come from Mexico. This has many consequences for the integration process (p. 23)

The differences between the acculturation policies of the United States and Canada lead to the U.S. Indian diaspora having more economic success due to its strong educational attainment, whereas the diaspora in Canada is much more politically prominent (Chand, 2012). Due to the variance in acculturation policies, the basis of the research conducted and cited for Indian-American immigrants should not be generalized and applied to theorizing about the adaptive strategies, including parental challenges, of Indian-Canadian immigrants.

Moreover, there have been numerous research studies done on South Asian or Asian immigrant families in a Canadian context. However, due to Asia’s vast diversity, the results of the research cannot be generalized to Indian immigrants. India is characterized by many unique aspects of language, diet, culture, and religion in comparison to other Asian groups (Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005). Indian immigrants have demonstrated a tendency to follow a more integrated approach to their settlement and show a relative ease in retaining core cultural norms while at the same time adopting specific aspects of mainstream culture (e.g., dress etiquette, English accent; Raj, 2015). In addition, given their voluntary migration in pursuit of a better life (Jacob, 2017), Indians may be more open to taking up characteristics of the host country while selectively maintaining their traditional culture. Therefore, Indian immigrants, coming as they do from a multicultural society, may demonstrate unique methods of integration and a range of adaptive
strategies when adjusting to the Canadian multicultural environment. These unique methods and strategies of integration require further consideration.

**Research Questions**

The two overarching research questions that guided my thesis are: what challenges are faced by Indian immigrant families in the Niagara region of Canada, and what adaptive strategies or approaches are used by immigrant parents to reconcile cultural differences? These research questions aim to gather information to provide a better understanding of the challenges to Indian immigrant parents. Additionally, my research questions are intended to lead to a better understanding of the adaptive strategies used by Indian immigrant families that contribute to a smooth transition to their host society.
Chapter 2:
Literature Review

Since limited literature is available on Indian immigrant parenting experiences within a Canadian context, the purpose of this literature review is to discuss the relevant and significant research studies regarding parenting challenges and adaptive strategies in immigrant families of diverse ethnic groups (visible minorities including Asians, Africans, and Hispanics) migrating to North America. Immigrant families share many characteristics; for instance, they often experience a decline in their occupational status, socialization, acceptance of their own experiences or upbringing, and familial support (Inman et al., 2007).

Recent studies suggest that immigrant parents from less-developed countries often sacrifice their own occupational ambitions and embrace the difficulties of settling into Canadian culture in the hope of providing a better future for their children (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). Research conducted by Janzen, et al. (2001) and by Sheriff (2009) has shown that rearing children is a demanding and complex task in a new cultural environment; immigrant parents experience challenges and acculturative stress. Differences between one’s childhood upbringing and one’s current parenting practices may cause considerable stress in the process of adjusting to a new culture.

Immigrant parents often have different developmental goals with respect to raising their children than do local parents in the host country. Maiter and George (2003) found that immigrant “mothers’ parenting goals and ways in which those goals were transmitted to their children were influenced by their internalized cultural values, beliefs and norms and external factors to their social context/environment” (p. 420). That means immigrants’ parenting goals are not static but change along with their social context after immigration into a new culture.
Parenting among immigrant families, and new immigrants in particular, thus requires balancing many changing realities and priorities. Exposed to a new cultural environment that challenges their thought processes, immigrant parents often develop child-rearing beliefs that help them establish a bicultural identity that may have positive effects on their family’s psychological well-being (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002).

**Parenting Challenges among Immigrant Parents**

Asian parents who migrate to Canada bring with them their cultural values and beliefs, so their norms for their children sometimes differ fundamentally from mainstream culture. For example, immigrant parents foster in their children a sense of interdependence to maintain closeness with family and community, whereas in Canadian culture, many parents try to introduce a sense of individualism in their children during their early years. Dosanjh and Ghuman (1997) asserted that “immigrant parents encourage their children to be conscious of and to appreciate the custom of familial interdependence rather than to follow and absorb the Euro-American style of rugged individualism” (p. 35). In this context, several studies have pointed to the tension between interdependence and individualism as one of the challenges immigrant parents face in adapting to a new culture (Inman et al., 2007; Sheriff, 2009).

In South Asian culture, respect and obedience towards one’s elders (a component of the hierarchal system) are cherished values that seem different from the values of the “individualistically oriented Euro-Canadian dominant culture” (Sheriff, 2009, p. 35). For example, there are respectful terms and formal titles to address elders and teachers in East India (e.g., “uncle” or “aunt” for elders, and “sir” or “madam” for teachers) and these may not be considered appropriate in the modern Canadian cultural environment. This may be a cultural shock to immigrant parents.
Another grey area involves the disciplining or harsh parenting practices (e.g. punishment for failures, strictness, authoritarian parenting etc.) that may be used by immigrant parents. In some cultures, parents may feel their children’s behaviours, accomplishments, and attitudes are a reflection on them, and see disciplining or harsh parenting practices as a way to discourage or avoid the tarnishing of the family reputation (Chang, 2007). These parenting practices might be a breach of normal conduct in the modern Canadian context. Therefore, the use of discipline, or traditional expectations of obedience and respect from one’s children, may pose unexpected challenges and consequences for many South Asian immigrant families in their new cultural environment.

Immigrant parents may encourage their children to participate more in family, as well as community and religious, activities so that children can maintain a close relationship to traditional values, beliefs, and practices. Inman (2006) and Jacob (2017) stated that many Indian parents work hard to maintain traditional family values — extended family, religious practices, encouraging interdependence in the children, respect for and obedience to elders — and thus confront many challenges and intergenerational conflicts raising children in their host country.

Maintaining cultural heritage and family norms (e.g., parental authority) is cited as a constant challenge that immigrant parents face throughout their cultural transition into a new country (Martins & Reid, 2007; Tyyska, 2008). Participants in the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO; 2010) focus groups felt that raising their children traditionally at home conflicted with the values their children were exposed to in school. For example, parents shared their concern about their young children threatening to call emergency services (911) regarding disciplinary action. In other cases, some parents were not comfortable with the perceived lack of discipline and respect for teachers that was permitted in some school settings. They reported that
this incivility had negative impacts on children’s behaviour at home, especially when children started questioning their parents’ cultural values and parenting practices such as the expectation of obedience and respect for parents that was traditional in the immigrant’s country of origin (SPCO, 2010; Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005). Key factors contributing to the abovementioned parental concerns include “lack of a culturally-sensitive approach and information on how the school system works in Canada. On the other hand, teachers face a lack of comprehensive information on immigrant family dynamics, expectations, customs and traditions” (SPCO, 2010, p. 20). Due to this lack of communication between the school and immigrant parents regarding their contrasting expectations of the roles of parents, teachers, and children (SPCO, 2010), immigrant parents face disappointments in the Canadian educational system. Immigrant parents not only emphasize academic performance and achievements but expect “value training” too (Chang, 2007; SPCO, 2010).

Another issue that many immigrant parents encounter regarding the Canadian education system is a lack of culturally specific approaches and supports in the school setting that could help to accommodate the needs of children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, especially first-generation children, who often face problems with language and communication and with adjusting to the school environment (SPCO, 2010; Guo, 2012). Immigrant parents often find that language acts as a barrier to their active parental participation in their children’s learning. Smrekar (1996, as cited in Peterson & Ladky, 2007) pointed out that, compared to English-language parents, non-English language parents find it difficult to understand the technical language teachers use to communicate educational strategies, resources, and expectations, which may discourage these parents from being enthusiastic about their children’s learning. When this results in immigrant parents being less involved in their children’s education,
the decline in involvement is often misinterpreted by school authorities as the parents being “uncooperative, unconcerned and uncaring about their children’s education” (Peterson & Ladky, 2007, p. 884). Ali (2008) argued that, for immigrant parents, these “constraints on their ability to exercise agency in fulfilling their parenting role promote loss of parenting self-efficacy” in their new cultural environment (p. 150).

On a related note, in their new Canadian context, non-European immigrant parents often embody relatively diverse or unconventional forms of parental knowledge (first language, cultural and religious knowledge) that they have gained through lived experiences in their home culture (see Guo, 2012 for details). Parental personal knowledge here means wisdom or knowledge that “is gained from lived experience in all aspects of life at work, at play, with family and friends, and so on” (Guo, 2012, p. 124). This knowledge may be accumulated by immigrant parents from their educational and professional backgrounds in their country of origin as well as from their current exposure to the host country’s education system, along with their own struggles as immigrants.

Guo (2012) also argued that within the Canadian educational system, “Eurocentric knowledge is perceived as global and universal”, whereas the culturally specific knowledge of many immigrant parents — particularly those from developing countries — regarding the pattern of education is seen as deficient, lacking, or inferior in a Canadian context (p. 7). Immigrant parents often feel excluded and not able to contribute to their children’s learning because they perceive that their own personal knowledge is being overlooked or considered irrelevant to the Canadian culture. Through his research findings, Guo (2012) emphasized the need for teachers and school administrators to recognize the importance of immigrant parent knowledge in their children’s education and the learning process.
In a contemporary capitalist society, immigrants’ personal knowledge is further excluded when first-generation immigrant parents’ educational credentials are not recognized, and equal opportunities are not available to them (Cui & Kelly, 2013). In other words, Asian parents and Asian children are always subject to “various institutional and structural inequalities experienced by visible minorities as well as their subordinate positions in racial hierarchies” (Cui & Kelly, 2013, p. 171). Participants in the Guo (2012) study complained about “cultural misunderstanding between immigrant parents and Canadian teachers” and “systemic racism” in Canadian schools (p. 18). Razack (1998) made similar claims, stating that minorities in multicultural Canadian society are allowed to retain their culture, and the perception of being different is encouraged, but this leads to minorities being denied access to the institutional power and privileges that maintain the dominant culture’s assumption of superiority.

Studies by Janzen et al. (2001) and by Sheriff (2009) have similarly raised concerns that Canadian systems (e.g., education, health, and legal) have failed to integrate the cultural diversity of immigrants, resulting in families experiencing increased challenges and stress during their integration process, which can, in turn, affect the quality of their physical and mental health. The studies also revealed that immigrant parents carry with them an explicit knowledge of child-rearing and goals for the developments of their children and feel that their relatively benign traditional approaches to parenting are often questioned in the mainstream culture. These parents find themselves confronted with unexpected parenting challenges and additional stresses due to these cultural differences.

However, the story of immigrant parents is not only about stress and problems, it is also a story of challenges overcome and adaptation towards beneficial changes and promising new opportunities. It is important therefore to understand not just the failures but also the successes...
that are inherent in immigrant parents’ experiences. I will now turn my focus to research studies that illustrate how immigrant parents meet their parenting challenges to provide better environments for their families in their new host country.

**Adaptive Strategies Used by Immigrant Parents**

A family’s development is typically shaped by everyday cultural practices such as beliefs, rituals, religion, and dietary habits. For immigrant families, adapting to a new culture can lead to challenges in optimizing their development. When people from one culture interact with another culture, they sometimes adopt an adaptive strategy (e.g., changing child-rearing practices to meet needs found in the host society) that may provide better psychological and sociocultural adjustment in their new cultural environment (Sam & Berry, 2010). Sam and Berry (2010) found that some immigrants have shown better adaptation outcomes due to elevated levels of bicultural competency and the availability of doubled resources (beliefs, values, and learning) as a result of exposure to two cultures. This bicultural functioning promotes “new cultural practices or hybridity in their parenting practices” (Sangavarapu, 2010, p. 37). Sangavarapu (2010) argued that “hybridized parenting” might stem from the flow of Western values, via global electronic media, that influences other cultures worldwide. Having some familiarity with Western culture before emigrating can facilitate immigrants’ adjustment to their new host country.

In another study, Hispanic immigrant parents felt it was a necessity to make their children learn English before entering school, so that the children could feel comfortable with English-dominated schools and attain academic success (Adair & Tobin, 2008). Such cultural alterations or adaptations in parents’ practices can aid in integrating their children into a new cultural environment, resulting in bicultural functioning that can help immigrant families to adapt successfully (Jacob, 2017; Inman et.al, 2007).
Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, and Buriel (1990) discussed three main adaptive strategies that most ethnic minority groups (including African American, Hispanic, Asian Pacific American, and Alaskan Native) use during their settlement into a new cultural environment: “family extendedness and role flexibility, biculturalism, and ancestral worldviews” (p. 350). Family extendedness and role flexibility refers to “the pattern of extended family support and networks that usually serve as problem solving and stress level mechanisms” (Garimella, 2008, p. 21). Biculturalism refers to the capability of individuals to internalize two cultures or function in more than one culture (Raj, 2015; Adams & Kirova, 2007). Ancestral worldviews are used by immigrant parents to teach children, through religiosity and philosophical orientation, how to attain meaning and purpose in life, and how to find fulfilment and pathways to achievement to gain a sense of worth (Conrad & Pacquiao, 2005; Jacob, 2017). These adaptive responses may be adopted by ethnic groups for the sustenance and welfare of communities, families, and individual group members. Such adaptive responses may be developed to gain both social acceptance into the mainstream culture and access to social institutions such as education, employment, and healthcare (Harrison et al., 1990).

All of the above adaptive strategies are used by various ethnic groups to facilitate raising their children with certain traits: positive acceptance of their native culture, valuing family relations by being caring and respectful, and the ability to be functional in both cultures (native and host). Some of these strategies may apply specifically to Indian immigrants. For example, research studies (discussed in the next section) have documented that bicultural functioning and role flexibility are commonly used adaptive strategies among Indian immigrant families.

Patel et al. (1996) also elaborated on the importance of individual investment in multicultural contexts for successful functioning in various cultures. Evidently, immigrant Indian
families don’t give up their traditional culture and values for new ones; rather, they selectively modify their values and practices to adapt to their new homeland, leading to developmentally productive outcomes including better life opportunities, a sense of dedication and responsibility, and absence of conflict in the family (Micko, 2016).

Due to their roots in a collective society, Indian immigrant parents tend to emphasize the maintenance of Indian traditional values or practices; for example, because of the importance of extended family, they maintain strong ties with members of the extended family and encourage a respectful demeanour in their children. On the other hand, Indian immigrant parents may modify certain traditional practices such as dietary habits, may not persist in having their children learn the native language, and may adopt other localized habits (e.g., learning how to ice skate). These parents would like their children to become autonomous; however, they are not rushing their children to be independent as relational characteristics, in contrast to autonomy, are still considered an asset in the new cultural context (Raval, Raval, & Deo, 2014). This hybridized parenting is “a creative working out” solution that helps their children to fit into local culture (Patel et al., 1996, p. 303).

Conrad & Pacquiao (2005), along with Sheriff (2009), emphasized the need for more research to understand not only how immigrants function in multicultural contexts and the adaptive skills they use to handle parental challenges, but also how to develop culturally specific strategies or programs (predominantly related to education and healthcare) that will be useful in adapting to the host culture. Therefore, in order to deliver benefits to immigrant families, it is critical to foster an understanding of the inherited cultural values, beliefs, and practices of ethnic groups with diverse traditions; this cultural awareness will facilitate designing culture-specific approaches in the education, legal, and healthcare systems. Culturally specific programs may
encourage immigrants to seek aid from sources other than their family, such as public or government support programs; this was not the norm for many immigrant parents in their home country (Sheriff, 2009).

According to a study by the SPCO (2010), designing an educational curriculum that is more meaningful to immigrant families’ beliefs and practices would be an important step towards minimizing conflicts related to cultural expectations between immigrant parents and their children. Instead of trying to fit immigrant children into the existing education structure, they should have access to culturally compatible support that would help them integrate into the Canadian education system (Anisef & Kilbride, 2004, as cited in SPCO, 2010).

**Challenges and Adaptive Strategies among Indian-American Immigrant Parents**

Indian immigrants migrate to developed countries like Canada and the United States in search of a better quality of life, including free school education, greater access to educational resources, an efficient infrastructure to manage daily life, and improved health and legal systems. Indian immigrants generally appreciate these opportunities and try to utilize them to the best of their abilities as they navigate through the various challenges they face at an individual and social level. They value the opportunity for personal growth and the range of employment opportunities available. Indian immigrants selectively choose from their traditional value system while adopting new values discovered in their host society; this permits a smoother transition to their new cultural environment.

Collectivism and interdependence, taken together, are considered to be one of the main components of social life in the Indian diaspora. This core feature is invariably maintained by Indian immigrants in their new context: collectivism, the role of extended families, and community religion combine to structure family dynamics that help transmit cultural values and
beliefs (Jacob, 2017). This parental effort helps in keeping children connected to traditional values and beliefs and in inculcating culturally expected behaviours (Inman et al., 2007; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002). Indian immigrant parents use parenting styles that are predominantly influenced by Indian cultural values and beliefs. That may be due to their learned behaviour of child-rearing in their home country.

Indian immigrant parents were raised in a cultural context dissimilar to that in which they are raising their own children. They often find themselves struggling with child-rearing in an individualistic society that values giving independence to children, and with knowing how much freedom of expression should be granted (Baptiste, 2005). Baptiste (2005) further stated that, based on pre-emigration knowledge of U.S. culture, some immigrant parents form a negative impression of U.S. parenting values and beliefs. These particular parents maintain their assumption during the initial stage of immigration, thus adding to their acculturative stress. Indian immigrant parents may struggle to find a balance between the amount that Indian versus mainstream cultural influences might help them in achieving their developmental expectations for their children. This dilemma sometimes leads to intergenerational conflict (Jacob, 2017). As Indian immigrant parents, they feel that American society condones children’s right to challenge parental values and authority, and that this contributes to loss of parental authority over children, for example, with regard to parents’ ability to discipline or be involved in marriage choices (Baptiste, 2005).

Research studies on Asian Indian families have highlighted that Indian immigrant parents thoughtfully and systematically retain aspects of Indian parenting while also taking on aspects of mainstream American parenting. For example, in Raval et al. (2014) study, immigrant parents from collective societies often eventually encourage a certain level of independence or
autonomous behaviour in their children. Garimella (2008) documented some changes that Indian immigrants make in such areas as dietary habits, dress etiquette, interactions with spouse and children, gender role adjustments, and degree of independence.

A study conducted with Indian Americans by Jain and Belsky (1997) observed that, while an Indian mother is traditionally the primary caregiver, fully involved in child-rearing, in practice child-care is typically a collective responsibility shared with other adult caregivers. However, familial roles change when support from the extended family or other relatives is lacking in a new cultural context. Mothers find themselves challenged by being alone in carrying the responsibility of imparting cultural values to their children which, in turn, sometimes forces fathers to take on the non-traditional role of caregiving for the children (Inman et al., 2007). Ideally, fathers not only provide financial and authoritative support, they also contribute actively in parenting their children by adopting role flexibility as an adaptive strategy (Inman et al., 2007).

On some occasions, because of the lack of support in childcare from extended family or other relatives in their new homeland, the high cost of childcare, and the desire to maintain traditional values and norms in child-rearing, Indian immigrant families are motivated to engage in long-distance parenting (Srivastava & Guzman, 2017). Faced with their inability to provide collective and family care, and hesitant about employing paid caregivers who have mainstream views of childcare that contradict their traditional views, participating parents in the Srivastava et al. (2017) study responded, “by sending children home to India in order for them to be reared within a context more consistent with deeply held beliefs around family and childcare” (p. 14).

Jambunathan & Counselman (2002) found that, due to the effect of the new cultural context on their child-rearing practices, Indian immigrant mothers living within the United States adopted certain child-rearing beliefs of the mainstream society, such as a less favourable attitude
towards corporal punishment compared to Indian mothers in India. This finding confirms the modification of parenting practices that results from the effort to better integrate into mainstream society. It might also help to explain why Indian-born mothers and fathers in the Inman et al. (2007) study recognized that they were more accepting of the idea of bicultural functioning for certain behaviours (e.g., being open minded and yet respectful of elders; speaking English with children in public) in the interest of helping their children function effectively both inside and outside the home; they emphasized a combination of traditional and mainstream cultural values in parenting the children.

Before I embark on my exploration of Indian immigrants’ parenting experiences in a multicultural Canada and the extent to which these experiences resonate with the challenges and adaptive strategies discussed above, I would like to talk about Canadian diversity and multiculturalism, then discuss the methods and the parenting model utilized to complete this research study.
Chapter 3:

Canadian Diversity and Multiculturalism

There is a long history of immigration in Canada. However, immigrants coming to Canada from a diverse range of source countries, predominantly Asian, is a recent trend. This recent influx of immigrants of Asian origin demands a review of policies and programs, at both social and institutional levels, to accommodate Canada’s increasing cultural diversity. In the early 1970s, Canada adopted multiculturalism as a national policy due to the increasing number of non-British and non-French origin groups (Hawkins, 1991). It is noteworthy that, at the time, only 3% of the Canadian population were immigrants of non-European origin (Jansen, 2005, cited in Leung, 2011). The 1970s’ version of multiculturalism did not include the aboriginal population. Leung (2011) perceived that this version of multiculturalism would be more accurately termed “bi-culturalism”. Since its adoption in 1971, multiculturalism has evolved “in terms of its focus, reference point and mandate” (Kunz & Sykes, 2007, p. 6). The Canadian immigration policy has changed from a “race-based to merit-based point system”, which has facilitated the entry of immigrants other than Europeans, provided they match the entry level criteria, which include level of education, occupational skills, and proficiency in English or French (Leung, 2011, p. 21).

In the 1970s, multiculturalism focused mainly on celebrating cultural differences in an effort to create cultural sensitivity; the 1980s saw multiculturalism encouraged in ethnically diverse groups for economic participation purposes at the institutional level; in the 1990s, the focus moved to fostering shared citizenship with an intent to develop a sense of equality and inclusion among all Canadians irrespective of cultural or demographic differences (Leung, 2011; Kunz & Sykes, 2007). This history shows that the concept of multiculturalism is not static but fluid, with programs and policies being developed that seek to address the changing social
climate in Canadian society. Given the demographic and cultural changes occurring in Canada (e.g., declining birth rates of Canadians), multiculturalism is now considered one of the most essential concepts in managing this ethnic and religiously diverse nation and achieving the goal of “meaningful cultural understanding and productive intercultural communication” in a global context (Leung, 2011, p. 24).

Globalization is continuously expanding in the 21st century, facilitating a dramatic increase of immigrants, thus expanding the flow of information and resources from all over the world to wealthier and more liberal societies (e.g., United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia). This movement of people across the globe is bringing a new kind of cultural diversity (Leung, 2011) where some suggest that “virtually every person experiences intercultural contact on a daily basis” (Berry, 2016, p. 4). It is therefore important to understand multiculturalism in the context of immigration and globalization and recognize that it denotes the presence of cultural diversity in Canada, and that communication and implementation of multicultural policies need to be synchronized with the economic, social, and political system to make Canada a truly multicultural society. As stated by Dupont and Lemarchand (2001), multiculturalism is a virtue for Canada but how it functions in everyday life needs to be examined. Ng & Metz (2015) propose that “multiculturalism can serve as an effective public policy tool to enhance a nation’s competitiveness, in an era characterized by financial crises, globalization, immigration, and changing demographics” (p. 253).

Canada’s multicultural image is a combination of “three cultural drivers: Aboriginal peoples, English and French groups, and immigrants” from all over the world (Kunz & Sykes 2007, p. 3). Immigrant ethnic groups, in the years after World War II period, were initially expected to assimilate into the local culture (Rex & Singh, 2003). Later, however, cultural
integration was considered more appropriate, as holding on to traditional values provided moral and emotional benefits associated with better psychological outcomes (Sam & Berry, 2010).

With regard to multiculturalism in clinical practice and in education, Pedersen (2001) observed that the use of a multicultural perspective created an understanding of behaviours that are “learned and displayed in cultural context” (p. 19) within those fields. In other words, individual behaviours are reflections of both one’s current and one’s native culture. Pedersen also felt that the diversity of cultures in a particular society provides it with psychological advantages as compared to a monoculture society, since “contact with different culture provides opportunities to rehearse adaptive functioning skills that will help us survive in the diversified global village of the future” (p. 20). This notion supports the outlook that a multicultural society should give due consideration to the requirements of communities having different cultural backgrounds who have not yet fully grasped how to function in the local culture.

Kunz and Sykes (2007) reported on a series of regional roundtable consultations held in eight cities across Canada, where representatives from government, community organizations, business, and media met with experts on immigration and diversity. The representatives agreed that the multicultural policies discussed appeared very sound in principle and were in line with the vision of making Canada a multicultural society. However, the representatives pointed out that these policies, in comparison to other economic, social, and political policies, were not being clearly communicated at the grassroots level. Multiculturalism is often wrongly understood by Canadians as a policy to integrate non-European newcomer immigrants and their immediate families into local culture. Participants in the roundtable consultations asserted that there is a need to break the myth believed by many Canadians that the only purpose of multiculturalism is
to integrate visible minorities\(^2\) and non-European immigrants. A result of this misunderstanding is that Aboriginal society, Charter groups (British & French) and those of European descent do not consider themselves subject to these policies. The representatives at the roundtable consultations suggested that exploring pluralistic societies (like India, the United Kingdom), who have success in navigating and managing intercultural relations over a much longer history than Canada does, would possibly identify positive factors that could be implemented in the Canadian context.

The roundtable participants strongly felt that, to communicate the principles of multiculturalism and therefore create a better awareness and understanding of the various culture groups residing in Canada, government efforts to reach out to the Canadian public through school and public education channels must be improved (Kunz & Sykes, 2007). Representatives from these roundtable consultations commonly agreed that intercultural dialogues among newcomers, Aboriginals, and Canadians might be a step forward in accomplishing the development of goals for our children, including economic security, health, well-being, and an overall respectful atmosphere. As Sahadat (2000) argued, “Dialogue should lead us from an attitude of segregation and discrimination to complementarity, the richness of which should be felt in a consolidated drive toward harmony in diversity without the threat of uniformity” (p. 357).

Parekh (1999) stated that multiculturalism should be interpreted as a way of understanding how humans live their lives, given that human beings are so intertwined with culture that the two are almost inseparable. One lives and grows in a structure that is culturally oriented in a certain way to ensure a socially stable life. Society should be culturally structured in

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\(^2\) A visible minority is defined by the Government of Canada as “persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.

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order to make life purposeful and harmonious. In my opinion, culture is very much shaped by environmental factors that are displayed in the form of social structure that manages human life in a specific environment. Moving from one environment to another requires that the individual adapt; fortunately, humans are the most adaptable social beings.

Though the lives of human beings are culturally shaped, every culture provides a unique identity to its members; this identity is not rigid but rather changeable and adaptable, yet it cannot be completely remade (Parekh, 1999). In his article, Parekh (1999) stated that different cultures define and envision “the good life” differently. No single culture can demonstrate a full understanding of human existence. Interaction between cultures might help in grasping the totality of human existence especially in a global world that is modern, mobile, and interdependent.

A society with cultural diversity may be an ideal place to understand human life from different perspectives and may offer a chance to integrate all the creative energies of the various cultures to make the society more vibrant, enriching all aspects of human life, including health, education, family values, beliefs, practices, music, art, food, and dress; a single cultural identity must not impose itself on the others (Parekh, 1999). Parekh (1999) further emphasized that every culture has its own significance to its members, demonstrating the meaning of human life to them; therefore, demanding respect when people come in contact or interact with dissimilar cultures should not be frowned upon. He also stated that members of every culture should be given some consideration as no culture is totally worthless and may embody some “creative energy” that might be beneficial or result in a rewarding contribution to a host culture.

Parekh (1999) further argued that a multicultural society gets the privilege of experiencing the cultural and moral plurality offered by diversity and, in return, this plurality
provides multiple choices to make that society more morally and culturally vibrant. Encouraging
creative dialogue paves the way to the development of a sense of belonging among its citizens
and “mutual commitment and concern as members of a shared community” (Parekh, 1999, p. 4).
To achieve the ideals presented here would require social recognition of diversity and the
restructuring of economic and political policies to better accommodate diversity and equality at
an institutional level.

The above discussion of various perspectives on multiculturalism furthers our
understanding of the importance of cultural values, beliefs, and practices in child-rearing among
the immigrant families who originally belonged to the multicultural society of India. The
understanding of culturally specific parenting beliefs and practices, of parenting challenges, and
of the adaptive strategies adopted by immigrant Indian parents should be applied in designing
policies and programs that explore cultural diversity and encourage individuals from different
cultural backgrounds to learn about each other. Interaction between cross-cultural communities
can result in the successful integration of immigrant families into local culture. This is a crucial
aspect of multiculturalism that is necessary for further progress towards a more inclusive and
democratic society. The objective of my study resonates with the following sentiments expressed
by Parekh (2005):

Multiculturalism is basically a theory about human freedom and well-being and rests on a
distinct conception of the good life. It is grounded in the three-fold belief that human
beings are culturally embedded, that every culture represents a limited vision of the good
life and benefits from a dialogue with others, and, finally, that a good society should
foster conditions of intercultural dialogue and should ideally be dialogically
constituted…. It values intercultural dialogue not as a way of coping with the fact of
cultural diversity, but rather to exploit the value of cultural diversity and to reap its ontological, epistemological, moral and other benefits (p. 16).
Chapter 4:
Methods

“Research is to see what everybody has seen and to think what nobody has thought.”
(Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, after A. Schopenhauer)

In the social sciences, qualitative research methodology is one of the primary means of understanding the social world from the perspective of participants, and how they construct the meaning of that world based on their experiences. A qualitative approach seeks to understand the subjective experience of an individual. Yilmaz (2013) explained that “qualitative research is based on a constructivist epistemology and explores what it assumes to be socially constructed dynamic reality through a framework which is value-laden, flexible, descriptive, holistic and context sensitive” (p. 312). Qualitative research can provide a descriptive rendering of the common pattern experienced by participant groups; this rendering seeks to capture the unique and individual experiences of the participants involved in the study. Szyjka (2012) argued that this type of research provides the researcher with knowledge that “is subjective and is interpreted through the perspective of the viewers” (p. 112). To examine subjective interpretation, according to Patton (2005), qualitative research offers at least three possible data types: “in-depth, open ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents” (p. 1633).

My study seeks to explore the lives of immigrants and their parenting challenges in the contexts of immigration and globalization. Adopting the qualitative perspective and the open-ended interview process has allowed me to generate theoretical knowledge and a deeper understanding of the parental challenges that immigrant families experience. This approach furthers understanding of the navigating strategies used in the immigrant settlement process, strategies that make the integrating experience less challenging and help the children of
immigrant parents to achieve the developmental goals their parents have set out for them in their new multicultural environment.

**Inclusion Criteria**

Nineteen Indian immigrant families from the Niagara region of Ontario, Canada were selected for the study using the following criteria to optimize the homogeneity of the sample:

- Two-parent families were preferred, with the mother, father, and biologically related children living together in the same household.
- Participants were to be first-generation Indian immigrants with young children who had been in Canada for at least 3 years. First-generation immigrants are likely to maintain closer ties with their home culture while trying to adapt to their new culture. The time period was chosen to ensure immigrant parents had been exposed to the host culture long enough to facilitate the progress of adaptation. Furthermore, immigrant parents with young children sometimes experience additional parenting challenges when the children start socializing in Canadian communities and start school.

I focused my interview on the parent who was the primary caregiver of the children. In each case, this was the mother. This is not unexpected given the traditional roles of men and women in Indian parenting (see earlier sections) but did restrict the perspectives of my data to only those of mothers.

The classification of “first-generation Indian immigrant”, for the purposes of this thesis, refers to an individual born and raised in India who has entered Canada with the official status of landed immigrant. On occasion, the term “first generation” is used in studies to refer to children who are born in the host country, but in my study, it will be used for those immigrants who are staying in Canada as citizens or permanent residents.
Participants

The Niagara region has experienced a demographic transformation within the last couple of years. From the researcher’s empirical observation, more ethnic groups from visible minorities have started to settle in the region, with many coming from India. Indian immigrant families are the second largest visible minority in Canada; thus, it is imperative to explore their experiences of settling into the Niagara region. Previous research studies have documented the immigration experiences of South Asian immigrants in parts of the Greater Toronto Area, but specific research can further our understanding of Indian immigrant groups as they would wish to be understood both as people and as parents.

Recruitment

Convenience sampling was used as a qualitative, nonprobability sampling technique as my purpose was not to generalize the findings of my study but rather to document the Indian perspective on parenting. Participants were approached based on my personal contacts within the local immigrant Indian community. I also used snowball sampling to recruit additional participants for the study. All participants had to meet the inclusion criteria outlined above.

Data Collection

Potential participants were informed that interviews would be audio-recorded. Interested participants received a formal letter of invitation (see Appendix A) and consent information (see Appendix B) via email. Participants were then asked to arrange for a time and place to be interviewed; laboratory space was offered for this purpose. The majority of participants chose to be interviewed in their own homes. A few participants came to my residence to be interviewed (with approval from the research ethics board [REB 17-161 VOLK]). Upon arriving for the interview, participants were presented with a formal letter of consent to sign, which reviewed the
nature of the study. Participants were given the option to communicate in English, Punjabi, or Hindi. The interview session lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes. I asked each participant open-ended questions using a prepared interview guide (see Appendix C). A compensatory amount of $20.00 was provided for each participant interviewed. A total of 19 participants were interviewed regarding challenges arising in the process of rearing children within their new Canadian cultural environment. All data were collected in the Niagara region of Ontario.

**Characteristics**

The 19 Indian-born parents in the study ranged from 30 to 48 years of age. All the parents who participated happened to be mothers with one to three children between 3 and 17 years of age. Three participants had their children attending high school and elementary school. Three mothers had their children only in high school. Rest of the participants had their children in elementary school only. While all were fluent in Hindi, the mothers had different mother tongues (e.g., Gujrati (11 participants), Punjabi (3 participants), Malayalam (1 participant)) and could all speak English, with some more fluent than others. Participants were diversified in their religious affiliation. Eleven of the mothers held undergraduate degrees with the remainder all having graduate degrees. Although most of the mothers had lived in extended family arrangements in India, only seven of the mothers were able to maintain that same family structure in Canada. No information was collected on their family income except information regarding both parents’ occupation. Seven of the participants worked full-time jobs, five had part-time jobs, and seven were not currently employed and serving as full-time moms. Non-participants spouse were working fulltime at the time of interview. Overall, participants represented a diverse range in family life, religion, and education.
Consent Process

As I planned to recruit participants through my personal contacts, I made sure participants were aware of the fact that their participation was completely voluntary and that if they chose not to participate it would not impact my ability to graduate nor hinder my study process. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed that if they did not feel comfortable with answering any question, they had the right to not answer and to move on to the next question. If any participant wished to withdraw, she could inform me, and the audiotapes and interview materials would be destroyed thereafter; no part of their information provided to me would be included in my data analysis, subsequent publications, or presentations.

No withdrawal requests from consenting participants were received. I informed my participants that they may be subject to known psychological risks associated with participation in a qualitative study; such risks could arise from recalling parenting challenges, potentially difficult situations, and the adaptive strategies used during their personal integration process to a new cultural environment (see Appendix B). Options for support services (e.g., psychological counselling) were available to participants should they experience any undesirable effects during or after the interviewing process. To my knowledge, following the completion of this study, no participants discussed or requested the use of these resources; therefore, I am not aware of any participant having experienced significant psychological stress during the interview.

Personal information collected during the research comprised the participants’ age, sex, education, employment, language, immigration status, number of children, children’s age, children’s sex, and children’s education status. All of this personal information was deleted completely from the computer once the data collection was complete. A code was assigned at the
outset of each participant’s interview to protect her identity. When the interviews were transcribed, a similar code was assigned to each participant to keep the transcribed data confidential. Recorded interviews were stored separately from the coded transcripts; the codes were known only to myself and my supervisor. Audio recordings were transcribed and would be sent for deletion once the study was completed. Transcribed data were stored on a password protected computer with codes used to identify each transcript. Transcribed data and paperwork would be destroyed after serving the purpose of the study.

**Interviews**

Qualitative research interviews may be defined as “a conversation with the aim of obtaining descriptions of the interviewee’s life world, with the purpose of interpreting the meaning of the phenomena described” (Kvale, 2002, p. 9). Interviewing provides “unique access” to the participants’ world. For my study, I conducted open-ended interviews to develop a better understanding of the parenting experiences of Indian immigrant families. Additional knowledge was gained by allowing participants to share their parenting experiences in their own words; I focused on what was said by participants rather than how it was said. I explored participants’ parenting challenges, their adaptive strategies, their evaluations of existing support systems, and their recommendations for making existing support services more useful to new immigrant families in adjusting to life in Canada.

I employed an open-ended question approach to establish my trustworthiness with the participants in the hope that they would feel comfortable enough to express their feelings and opinions freely. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded so that I would be able to listen closely, as many times as needed, to the participants’ actual words, my responses to their comments, and our dynamic interaction. This process provided greater
accuracy as I translated and transcribed the interviews. All of the interviewees spoke in Hindi, Punjabi, or English, sometimes using two of the languages.

During the interviews, I used probing questions and, depending on the initial response, asked follow-up questions that further engaged the participant. Participants expressed personal feelings, opinions, desires, and experiences and addressed sensitive issues concerning their parental challenges and the cultural integration process. After the interviews were conducted, I translated all of the recordings into English as I have both verbal and written skills in the Punjabi and Hindi languages.

All of the interviews were transcribed by me personally for accuracy and confidentiality. The information collected during the interview process was validated by listening to and reading each transcript multiple times. I organized the information received in the interviews according to certain categories. Interview guide questions (touched upon in the next paragraph) were based on the main categories presented in the immigrant parenting framework, which matched the objective of the study. Once the information was categorized appropriately, data were coded to reflect instances where similar themes emerged during the interview process.

Data Analysis

To structure the research findings of the study, an immigrant parenting framework was used to identify immigrant parenting challenges and understand adaptive strategies used in or suggested by their settlement process. It is not a theoretical model but rather an orienting model, designed by Ochocka and Janzen (2008) and based on two components: “culture and context” (p. 94). The framework illustrates the process of parenting for immigrants coming to Canada. It identifies the kinds of policies and programs that should support immigrant parents in their process of settling into Canadian culture while respecting traditional parenting practices in order
to help their children achieve the developmental goals their parents have for them. Ochocka and Janzen (2008) tested this framework by conducting a large qualitative study on families who had migrated to the province of Ontario, Canada.

Ochocka and Janzen’s (2008) framework starts with “parenting orientations”: immigrant parents’ traditional values, beliefs, and practices, which govern their expectations for their children’s behaviour, and their future aspirations. In brief, a researcher examines what values parents want their children to inherit and what developmental goals they have for them.

![Figure 1. Immigrant parenting framework.](image)

“Parenting styles” (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008) refers to the ways that immigrant parents guide and interact with their children to implement their parenting orientations in a new cultural environment; in my study, the Canadian context is the new culture. It is dissimilar to the culture immigrant parents themselves were raised in, which may impact their parenting orientation and style.
“Parenting modifications” (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008) are the changes immigrant parents felt that they had to make in their parenting orientation and style due to their settlement into Canadian culture. As the immigrant parents in my study had lived in Canada for more than 3 years, they had had ample time to experience multiple changes.

“Parenting contributions” (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008) refers to the ways immigrant parents can contribute positively towards Canadian parenting. Immigration is a two-way process between immigrants and the host society (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008). This means that immigrants not only adopt new ways, without completely shedding their traditional values and beliefs, but potentially help influence and affect the shape of the host society with their imported cultural values.

The final component of the immigrant parenting model, as designed by Ochocka and Janzen (2008), is the “parenting supports” that are offered to immigrant parents by mainstream service providers to aid their smooth transition into the host culture.

Many components have been taken into consideration to construct this parenting model (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008) and make it useful in understanding immigrant parents, various aspects of their parenting, and the associated complexities within the contexts of immigration and globalization. This parenting model acknowledges the significance of the particular context from which immigrants migrate to their new country and how they perceive their new cultural environment — elements that depend upon their cultural backgrounds or on intercultural differences and are influenced by external factors over time.

Not every parent has the same developmental goal for their children: differences arise in child-rearing practices since parents belong to diverse cultural and religious groups. Parental age, education, socioeconomic status, and professional struggles, as well as the number, age, gender,
and temperament of their children, may shape immigrants’ parenting styles. Not all immigrants perceive the new cultural environment the same way; each acculturates differently in the new context. Additional influencing factors include how long they have been in the host country, their prior knowledge about mainstream society, how welcoming the host society is towards them, and how much interaction they have developed with the local population.

Similarly, each individual immigrant parent modifies their parenting style depending on how long they have been in the host country, their range of adaptive flexibility, the financial status of the family, and their traditional cultural and religious embeddedness.

Furthermore, what influence do the immigrant parents’ have on local parenting styles and are they able to contribute in a positive manner to the general understanding of parental practices in their new host culture? Outcomes vary depending on the amount of creative dialogue parents have had with other communities inside their new multicultural society, what type of support system is offered by service providers, the acceptance and tolerance level of the host society, and, lastly, the immigrants’ socioeconomic and political participation at an institutional level.

**Interview Guide**

I designed the interview guide in a semi-structured format that consisted of open-ended questions with the purpose of capturing a deeper perspective on the participants’ experiences. As Agee (2009) points out, “qualitative research questions need to articulate what a researcher wants to know about the intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions” (p. 432). My literature review and the immigrant parenting framework (details given in the following section) helped to formulate an interview guide (see Appendix C) to navigate the interviews from start to finish. Each component of the parenting framework corresponded to one of my study
objectives. The interview guide questions matched the objectives of the study, with questions on: values and beliefs (e.g., respect, family, religion, traditional food, language, and developmental goals for children); implementation of values and beliefs; similarities and differences between the country of origin and the new country; changes in parenting practices and family dynamics since coming to Canada; parenting support needed and used; and parenting suggestions for local parents as well as for newcomer immigrant parents. I also requested feedback from the participants. I asked additional questions during the interview process to elicit further details, such as asking participants what their professional experience has been in Canada and how they navigated initial hurdles regarding the recognition of their credentials.

**Implicated Researcher**

My interest in this research study was born out of my personal experience of having come to Canada from India as a landed immigrant. In the transition process after immigration, I experienced significant challenges while adjusting to my new life in Canada. The first significant challenge was being away from my parents and extended family: I found that I longed for their emotional and physical support after I gave birth to my children. I was able to relate on that level to several of my participants. A second challenge that I faced regarded my education. My doctorate in anthropology, from an Indian university, was not recognized in Canada. I was therefore faced with the dilemma of either starting from scratch or giving up my dream of a career as an academic. My lived experience as an immigrant parent provided me with deeper insight into and awareness of the challenges associated with the transition process to a new cultural environment. However, I also recognize the importance of being aware of my “insider status” and attempting to set aside my biases during data collection and the analysis process in order not to compromise the validity and reliability of my research findings.
Trustworthiness of the Study and Findings

To ensure the trustworthiness of my qualitative research study, I followed the criteria of credibility, confirmability, transferrability, and dependability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported by utilizing the immigrant parenting framework (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008) that guided the formulation of the interview questions to match the objective of the study. Using the interview guide, with its specific questions for my participants, gave me a chance to review their answers and eliminated the risk of inserting any preconceived notions or biases I might have had into the concluding results. Peer briefing, in the form of consulting with my supervisor and committee members, was included to enhance the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, confirmability, which refers to the objectivity of the data and minimizing researcher bias, was achieved through research discussions between me, as principal investigator, and my supervisor. In documenting the results, participants’ own words were quoted to establish the confirmability.

Transferrability refers to the external validity of the study and whether the results apply to other groups. Efforts were made to recruit participants who were representative of the majority of Indian immigrant families within the Niagara region. In addition, the participants’ demographic information is provided to determine the transferrability of the findings to other groups. Similar to the issue of transferrability, dependability refers to how replicable findings are. In addition to the sample’s demographic data, information is provided regarding participant inclusion criteria, data analysis, and discussion. I would hope to find similar results with similar groups.

Reflection and Reflexivity

As an immigrant, this study was an exciting and important venture that would assist me,
while exploring other immigrants’ parenting experiences, “to become more explicit about the link between knowledge claims, personal experiences of both participant and researcher, and the social context” (Finlay, 2002, p. 7). Through my study, it is my intention to bring forth the voices that are currently missing within the literature on Indian immigrant parents in order to explore their parenting challenges and integration process in Canada’s multicultural society. I hadn’t used the qualitative approach in my earlier research studies in India; however, I found that exploring this methodology over the past two years has given me greater insight into its benefits.

After immigration, I faced many challenges during the transition process into Canadian culture. The fact that I was able to relate personally to the accounts provided by the immigrant families allowed me greater understanding of their experiences, which were both different from and relatable to my own. The dearth of research on parenting experiences of Indian immigrant families, together with my own experiences, encouraged me to explore immigrant perceptions of parenting in their new context using the multicultural perspective. In addition to being conscious of my own thoughts and feelings, I examined my data through literature reviews and discussions with my supervisor and committee members in order to validate my qualitative research and add to its credibility.

I was conscious of my position as an immigrant and a researcher and drew on these roles and experiences. I believe this consciousness was somewhat helpful in collecting my data given how often, despite my familiarity with their overall situation, even I was surprised to hear about the extent of immigrants’ challenges and their attempts to overcome them. During the data collection process, I maintained an open mind and was prepared to learn from these other Indian parents in the hope of being able to contribute to the academic literature on challenges and success in immigrant families. My philosophical assumption is that nature has created people
with individual differences to enrich the spectrum of life. It would be monotonous if everybody experienced life in the same way. This perception also helped me to enjoy the different perspectives that my participants presented during the interview process.
Chapter 5:

Results

“People are good here, we can walk along with them but cannot follow them. Because we have our own culture.” - Participant #9

I have organized the results of the individual interview discussions by following the main categories of the parenting framework outlined in a previous chapter. Views discussed in this section are based on 19 participants’ individual life experiences of their lived spaces in India. As such, they do not represent the whole of India. The individual parenting experience of each participant since coming to live in Niagara or its surrounding areas is explored and is based solely on their own lived experiences, so no generalization can be done. I have used the phrase “Indian culture” to highlight those cultural values that are typically held in common among Indians. Participants’ names are not included but have been replaced with numbers (e.g., Participant #1, Participant #2). Quotes from participants are direct quotes that often reflected a translated mix of English and Indian languages as understood by the researcher.

Highlighting the importance of Indian traditional culture is not intended to disparage the richness and benefits that other cultures offer or imply that families function best only in the traditional context. I address the cultural premises of Indians because of the important role that collected source material has in properly formulating and providing informed public services to immigrants. Participants’ references to “Canadian parents” and “Canadian children” are restricted to local Canadian residents within the Niagara Region whom they are familiar with, residents from workplaces, schools, community centres, and other shared public spaces.

Parenting Orientations

Before discussing their parenting experiences and aspirations for their children in a new cultural context, I asked the participating Indian immigrant parents (mothers) to describe their
reasons for migrating to Canada and any initial struggles they faced. All participants agreed that better life opportunities (a smaller number of people, free education for children, better healthcare, better infrastructure etc.) for them and their children were the primary reasons to move to Canada.

Thirteen participants narrated their experiences with career struggles that were associated with the immigration process. In many cases, these participants encountered work-related difficulties before facing parenting challenges. Even though they had some inkling before landing in Canada that there was a possibility of professional setbacks, experiencing them in reality was difficult to come to terms with. Employment-seeking barriers included lack of Canadian experience, non-recognition of their credentials, differences in work culture, and the need for retraining or furthering their education.

Four participants clearly talked about their frustration with all of these requirements in re-establishing their careers, including justifications of their credibility and their ability to work in the same profession as they did in India. These participants did not continue with their careers in Canada and shifted their focus to parenting as full-time mothers. The frustration this move entailed was further exacerbated by the lack of extended family support.

The discussion shifted to parenting orientations, with inquiries about the participants’ aspirations for their children. Parenting orientations are the immigrant parents’ traditional values, beliefs, and practices that influence their parenting expectations for their children’s behaviour and their future aspirations for them. These include what values parents want their children to inherit and what developmental goals they want them to achieve.

Participants had different responses to the question regarding parenting orientations. Two participants had never reflected much upon the idea of what careers their children might have;
this was partially due to their own initial professional struggles. In regard to parenting orientations, participants acknowledged the influence of parenting practices used by their own parents, and the empirical observations they made while being raised in collective family settings. A main idea that came out of these individual discussions was that the participants’ own parents’ parenting guidelines and expectations have influenced their expectations for their own children:

In India it is always parents who decide what their children have to do. They make us do things that eventually help in having career and able to make good living out of it. So, it is a trust relationship that parents always think good or well for their children, so we tried the same thing with her.  

Participant #15

The way we were taken care in India by our parents. I wanted to do the same with my children, staying with them full time.  

Participant #8

The participants were aware of the fact that they had to adjust their parenting standards if their aspirations or goals for their children were to be met in their new social and cultural context; for example, stressing only academic achievements was viewed as insufficient. They noticed that involvement in extra activities (e.g., sports) along with academic studies was the norm among children from non-immigrant families. During individual discussion that progressed from parenting aspirations to parenting styles and practices, participants began to reflect more on how they wanted to raise their children in the new cultural context and what traditional values they still wanted to instil that would help their children contribute positively to the host society and achieve success in their academics or careers. A key goal of all the participants was to teach their children good habits that included being respectful to their elders, caring, maintaining strong ties with family members, eating fresh and preferably homecooked food, living a disciplined life, and following a religion or having faith in God.
These habits, or values and beliefs, were considered significant by each participant. They served to guide these parents in their children’s character formation and were expected to ultimately lead to the achievement of their aspirations for their children.

**Respect**

All participants demonstrated an understanding of being in an individualistic Canadian society where children were expected to be independent and self-directed. To my participants, the term “respect” meant that children would listen to their elders and their opinions, including those of parents and other elder family members, and would acknowledge the fact that these elders meant well for the children:

> I want my children to listen to us and value our experience and learn from our mistakes.  
> **Participant #13**

> A respectful demeanour was believed to result in children becoming more productive and useful citizens of their new country as well as future success:

> Being respectful is considered very much Indian practice but I believe it helps any child. If they are respectful to others, others will respect them. This goes throughout in your life, in school, job, wherever you are. It is important to have respectful demeanour in one’s personality.  
> **Participant #11**

Sometimes the word respect, for Indian children, also means they must address their elderly family members with formal titles. All of the participants tried to make their children follow this aspect of respect within the family unit but did not encourage using formal titles outside as local people might not appreciate that form of respect.

Only one of the participants recognized the tension between the tradition of respect (e.g., deference to elders) and the more independent nature of respect in mainstream Canadian culture. She explained that there was a difference between children born and brought up in Canada and those in India. One example would be a relaxed focus on obedience that the Canadian-born child
demonstrates. Canadian-born Indian children question the relevance of respect in their new context. This may contribute to a psychological dilemma for immigrant parents:

They (my girls) won’t respect their elders just for the sake they are old. Respect should be earned by presenting reasonable ground to make this generation understand certain values or practices that are hard to follow by these kids who are living here and born here.

Participant #1

Family and Modified Extended Family System

Despite the occasional mention of family friction (see above), almost all of the participants highlighted the importance of family and the role of members of the extended family:

Whatever employment they choose, I want they should have strong ties with family e.g. we believe in joint families, inter-dependence, strong family bonding.

Participant #2

Grandparents teach you empathy, respect, share their life experience, traditional values and most importantly patience. We as a parent are always having too much going on. We sometimes become impatient with our children as parents are so busy with everyday life, they cannot give that much time. If you have your parents, they can compensate for you.

Participant #12

They have grown up with their grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, second cousins, and other near and dears. So, they have seen our tradition from the very beginning. I am sure it helped me bring them close to our culture norms and beliefs.

Participant #16

All participants agreed that their children learned to love their parents, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives, and understood the benefits of being with them. Their children also learned the importance and value of relationships including how other family members can contribute positively to the family with emotional and financial support. Regarding the significance of family, participants said:

Our children learn more about our traditional values from our parents and relatives, values of relationships, their importance and how other family members can be asset to the family; learning about caring and sharing with other family and keep relationship strong; learning how to bond with others and be helpful to each other and learn to adjust and being respectful.

Participant #7
I wish them to have strong relationship with their family members like cousins, parents and grandparents, etc. I work hard to inspire my kids towards those aspects of family dynamics.

Participant #4

Be there for your near and dear and try to make connections and understand other members of your family or even friends and be helpful and caring when others need you. Invest your time and emotions in your family members.

Participant #11

Although only seven participants were living in an extended family system (where the household consists of parents, children, and grandparents) in Canada, all of the participants viewed the extended family system as a highly valuable source of support, especially during infant care and when the mother returned to work. Members of the extended family, including those still living in India, also served as an important reinforcement of traditional beliefs and culture; several mothers reported taking their children to India to preserve family links and cultural familiarity:

I take them to India whenever it is possible. So, they can have first-hand experience and hope to stay connected. I do not want them to forget Indian culture. They love going to India. Even they refuse to come back here.

Participant #16

I would like to keep him connected to our traditional native culture. If I take him to India, at least he’ll be knowing something about India. As my parents in India do not know English, he will be able to speak with them in native language.

Participant #17

Religion

Religion is another important component of Indian cultural heritage that has a large impact on people’s personal lives. The people of India tend to have a strong belief in religion, with both religion and spirituality adding meaning and purpose to their lives. All my participants agreed that they valued religion and taught their children to follow their traditional religious beliefs, including the performance of rituals to some extent. Creating awareness and knowledge about other religions and explaining the reasons for maintaining faith in God helped them to connect their children with traditional religious values, as the following quotes illustrate:
I give them knowledge of all the religions and they developed an understanding of all the religion, but I told them to follow the religion we are following and stick to that. I don’t say this religion is good or bad but be respectful to religious diversity. Participant #13

I strongly recommend children should follow religion, this will make them strong, focused, e.g. worshiping Hanuman is very similar to superman. Or worshipping sun mean getting energy to be strong. All this is so scientific, so I made my children to learn about religion because it has lot to offer that has very scientific fact in it. As they are young, we should make them follow religion. Participant #2

I want my kids to follow religion to be good human being, have faith in god follow same religion practices, but if they want to follow other religion, I have no problem with that. All I want them to have good things. Participant #3

Spiritually I try to instill how to be respectful and have faith in god. Participant #5

One participant chose to send her children to a Catholic school because of its approach to discipline and to further their faith in God:

We chose Catholic school, because of their discipline. In India, I always attended Catholic for same reason. They have very strict guidelines to follow in the school. I like that because at the growing age children need to follow rules and guidelines to structure themselves. You should not let at this stage to do whatever they want to do. They do spare few moments in the morning to say your prayers while standing in mass in church. Participant #12

**Traditional Food**

“Culture is a major determinant of what we eat.” (Fieldhouse, 2013, p. 1)

More than simply a source of bodily nourishment, food plays a major role in religious, social, and family constructs (Fieldhouse, 2013). Both biological and cultural needs play significant roles in human food consumption. The nature of food intake is also shaped by different geographical, psychological, economic, and political factors (Fieldhouse, 2013). In his book, Fieldhouse (2013) demonstrated that food habits are part of a dynamic process known as culture. People are taught the value of the culture in which they grow up, and learn to believe that their own pattern of behaviour is the norm. Similarly, food habits are maintained because they are symbolically meaningful behaviours in that particular culture, becoming an essential component in maintaining social heritage. Lastly, Fieldhouse states that immigrants in Canada
bring different ideas of food patterns with preferences that are oriented to their unique culture and tradition. Conserving traditional food practices becomes a tool to enact their relationships with those back home, construct cultural identities in their new cultural context, and impart family and community values to their children (Vallianatos & Raine, 2008). In their review article, Zalipour and Hardy (2016) demonstrated that:

Food is significant in diaspora for its ability to re-establish a visceral–intuitive relation to religion and origin. Community and family relationship maintenance through the provision of food … among the members of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand manifested instances where women used their culinary skills to create affinities between their family members, themselves, and the neighbors aligned with them in a multicultural context. (p. 788)

While the degree to which the preparation style and consumption of food varies from culture to culture, food is integral to traditional Indian culture, religion, and family life (Zaman, 2010). The predominant assumption is that the role that food has under religious constructs is the particular domain of women, as part of their role in the maintenance of the culture (Vallianatos et al., 2008). The strong cohesive agreement found within my participants’ answers supports this assumption.

Cooking fresh, healthy, and vegetarian dishes was a highly discussed topic among participants, especially when discussion moved more towards the kind of parenting practices that pose challenges in their new environment. All participants agreed that they had to make a considerable adjustment to their traditional cooking. They wanted to offer their children fresh and home-cooked food each day so that they remained healthy, as good health was considered key to a good life and the ability to do well in academics. Participants further shared that a
majority of their meals were prepared at home including some Canadian dishes (pizza, pasta, vegetarian sandwiches, etc.). Various benefits or reasons that were cited by participants for their preference for home cooking included being vegetarian, the freshness of the food, the freedom to change preparation style, health factors, and cost effectiveness:

I am raising my children vegetarian. I believe in home cooked and fresh food as it really contributes positively in children development and growth in long run.

Participant #2

We are vegetarian. I prefer fresh food for my kids. I always give them homemade food. My children are used to take Indian food and Canadian style prepared Indian food in school which is fresh.

Participant #2

Two participants mentioned that their children were very particular in what they ate and did not consume any outside food so these participants prepared all their food for them:

My daughter is not used to eat outside food. I have to cook for her. Even if we are eating at any restaurant. If she likes homecooked food, I will cook for her. All I want is for her to grow healthy.

Participant #15

It is not the case that Indian people in Canada do not eat outside of the home. The participants’ choices of where to eat depended on family preference, what kind of parenting norms and practices they were raised with in India, and their personal choices about and definition of healthy food.

Summary of Parenting Orientations

Participants hoped that their children would inherit the traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices that they believed would play meaningful and significant roles in the children’s character formation and make them productive individuals for Canadian society. All participants stressed the value of respect, of family and the role of extended family, of religion, and of holding on to traditional culture (festivals, celebrations, language, etc.). In general, participants were positive about their children’s future in Canada and unanimously stated the importance of
academic achievements and their dedication to guiding and supporting their children to fulfil their dreams.

**Parenting Style**

A lioness will definitely teach her cub to learn how to hunt irrespective of context. And, so it is very natural to parent my children traditionally, as I am Indian and Sikh by religion, so it was very obvious to bring them up Indian way.

Participant #7

Parenting style includes how immigrant parents guide and interact with their children to implement parenting orientations in a new cultural environment away from their country of origin. There was elaborate discussion on parenting practices (with every participant), with great emphasis on native cultural influence and how child-rearing in India is a collective effort supported by other family members. Seven participants expressed satisfaction that having extended family in Canada contributed immensely towards their psychological and physical well-being while raising their children in a new cultural environment:

I was lucky to have my sister and parents around. My kids always had company in the house, so I was mentally free. There were so many people that children could play with, I could not remember how the time had passed by. Child-rearing for me was a collective effort rather than only maternal effort.

Participant #16

My parents-in-laws have gone to India for two months. I find it so hard, but I have other family members who are helping me so I’m able to manage the situation.

Participant #17

**Parental Control in Shaping Children’s Lives**

Participants were then asked what other aspects of their parenting they considered to be helpful and meaningful in fulfilling their children’s developmental goals and maintaining their connection to Indian traditions. Most of the participants revealed that they tried to understand and listen to their children and vice versa. Eighteen participants stated that they had hardly any serious parent–child conflicts. The fact that their children were still young was the common reason cited by the participants for not having any intergenerational conflicts; they felt this may
change as the children mature. Although one participant had daughters attending university and she too was in agreement with the other participants having any serious intergenerational conflict. All participants stated that they did have some prior knowledge about the potential cultural challenges immigrants face on their immigration to Canada. As a result, the participants had prepared themselves to be open to making changes at both the social and individual levels after immigration.

As in all relationships, power dynamics are vital in parent–child interaction. As mentioned earlier, in India, hierarchy plays an important role among individuals (who are ranked by power and wealth as well as caste), and also among family and kin. For example, men are considered superior to women and senior relatives are respected by junior relatives, with younger siblings expected to be respectful to older siblings. Indian parents quite often make all the important decisions for their children and play a foundational role in shaping their futures.

Participants reported using their hierarchal advantage to deal with issues like good behaviour versus bad behaviour, healthy versus unhealthy choices, and why certain values and beliefs are important to follow. They used different parenting actions to shape their children’s characters and identities in their new culture including: being a good role model, reasoning, considering the children’s perspective, choosing middle ground, bargaining with their children, and occasionally using a firm tone to establish parental authority:

I always followed Indian family values and beliefs myself, so it was more convincing for my kids and they followed the same path I was walking. Seeing me doing things were more impactful e.g. if I have to convince my children to eat healthy, first I have to show them I am eating healthy. You have to be good role model to them.

Participant #8

If we impose our things on her, it might go in the opposite direction. We don’t want to stress her out as she’s young. One has to work with one’s children like a friend. We see her perspective on everything. Then present our perspective. We tried to come in the middle to avoid conflict. We have to be very innovative with her. Screaming or shouting won’t help.

Participant #15
As children are experiencing local culture more, so to makes them follow traditional practice, you have to give them reasonable explanation why they have to do; forcing them to do it will not help. You will have conflict with your children for sure. Participant #11

One participant shared an experience she had had with her daughter, where patience helped her daughter to recognize the virtue of certain traditional practices:

It takes time to accept certain norms or tradition, but keep on trying, keep on exposing or connecting them to our culture. It is sometime slow process. Eventually they will realize the beauty of it and definitely embrace. Participant #5

Participants agreed that screaming and harsh discipline were not required, as they were aware of the fact that their children were being sandwiched between two cultures:

It is not our kids fault, they are trying to absorb two different culture. I think it is more challenging for them than for us as parents. Participant #2

Two participants talked about using Canadian-style disciplinary actions such as time-outs or taking away privileges (e.g., the use of electronic gadgets) to discipline their children. One participant told me that she always sought assistance from other family members in resolving any minor parent–child conflict:

Having family around was and is a big blessing in my life. I had some conflict with my children. My brother has a very strong bonding with my kids. They are very attached to him. So, his involvement always brings peace between us and my kids. Listening from other elder family member in the house helped them to understand things, more like having a second opinion on things. Participant #16

Through the interviews, participants reported that the category of action they most favoured for shaping their children’s character was building stronger bonds with them. They felt that this strategy would nurture a mutually respectful relationship between parents and children. Participants believed that bonding helps the children to follow the parents’ developmental path and they provided guidance accordingly. They also felt parent–child bonding made their children feel secure, safe, confident, and comfortable in sharing their concerns and issues.
Participants revealed a few other methods used in building their relationships with their children, one of which was to simply be there for them. In Indian culture, there are several traditional practices considered to further the development of parent–child bonding such as co-sleeping, interdependence, and helping children with routine chores. Participants admitted that they tried to maintain the abovementioned traditional parenting practices in the new cultural environment.

**Child-Centred Parenting**

Participants analyzed their parenting style in comparison to their perceptions of the Canadian parenting style (see the next section, “Canadian Context — Perceptions of Canadian Parenting”). In Indian culture, it is a long-lived tradition for parents to invest many physical, emotional, and financial resources in their children, in the hope of providing a safe and secure future for them: family and children are paramount. Each participant revealed that, as an Indian parent, her life transformed to being child-centred on becoming a parent:

We as Indian parents are very involved with our kids’ life as compared to Canadian parents. Canadian parents leave some space for themselves to enjoy life, but we are much more devoted to our kids’ well-being, future, academic achievement, not having any space for ourselves. Life in an Indian family can be too children-centered.

Participant #4

We as a parents (India), have a children-centered life. We hardly live for ourselves but always worry about our children and their future and find ways or resources to give them as much comfort we can provide them. This gives use immense satisfaction. Life is cycle, when their kids grow up they should, as parents, devote their life for their kids.

Participant #1

Five participants further shared how both they and their husbands tried to make up for the lack of supportive family members by being more available for their children:

Myself (as I was working full time) and my husband managed to look after our kids. We have to sacrifice our personal life but that was okay with us.

Participant #13

In addition, other participants revealed that sometimes one parent (usually the mother) would sacrifice a career to be with the children full-time:
I gave up my career and focused on raising my children. Now they’re in high school and I’m back in school going to complete my course.  

Participant #14

I was very scared when I was pregnant with my first child as I was away from my family and our family income was not great, so my parents were unable to come to help me. So, we decided, I would take care of my kids and not work outside.  

Participant #8

The participants all saw themselves as being, for the most part, parents who were devoted to their children and comfortable in their roles as supporters of both the emotional and financial needs of their children:

Parenting support is much more there in Indian culture. Supporting our children financially. I do not want my child to be under debt when he/she leaves university. I like to support them financially not only with money; I will also help or support them psychologically by being there for them always.  

Participant #5

Co-Sleeping

I tried to gather participants’ detailed views on a few common Indian parenting practices including co-sleeping, living with extended family, and community living. To the participants, these traditional parenting practices play a significant role in creating bonding and interdependence both within the family and with members of the extended family.

According to an anthropological study on co-sleeping by Nasatir-Hilty (2014), co-sleeping is a widespread practice that involves infants sleeping in close proximity to their mothers or both parents, which often amounts to the mother and infant sleeping together on whatever space is available. In Western culture, it is perceived as a practice where infants share the bed with mothers or parents (bed-sharing). This traditional practice was never completely abandoned by either non-Western or industrialized Western cultures, but recently Western societies have started developing negative attitudes towards co-sleeping, in part because of its association with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
Nasatir-Hilty (2014) emphasized three biological benefits of co-sleeping for the parent-child dyad: skin-on-skin contact, ease of breastfeeding, and a potential decrease in the incidence of SIDS. She recommended that co-sleeping should be analyzed through cross-cultural comparison, as Western societies have a higher rate of SIDS than do non-Western societies; the fact cannot be ignored. Research findings discussed in Nasatir-Hilty’s (2014) study revealed that Indian families residing in the United States and the United Kingdom have shown a very low rate of SIDS as they continued the practice of co-sleeping in their new cultural context after migration.

Participants tend to follow the practice of co-sleeping in conjunction with other practices like the modified extended family system and community living to help maintain the native family dynamics in their new cultural context. All participants discussed in depth their opinions on how these practices contribute positively to their children’s development, as illustrated by the following comments:

Co-sleeping benefits children, it is not only Indian practice. I feel more secure if my kids are sleeping with me. When we do that it brings closeness between parents and children. Another reason that I think is, as an Indian parent we feel it is more caring gestures towards kids. Interdependence is very important irrespective of any culture. It is the positive thing to have in our family. This way my kids feel more attached to the parents and develop secure bonding and share their concerns and issues and have better psychological wellbeing. Participant #4

Emotionally it will be shattering for us if we make them sleep in separate room. We are not ready for such transitions even we are in Canada. Anyway, they are going to sleep alone or prefer to sleep alone once they are teenage. Participant #7

I still sleep with my younger one whenever she is upset or worried even though she is in her 20s. It’s okay to sleep with your children. They feel secure and closer to you. They will confide in you their issues and concerns more freely. In these days, mental health issues are increasing so if my sleeping with them provides some relief I will never say no to them. Participant #13

Benefit of my daughter sleeping with me allowed us to figure out something (twitching issues) was there, and it could have been worse. Besides, children when they are young, they get bad dreams. And my daughters had those, as we used to sleep with them, we used to soothe them and that way they felt safe and secure. That whole process created a very strong bonding between us.
and our children. I’m glad I followed Indian practice of co-sleeping.  
Participant #18

Community Living

Another important focus of discussion was how living in a community with other Indian immigrants made a big difference in bringing their children closer to Indian culture. Most participants (sixteen) felt lucky to be with their own community members who helped their children and themselves stay rooted in their Indian culture:

90% credit goes to the fact if you are living in your community, it is much easier to create connection with Indian culture. Being with community we all celebrate are festival, events related to religion quite often that makes them to connect with our culture better.  
Participant #2

Staying near your community, make you feel less lonely and another benefit is, it is easy to keep our children connected to our traditional values and beliefs. It is very important to be surrounded by people who have similar tradition, background, it feels like a family and one does not feel lonely in this country.  
Participant #7

Summary of Parenting Styles

Participants were using parenting practices that they felt helped them achieve the vision they had for their children: to lead a good, healthy, and productive life. Parenting practices differed, with certain practices being traditionally influenced. The changes parents made to a few of these practices will be discussed in a later section (“Parenting Modifications”).

Participants were understanding of the fact that their children were trying to navigate two dissimilar cultures. They were supportive of their children developing a bicultural identity to allow them to function effectively in the two cultures. Participants were hopeful that this kind of integration would help their children to have better life opportunities at the social and institutional levels. They nurtured strong parent–child bonding by being available to their children and keeping them near people of their own community to strengthen cultural ties; they firmly believed many Indian cultural norms could contribute positively toward their children’s
mental and physical well-being. They did not follow all Indian values, beliefs, and practices just for the sake of tradition, but rather selected those that they believed to be positive for their families in their new cultural context.

**Canadian Context — Perceptions of Canadian Parenting**

“Culture” refers to the common identity of a specific group of people that arises from what they do, how they do it, and why they do it as they respond to the environment they live in. Culture encompasses religion, food choice, clothing style, language, marriage, music, worldview of right or wrong, table manners, how visitors are greeted, and how a person behaves with loved ones (Fieldhouse, 2013). These variations are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Culture becomes key in a global world where culturally diverse societies are intermingling due to a recent increase in migration worldwide. Immigrant families are rooted in their culture of origin. When migration occurs to a dissimilar culture, immigrants often encounter difficulty in understanding the new host culture; for example, immigrants to Canada from India may have difficulty in adjusting to Canadian culture with its cultural complexity, including multiculturalism and the dominance of charter culture (i.e., British & French culture) at the political, social, and economic levels (Kunz & Sykes, 2017). Development of participants knowledge about local parenting practices comes through various processes including acquiring language skills, professional interactions with co-workers, hearing about them from their children, or through informal observation of others and online learning.

Participants pointed out that social media and the internet brought a Western influence into traditional culture back home. They noted that in recent times, the Western construction of childhood and the promotion of materialism in shaping the younger generation, carried out on a
global scale, have tended to put pressure on parents to reduce the cultural differences in their parenting practices. With this understanding, participants discussed the Canadian context — their new culture that was in many ways dissimilar to the one in which they were raised — and highlighted the differences as well as the similarities in educational, religious, and cultural expectations. They also explored how those differences and similarities might have impacted their parenting orientation and style.

**Educational Expectations**

Like Indian parents, participants emphasized the importance of academic achievement and goals. Like Canadian parents, they emphasized the importance of involving their children in extracurricular activities. Many of my participants found the local elementary school education system not strict enough, with its emphasis on leisure and recreation as well as studies. Participants further noted that children at an early development stage were not challenged to their full potential in the public education system:

> I have seen many Canadian families where there are no expectations from children. I think that is totally wrong. If no expectation or goal or target for children to accomplish, there won’t be any outcome.  
> Participant #11

However, four of the participants were more positively receptive:

> Here in elementary school, there is not much stress on studies and teachers encourage extra activities. I like the balance. In India there is too much focus on academic achievement, less on sports or any other activities.  
> Participant #3

> I was very happy with the education when my children were little. No stress. No heavy backpacks. Having fun in the school. Not too much stress on academics.  
> Participant #14

One participant chose a private school for her child as she felt that her child would not be challenged enough in the public school system. She opted for the Montessori educational system:

> Public school system in recent time is not very effective for achievement or at par with their developmental, cognitive skills/learning abilities. Academic expectations in public school are very low and that did not match with my expectation that I had for my child academically. That’s why I chose Montessori Private School.  
> Participant #11
Participants could not resist comparing their own educational experiences in India to the local Canadian education system. They felt that there was a gap between the easygoing elementary school level and the very challenging high school level, and noted that at the university level, students are assessed differently than in elementary and high school. Participants stated that the Indian education system put more emphasis on memorizing and retaining information:

It is easy going, kids are less burdened compared to Indian education system where academic achievement is the main outcome of school learning. Here learning is stepwise and slow process. Kids are not burdened with any expectation.  

Participant #8

Cultural Expectations

Upon landing in Canada, participants found many cultural differences. They felt that the cultural diversity in Canada was similar to what they had experienced in their native country, except that in India there was a strong subcultural heterogeneity, while in Canada people from diverse countries of origin could be seen socializing on a daily basis around the neighbourhood, at the grocery store, and so on. All the participants noticed differences in family dynamics, behaviours, and the marital system:

Children from immigrant parents are sure their parents are going be together, not like local culture. Where separation or divorce are more common than our traditional family structure. So, family dynamics are stronger in India as compared to local culture. For kids’ sake we do a lot of sacrifice and living in extended family, differences are addressed by our elders who always like to make us understand how important it is for children to have a family together.  

Participant #2

All participants agreed on the importance of strong family values, such as respect and taking care of elders. Expectations of children having a respectful demeanour were relatively high when compared to Canadian parents. Participants believed that extended families play a beneficial role in developing this aspect of positive behaviour in children’s personalities. Participants agreed that all parents love their children irrespective of cultural background,
whatever the differences in their ways of parenting. Participants disciplined their children through reasoning but remained assertive during the early stages of their children’s development. They maintained their parental control until adulthood by being friendly and supportive. For example, participants preferred to support their children emotionally and financially until later stages of their lives as they felt that doing so maintained closeness with them.

All of the participants in my study believed in maintaining a guided supervision approach with their children until they made their career choices. They wanted their children to focus on their studies and no encouragement was given to children to be financially independent until the completion of their studies. In the participants’ opinion, Canadian children are brought up to be independent and self-motivated at a relatively early stage of life.

On the other hand, two participants identified positive differences such as Canadian parents’ encouragement of non-academic extracurricular activities, and the involvement of both parents in child-rearing, as opposed to the traditional Indian arrangement where the mother is the primary caregiver and the father is the financial provider.

In Canadian culture, both parents try hard to work or involves in activities that create same bonding with both parents. In our community mother are much involved than father. Fathers in Canadian society are more involved in physical activities with their kids. I liked it very much, I wish fathers in our community should have such involvement with their kid’s activities.

Participant #4

I really feel both parents should make strong bonding with children. In my case, my husband works so he hardly spent time with them. I always insist he should try to be with them whenever we are home. Try to take interest in their life. They will grow old and will not feel the connection with their father. So, spend as much as time you can with them. Strong bonding or relationship with both the parents is must.

Participant #9

Although all the participant acknowledged that parents should help children become independent, they were in no hurry to make their own children independent as they valued interdependence and collectivism. In their opinion, these norms provide a strong foundation for family dynamics. The participants wanted their children to inherit selected norms of the Indian
family system (the modified extended family system, filial piety, interdependence) in their new cultural environment. Participants believed that these norms would contribute positively to their children’s development, helping them to perform better academically as well as become productive members of their new society.

All of the participants perceived that there was a prevalence of diversity in family structure within Canada, such as single-parent families, divorced parents, and the involvement of multiple stepmothers and stepfathers in some Canadian children’s lives. However, only one participant commented that the diversity in family structure was neither normal nor healthy for children:

I think local population should pay more serious attention to the benefit of raising children by biological parents. E.g.: families with step-children, mothers, fathers. They should see the drawbacks of these family dynamics. Too much is going on in that setup. But clearly biological family like Father and Mother, raising children like a normal family is very important for the child’s mental and physical health.
Participant #14

Summary of Canadian Context

Research participants noticed both similarities and differences between their ways of parenting and those of Canadians. Major similarities included love and care in the parenting of their children and wanting their children to lead responsible lives and contribute positively to society. Major differences included the establishment of close, strong ties with family and members of the extended family, and being raised by both biological parents in the nuclear family household.

Parenting Modifications

Culture is a very contextual. Tradition, values beliefs and especially practices can be followed at individual levels and can be changed accordingly. One should understand the meaning behind and can implement those meanings in their family dynamics. If we are adapting to the changes, that doesn’t mean we are leaving our culture behind. Basically, we are evolving new ways to keep our society healthy and living in peace with
others. If we are going to stick to those values or practices/beliefs, we make others suffer so one should go with change.  

Participant #15

Parenting modifications are the changes immigrant parents make in their parenting orientation and style due to their settlement in Canadian culture. When people migrate to a new country, they tend to adjust to new ways of living. As participants in this study are not newcomers to Canada but have been living in Ontario for more than 3 years, their relatively long period of settlement will aid our understanding of the parenting modifications they have employed.

All participants admitted to having modified their parenting approaches, and that they had known before they came that this would be needed in their new cultural environment. One of the most common points of agreement among the participants was that they had to modify or hybridize their parenting style to fit into the local culture and provide better life opportunities for their families:

As you are in new environment, one has to adopt to certain ways to avoid clash to make life easy and comfortable. As a parent it is your responsibility to make your children learn the value, beliefs and also expose them to some local values too, as they born in Canada. It purely depends on parents what and how they want their kids to be.  

Participant #7

We have to modify as it is hard to follow traditional norms here e.g. when my first born was there, as per Indian tradition, we always put a honey drop in his mouth and here we could not give him honey, but in Canada, doctors don’t allow honey until child is one year old. And same way, we don’t give meat to young kids in India but in Canadian health guide it is OK to give meat to children.  

Participant #4

I did follow what my mom did. It is obvious as I was brought up traditionally. But when I came here, things changed, as I familiarized and learned about Canadian parenting approach e.g. Need to make kids more independent; to learn extra activities besides studies. I try inculcating both the cultures. I would say it is mix and match of both.  

Participant #3

Two participants noted that industrialization as well as globalization in its various aspects — such as social media, and information and communication technology — might result in redefining the concept of childhood within the globalized world, indirectly influencing
traditional norms. These participants reflected that these influencing factors are resulting in the weakening of certain traditional practices in their country of origin. One participant revealed that misleading portrayals of Indian cultural values in the media, especially in entertainment sources, occasionally challenged her parenting practices in her new homeland:

Indian media is not portraying actual culture. Indian TV/cinema program are so misleading. So, it is hard to convince my kids. In India, things are changing very fast recently, they are following American culture due to globalization. Women are now more liberal in dresses, more American. Women are following less of traditional role and demanding gender equality, so making my girls to follow traditional gender role is impossible. 

Participant #1

Three participants observed that the process of modification took time. They noticed a difference between raising their first child and their second child, with their first child being raised more traditionally than the younger one. This was viewed as the result of learning about alternative Canadian parenting practices that might help their children fit in with Canadian culture, but was also seen as “giving in” to changes away from their traditional parenting practices.

A couple of participants felt that professional struggles drained them so much that they hardly had any energy and enthusiasm left to keep their children connected with native culture. Maintaining one’s culture of origin was clearly a challenging, time-demanding process that some mothers simply couldn’t keep up with alongside their other work.

I was so busy with my life juggling career and childcare I never had time to think that much. I was not having time to keep my child connected to my native culture. Occasionally I used to go to temple and liked it for myself. I never looked to raise my child traditional ways as I felt it was not going to work here and not appropriate in Canadian context. So, I never taken that path. As my step-Mom is from Canadian culture so I had to make a lot of adjustments myself to fit in.

Participant #11

We are not able to raise our kids traditionally at all. I would say only 10% of my parenting practices are a reflection of the Indian way. Because of our job schedules, we are not able to take them to any community gatherings. Although a lot of families are here in the Niagara region who are from similar culture background. Our working hours do not allow us to keep our children in touch with our tradition.

Participant #18
Another factor that contributed to the weakening of the connection with native culture was being away from their own community of people. Some participants had experienced social isolation, as, until recently, there was not a lot of cultural diversity in the local Niagara population: only a small number of Indian families had settled in the Niagara region. Without a passive influx of traditional culture from the community, the burden on parents to actively maintain their culture was much higher, resulting in potential stress for the caregivers in their new cultural context. As noted previously, participants mentioned that staying within their own community contributed heavily to maintaining strong ties with traditional culture.

Six participants told me that they had made a conscious effort to explore community centres, such as the Early Years Centre at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). They wanted to observe and learn the local parenting practices in order to modify their own parenting practices and help their children fit into the local culture, especially within the school environment. The six participants were aware that, in school, their children would predominantly experience the local mainstream culture.

I used to take them out early year Centre to expose them to local culture as they are born here and interact with others. I used to interact with other parents just to have the feel how they are raising their kids.  
Participant #3

I used to take him to YMCA early years Centre. There he learned how to speak local language, interacted with children from different cultures. He used to learn about different food, e.g. waffles, pancakes.  
Participant #10

The most common challenges that these parents experienced in adapting to Canadian culture pertained to food, language, and discipline, even though, as Indian immigrants, these participants did come from a multicultural society with rich diversity in food, attire, religion, language, and so on. However, in their homeland, this diversity posed fewer challenges. In language for example, people maintained their mother tongue, as well as another common
language (English or Hindi), to communicate with populations having a different mother tongue. Similarly, despite having different types of food, depending on one’s state of origin, there are still shared common ingredients and spices.

**Maintaining Traditional Dietary Habits**

In India, the consistent availability of fresh and raw food sources throughout the year can be considered one potential factor that minimizes Indians’ reliance on canned, processed, and frozen foods. In addition, the long summer season and inconsistent availability of electricity make it challenging to keep food frozen or refrigerated for any length of time. Overall, the people of India are in the habit of cooking food two to three times a day, depending on individual family needs and affordability.

When participants moved to Canada, they noticed significant differences including the availability of prepared, canned, processed, and frozen foods at local grocery stores. All participants noticed that there were multiple options for eating out (e.g., fast food) in Canada. Participants were in the habit of cooking most of their meals at home. Thus, they found it challenging to create a balance as far as dietary acculturation was concerned:

> I believe in home cooked and fresh food as it really contributes positivity in children development and growth in long run. Fast food is not good for children but being in this country and kids are exposed to these foods so much, sometimes it is unavoidable, so I have to make some changes in our habits. Occasionally we do give them some fast food.  
>  
> Participant #2

Two participants stated categorically that exposure to multicultural foods back home allowed them to try different cuisines, and that they did not have any dietary restrictions due to religion. Once in Canada, they chose to adopt some Italian dishes (pasta, pizza, etc.). Relishing dishes such as pizza meant that these participants could offer local food to their children, which resulted in better integration into their new cultural environment. This helped particularly in school, where children shied away from taking traditional food. Some participants made changes
in preparation style or ingredients to make their children’s lunches healthy and acceptable in school settings:

My daughter initially refused to take Indian food to school. I managed to make her understand. Now people like her food. You have to work on and act smartly. It was difficult at elementary level, but I changed a few ingredients and the typical smell was not there. Participant #13

Three participants were initially living within their own community in the GTA, (populated predominantly with visible minorities) and later moved to the Niagara region (predominantly a non-visible minority population). They explained that there were some parenting challenges associated with the new cultural environment in the Niagara region. Children did not hesitate to take traditional food to school in the GTA, where the majority of children belonged to a distinct ethnic group. In contrast, in the Niagara region, participants’ children felt uncomfortable taking a lunchbox with traditional food to school, since the majority of the children there belonged to the dominant community.

They shy away from taking traditional food. In the beginning of their school year, I sent Indian food in their lunch box, student started laughing at my kids and after that they refused to take, so it is always non-traditional food being taken in the school, now they give me hard time to eat Indian food in the house. Participant #1

I have adjusted a lot and changed my parenting to integrate Canadian culture especially with my children, so they should not feel out of place here. Before people start asking them what they had in their lunchbox, I gave them Canadian food. E.g.: veggie sandwiches. Participant #14

In particular, four participants noted that their children’s acceptance of traditional foods often depended on their location. Children were more likely to eat traditional foods at home or in communities where there were a large number of Indian children. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that these children were confident that they would not be teased when they were not around members of the dominant culture, many of whom have minimal knowledge and understanding about the dietary practices of Indians. The children had accepted traditional foods as an important part of the Indian culture that their parents wished them to connect with:
Other students make fun of his food in school (Niagara region). I came from Brampton, he could have never faced such a situation there. As my cousin live over there, and their kids still carry Indian food in school. All other cultures, in Brampton are familiar with Indian cuisine. In Brampton schools, 50% of kids belong to Indian community and rest are of other culture including white community.

Participant #4

My daughter saw other people bringing their native food and speaking their native language. She doesn’t shy away from being traditional in language speaking or food.  

Participant #5

All participants felt very concerned about the dominance of fast, frozen, and processed foods over all-natural, home-cooked food options for their growing children. They sometimes found that it was quite challenging for their children to make healthy lifestyle choices within their new cultural environment:

They can get used to Canadian food very easy as they are surrounded by local people. But nobody is going to introduce them to Indian food, so it is my responsibility to expose them to Indian food. I always try to connect them to Indian values, practices and belief and cuisine. I think children should be introduced to real and organic food, not processed food I mean healthy and chemical free food for children.  

Participant #7

Teaching Mother Language

The majority of participants faced even greater challenges with keeping their children in touch with their native language (mother tongue). It was a common belief among the participants that, before their children interacted with the outside world (the local culture), it was easy to teach them the Indian language. Once they started going to preschools and local daycare facilities, the children integrated very quickly with the local culture. Sometimes there were multiple reasons for parents to give up teaching their native language, including their professional commitments or work schedules, their own ability to speak English, the unavailability of extended family, and a speaking knowledge of English among the family members back home. Also participants were busy managing household duties, as they lacked the luxury of hired help that many were used to in India and did not use local daycare facilities:
We both are working, we do not spend much time with them and there is no family around us. It is our fault as we are not very insistent on the idea of keeping them in touch with our native language.

Participant #18

It will be hypocritic way to tell them, you need to speak Punjabi because I am an Indian parent. I kind of find it hard to convince them to follow Indian language, religion. I have to look after so many other things e.g. caring, cleaning and run around for groceries. I never had any help around the house and worse thing I know English. I found it stressing to make them speak my mother tongue. As they told me that it is not practical language to communicate. Why they need to learn Punjabi as they don’t live in India. Just not to start arguments, I let them speak English, just to avoid clash.

Participant #1

Being in a daycare, my daughter was exposed to local culture. She picked up local values and practices very easily. She was very fluent in my mother tongue before she joined daycare. Now she can hardly speak a word. Now she’s so fluent in English, she transitioned to her new environment very quickly.

Participant #15

Three participants did not report any challenges regarding language. They told me that their children spoke both the mother tongue and English. These participants were strict in requiring their children to communicate in the mother tongue with them, as well as with other family members and community friends, in order to maintain a bilingual identity. Other parents revealed that because their children were surrounded by English-speaking people, especially once they started school, or because of participants’ own lack of persistence, it became more challenging to maintain bilingualism in their children. These participants’ children could understand their mother tongue but preferred not to answer in it:

I speak my native language with them they understand me but respond me in English as they are most of the time with English speaking people.

Participant #1

I feel bad about it that my children are not speaking my mother tongue. When we go to India, they are not able to communicate with their grandparents in their native language. It is our fault as we are not very insistent on the idea of keeping them in touch with our native language.

Participant #18

I spoke both languages Hindi and English with my children. My older son speaks Hindi but my younger communicate only in English. He knows how to speak in Hindi, but he prefers speaking English.

Participant #6
Practicing Religion

Religion plays a fundamental role in many people's lives. The participants clearly stated that their children were not as religious as they were. Their children followed some religious practices without question, but found others not convincing or relevant enough to follow in their new cultural context:

I don’t eat and cook beef in our house. But if he (my son) wants to eat beef at friend’s house, he is more than welcome to do that. The reason behind this practice is Hinduism to the extent, I understand the reason for not eating beef. But he does not practice Hinduism to that extent and doesn’t have that understanding since living in Canada. Eating beef cannot make a person look good or bad so I do not want to impose such practice on my children because this practice is very contextual. Participant #11

My daughter questioned about not eating pork due to religious restrictions. She will always nag me about it. I tried all possible explanation, but she is not convinced. Participant #12

I worship statues. So, my son will always ask me how do statues going to help you? He will tell me, even in our religious scripture, it is written to do your duty and handle responsibility in your world nicely and fairly. So why to do statue worshipping? I always try to explain as we have grown up doing all that, so I follow that. Participant #16

All participants felt the need to be flexible about the extent to which religion should be imposed on their children. For some, practising religion was a much more active process than just attending services. Some religions, such as Hinduism, require adherence to idol worship. In some religions, specific clothing is worn. For example, among Sikhs, men traditionally wear a turban in public. Young children either wear a patka [head covering] or wear their hair in a bun on their head; parents do not cut their children’s hair.

One participant agreed that she had had to make a compromise on her family’s religious practice within their new cultural environment. This participant stated that, even if a parent wanted to continue with their traditional practice in Canada, it would become challenging for their children to understand why the parent or older sibling was wearing a turban or patka and thus they would shy away from emulating their practice. The participant explained that, in her
opinion, following certain religious values is tougher for children as they are subject to public ridicule, which may result in psychological issues. Conversely, another participant successfully maintained adherence to her religious belief and helped her children be strong, showing them ways to handle the reactions of others:

Keeping hair in our culture is norm. I made my son understand why it is important and how to make other person understand; now he is passionate about keeping his hair. He doesn’t want to go for haircut.  

Participant #4

Change in Family Dynamics

Seventeen participants told me that they became a parent for the first time after their immigration to Canada. They had not had any prior experience of parenting while in their native homeland. Nevertheless, all 19 participants agreed that there was definitely a contrast in family dynamics since arriving in their new cultural environment. They all had had to make adjustments during the transition process; those who were parents agreed that some changes in parenting practices had been necessary. The participants came with an open mind (cognitive flexibility), ready to experience new ways of life. There were challenges, but the participants’ willingness to learn and negotiate the obstacles within their new multicultural environment made the challenges less stressful. Their approach, involving hybridization of family dynamics, led to a smoother transition.

Participants’ relationships with their partners, and, later on, their children, changed for the better once they had made these adjustments after coming to Canada. Participants felt that they and their family members had become more understanding and helpful to each other. Partners went beyond their stereotypical roles, especially the fathers, who contributed more to child-rearing than they would have in India, where mothers would always obtain help from other family members or relatives — anyone except the father. Although there was role flexibility in
participants’ families in Canada, mothers were still more actively involved in their children’s lives.

As stated earlier, 14 participants came to Canada unaccompanied by members of their extended families. Lack of both prior parenting experience and family guidance left these participants to develop hybridized parenting practices in the new culture. All of the participants felt themselves to be friendly and lenient with their children, to listen to their perspectives without limiting their freedom of expression, since they were born and brought up in Canada. Still, the participants tried to reproduce the dense matrix of relationships in their culture of origin by making every possible effort to keep the children close, and taking up the role of guide and supporter both emotionally and financially. Participants expected their children to respect their judgements about the host culture and Indian norms. Participants used reasonable explanation to further their children’s understanding of the differences between good and bad behaviour. Their objective was to guide their children to be good, healthy human beings able to lead meaningful lives and ultimately to thrive in the new country.

**Summary of Parenting Modifications**

All participants stated that their parenting beliefs and practices could be seen as a blended or hybrid form of native and Canadian culture. Most of the modifications reported were in dietary habits, and language; there were also adjustments in personal attitude and behaviour at the individual level within the family system. Participants came to Canada with cognitive flexibility and a willingness to adjust to the new cultural environment. The participating parents found a new flexibility regarding parenting roles. Mothers still actively participated in raising their children within their new cultural environment and had occasional support from the fathers.
Most parenting practices inside the home were very much influenced by traditional culture, whereas for parenting in the outside world the participants used a blended parenting approach and strategies in order to reduce psychological stress on their children, since they, even more than the parents, had to deal with their new cultural surroundings. Participants tried to be lenient by, for example, giving their children freedom to present their own perspectives. They were also proactive towards their children’s behaviour, perhaps due to their prior understanding that harsh or authoritarian parenting was not acceptable in the new cultural context. Furthermore, changes in parenting perceptions in their country of origin due to the impact of globalization might also have influenced their parenting practices.

**Parenting Support (Recommendations) for Immigrant Parents**

At the end of their interviews, participants were asked what kind of support they used that helped them to understand and learn about the Canadian ways of parenting or contributed towards their integration process. Most of the participants expressed that they had never looked for any kind of support for themselves, although three had applied for education loans to upgrade or update their professional skills to Canadian standards. Participants agreed that they would use an Early Years Centre to expose their children to others of diverse cultural backgrounds, and to prepare them for the school years ahead. Two of the parents used a daycare facility to make up for the lack of support from extended family, as both parents were working full-time. The majority of participants relied on their friends, their relatives, and members of their own ethnic community to help them understand the Canadian way of life.

Two participants noticed that, due to the affordability of communications technology, information regarding Canadian social and institutional systems had become more accessible than in times past. Recently, more support services and programs were added and made available
to newcomer immigrants, including, for example, details of a mortgage program for newcomer immigrants. One participant, who had recently immigrated to Canada, narrated her personal experience regarding support services, and her awareness of these opportunities in North America due to advancements in communications technology:

We registered ourselves at YMCA under newcomer immigrant family section. They used to send info on all workshops and seminars for new families. And one day I learned about mortgage system for new immigrants – housing loan from Meridian bank. We were very interested to have our own house rather than paying rent. This piece of information changed everything for us. They gathered our financial history from here and also back home. They processed our case on the basis of the information they gathered and gave us a loan.

Participant #15

It is important to do your homework and learn what is there for new immigrants. One has to be active and explore all the opportunities. Technology is a big help too as new information is available online and these things were not as accessible a few years back.

Participant #15

**Multiculturalism in Education**

The most frequent suggestions that arose from the participants concerned the Ontario education system. Participants strongly suggested that the Ontario elementary school curriculum should be academically more challenging, and tailored to students’ learning potential. Another suggestion made by participants was the implementation of a multicultural perspective at the institutional level in the education system. In the participants’ opinion, this suggestion applied particularly to the Niagara region, as more immigrant families from visible minorities were settling there; they felt it would serve to make Niagara, and the surrounding area, a multicultural society. To these participants, it was important that there should be school programs to foster awareness and understanding about other cultures.

One participant shared her experience of living in the GTA before moving to the Niagara region. Based on her specific experiences with schools in the GTA, she noticed that there were often celebrations based on different ethnic cultures. Students would dress up in the garb of a
traditional culture and were encouraged to bring their native food to school. These events were publicized in the school calendar and on bulletin boards. Students were made aware of these cultural events and could inform parents of the details if need be.

All participants believed that having a multicultural perspective in school helped their children learn about other cultures. This and other types of cultural exchange helped generate tolerance among the local populace, and the hope of a more respectful cultural atmosphere in which both new and established immigrants would feel better integrated and respected:

In school, the government should encourage a multicultural environment so that students are more aware of diverse ethnic groups who are migrating to Canada. This will bring a better understanding of cultural diversity and more acceptances will be there. It will benefit immigrant coming from different cultures not to feel shy of their cultural identities. Students will have more respect for different religions/ethnicities.

Participant #13

Having *multicultural perspective* in curriculum not only helps our children to learn about other cultures but also local population to get some understanding of all the diverse cultures migrating to Canada. This will create a more tolerant/acceptable situation when learning about other cultures, they’ll be more respectful and not feel like we are some kind of alien.

Participant #18

In Canada, the concept of multiculturalism is focused on equality and human rights. However, the participants felt that to make those rules more effective a multicultural perspective should be implemented at the grassroots level, with schools serving as the starting point:

Canadians say it is multicultural country, but representation is missing. Schools are a social foundation, where the first stage could be to learn about multiculturalism.

Participant #13

All participants agreed that some changes to the school curriculum should be made and that additional dietary options in the school lunches should be available. For example, they suggested that instead of learning only about Canada, students should also learn about civics and world geography, and about religion, including spirituality and philosophy. Moreover, students should be provided with food choices from other cultures, such as Chinese, Indian, African, and Latin:
Instead of having pizza day, they should bring diversity in school lunches. I know pizza is one of the cheapest food on the earth, but I do favour diversity. Participant #5

**Parental Involvement in Education**

As a parent, some participants did not feel much involved in their children’s learning process. They were not familiar with the resources that teachers were using to educate the children. One participant resorted to the internet to learn about the various resources and instructional strategies the teachers were following in school. They felt that no information was provided to parents to give them an understanding of what was being taught. Participants strongly felt that the education system should be more interactive and that parental involvement should be encouraged. They expressed the desire for teachers to send the curriculum home so that the parents would know what strategies were used in their children’s learning process. In this way, parents could use the same strategies and resources to help advance their children’s learning while at home.

In accordance with parental attitudes in their home country, participants stressed the value of academics, and that they expected a higher level of achievement and success than Canadian-born parents did. Coming from an education system where students were encouraged to learn from textbooks and which provided a significant amount of homework, parental involvement in home learning was expected as a way of providing children with a competitive edge. Since their children were not given the same tools in their new educational environment, these participating parents often found themselves lost and helpless:

There should be standardized system as far as school homework is concerned. It should not be dependent on the teachers. We as a parent wants to be in touch with children’s study. There should be some homework that way we will come to know what’s going in the class. We miss out on that aspect. There are not many opportunities to interact with teachers. Participant #2
Two participants commented that the Indian education system is still traditional in its approach and that, in contrast to the Canadian system, technology has not had much of an impact:

We still learn traditionally or via older method. Not much innovation has happened in India especially in education system.  
Participant #16

Here, Educational approach and strategies are different than back home. In India, we had text books in school. They stick to the books and curriculum. Here, teachers use activities to make children learn by themselves. Kind of let student explore and learn.  
Participant #15

Another participant felt that technology should not be permitted to have too much influence in elementary school on the grounds that it would not contribute positively in the long term:

One biggest drawback I find here, is that kids are not in the habit of writing. Writing skill is taking a back step too much influence of technology.  
Participant #6

All participants clearly demanded that students should be assigned regular homework that would help parents in tracking their child’s academic progress in school:

As a parent, I don’t feel much involved in child’s learning process. I don’t know the resources they are using to make children learn. One has to go to the internet and learn what system they follow in school. There is no information for parents to know what’s going on. System should be more interactive and parental involvement encouraged. And should send the curriculum home so they know what strategies are used in the learning process. So that they use the same and help the children in house to advance their learning.  
Participant #15

For the teacher, if parents show interest, they will send some information. If parents do not have time, they do not bother to send you any report about your children academic progress. It is really strange. Because the school system seems so alien to us some time, we do not know how and what to ask. In India, students have text books, homework, exams, class tests, so we know what is going on in the school and how our children are doing.  
Participant #8

One participant expressed her regret on following her son’s teacher’s instruction not to assign additional work at home to advance his educational learning. The teacher conveyed to this participant that her child would become bored in class if the participant helped her son do extra learning. She felt that her personal knowledge regarding her son’s education was overlooked by
the schoolteacher. Thus, the participant did not pursue extra learning and, once her son entered the 7th and 8th grades, felt that her son found it difficult to manage the academic expectations of those levels as a result. The participant found that in upper elementary classes, students were challenged with more studies in their curriculum, whereas there was less of an educational expectation in the lower grades.

Five of the participants talked about assigning their children extra studies at home by using online educational resources or purchasing practice books from higher grades to advance their children’s learning. These participants also used additional resources such as the Oxford and Kumon Learning Centres to better their educational skills in mathematics or language.

All of the participants felt that policy makers need to adapt to contemporary Canadian conditions, where immigrants come from many different countries. Participants believed that it is the government’s moral duty to ensure that every culture in Canada gets recognition in the education system of each province. One participant specifically commented that more emphasis should be given to making students aware of cultural facts:

More emphasis should be given in making student more knowledgeable and aware of more factual or conceptual knowledge. There is gap between elementary school learning and high school learning process, from very easy going to very challenging.

Participant #8

Two participants discussed their awareness about the old Canadian education system, which was very different from the contemporary system they found in Ontario:

Twenty years ago, public system was academically more challenged for children as compared to current education system in public school. There were more expectations from children learning wise but now things are easing going. E.g.: if you tell children to run around without telling them why they are running around, you are wasting their energy as they are not developed to explore on their own. They should go back to old model or method of learning and compare to today’s system and try to figure out something in between. Rather choosing an extreme option, shedding old system completely and adopting new one, I think it is time to reflect and do something to capture the potential more effectively at early age of development.

Participant #11
Additionally, all the participants suggested that having multicultural celebrations that included food festivals in the schools would not only provide students with the experience of participating in and learning about different cultures but also would give immigrant parents the chance to be more involved in such festivals. This would provide a platform for families of diverse ethnicity to interact with each other. Although information about other cultures is available on the internet, seeing and experiencing diversity in person, at the social level, provides a richer experience.

**Knowledge of Extra Language as an Asset for Children**

For nine participants, encouraging a multicultural atmosphere also meant offering the opportunity for students to learn different languages. Based on their own experience of learning different languages in India, these participants believed that children had the capability to learn a variety of languages. They elaborated that school authorities could create opportunities for students to learn different languages that would allow children from a non-English-speaking culture to stay connected to their mother language.

They (govt) should provide more options for students to learn different languages. Instead of public school, catholic school offer classes to learn difference languages. Public school should implement such program as immigrant parent opt public schooling for their kids. My kids want to learn Spanish. I asked them why not our native language. They told me there is not such option.

Participant #1

One participant shared her interaction with her son’s schoolteacher, who encouraged the participant to keep her son in touch with his mother tongue; assuring her that this would not hinder his learning English. This teacher was aware of the benefits of being multilingual to children’s learning. If all schoolteachers were made aware of the recent research studies (such as Guo, 2012) and other academic resources that have documented the positive results on learning of being bilingual or multilingual, it would serve as encouragement to immigrant parents to teach
their children their native language and be a step forward to the next level of positivity about multiculturalism in the school and the host society.

**Parenting Contributions**

*Suggestions for Local Parents*

The participants offered recommendations that related to helping immigrants to achieve integration with their new cultural environment while selectively maintaining lifelong cultural values and beliefs that would be meaningful to and productive in their new cultural context. All participants believed that it was important to be able to maintain bicultural functioning as a family, which had helped their successful adjustment in Canada. A few suggestions from participants focused on how to encourage Canadian society to not only acknowledge but embrace the reality of immigration from diverse cultural backgrounds.

All the participants stressed that the education system should be used to lay a foundation for such knowledge with the expected result being a greater acceptance of and respect for immigrants. Participants felt that acknowledging different cultures would be a significant step towards local society being able to benefit from the knowledge that these ethnic groups bring to Canada. During each interview, the discussion eventually moved to how immigrants can contribute positively to Canadian society, with one suggestion being that more opportunities should exist to have cross-cultural parenting dialogues. Participants were appreciative of many things Canadian culture had to offer; however, some participants noted some aspects of local family dynamics that they felt could be improved. Participants believed that addressing these would result in more positive outcomes for local children:

I feel in local culture, kids should have stronger bond with their parents. I have seen people at my workplace, they speak disrespectfully(bitch) about their parents, I cannot dare to do that about my parents as I never feel that way. We have more strong bonding with family. I do not say they do
not interact and have some kind of bonding. But in comparison, we have better edge. If Canadian culture can integrate that aspect that will be very good. It is more like a give and take.

Participant #3

If local people can understand how to live in a relationship. People have very self-centered approach. Compromise is not a part of their life. You have to understand other’s perspective and be open to it. Think if you are working, it is not always one-person job. One has to work in team. So, if they bring that same idea in their families and live together and raise their kids together, I think it is much healthier family environment and impact their growth and development positively.

Participant #7

One participant went on to suggest that there should be a special program at the high school level, or possibly as early as elementary school, focusing on family dynamics and what is involved in having children, with topics such as, “When is the right time for starting a family?” The younger generation should be taught that one should not have a child simply in order to collect benefits from the government. They should understand that a young life is at stake when these decisions are made and that their choices carry over to the future of society. Through this approach, students would come to learn what kind of family dynamics are essential for a child’s growth and development and they would have the information to help them in choosing the right path.

Suggestions for Newcomer Immigrants

For the final question, I asked participants what suggestions they could offer to newcomer immigrants that would help them to have a smoother and less stressful acculturation to and integration into local culture. Several suggestions applied to newcomer immigrants irrespective of ethnicity:

Do not give up your culture, language or religion. Follow it confidently. There is nothing inferior about following your culture in Canada. One can survive by integrating with local culture without giving up our own culture.

Participant #19

Learning English or knowing English is very helpful factor in transition with local culture. New immigrants should use ESL or available support system to learn local language if they lack fluency in English. You can contribute better for your family. It makes a lot of difference.

Participant #15
New immigrants should either have extended family or live near friends and relatives. That way they get emotional support from community members otherwise it is very hard for newcomers to adjust here in the beginning.  

Participant #16

It is important to do your homework and learn what is there for new immigrants. One has to be active and explore all the opportunities. Technology is a big help too as new information is available online. For newcomer, I would suggest that they come with open mind so that they can experience new ways of life. It will be less stressing if you try to learn new things and negotiate with new environment.  

Participant #15
Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction to the Population Studied: A Recap

It is essential that readers understand the importance of the main features that provide the foundation of the Indian family system. These Indian immigrant participants brought with them their lifelong experience of having grown up within their traditional culture. To avoid overgeneralizing and to recognize the diversity between groups of people, it is necessary to describe their prominent common traits. Here I will first recapitulate the Indian family value system and core parenting practices observed in my study and documented in the literature.

India is known for heterogeneity and diversity of region, religion, culture, language, and food habits. Although India is viewed as multicultural, the main characteristics that unite this collectivistic society (Jacob, 2017) are a common belief in family, kinship, social interdependence, and patriarchy, whereas Americans and Canadians tend to believe in individualism. Indian parenting practices typically include an emphasis on academic achievement, familial bonding, and solidarity (recognizing the importance of family and respecting elders). People of this community tend to seek emotional, social, and financial support from their families, extended families, and communities (Medora, 2007; Sheriff, 2009).

Another distinguishing feature of this community is found in their philosophical, spiritual, and religious beliefs. In contrast to a more modernized or Western set of values, in traditional Indian beliefs an individual’s primary duty is to take care of the family: any thought of one’s own personal growth at the expense of family well-being is frowned upon. The findings of my study and a review of the literature suggest that Indian immigrants have continued to emphasize core familial values and beliefs to their children while settling into their new cultural
context (Jacob, 2017). However, the process of immigration to a cultural environment that prioritizes a different value system does pose a challenge for immigrant parents.

My qualitative study involved in-depth interviews with 19 Indian immigrant participants living in the Niagara region of Canada, all of whom emigrated from India to Canada and were adapting to a new multicultural environment. The study was conducted with the aim of identifying and understanding the influence of traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices on the parenting styles and the family dynamics of Indian immigrant families within their new Canadian environment. Using the results of my study, I will now explore the challenges and successes faced by these immigrant families during their transition.

**PARENTING ORIENTATION**

My analysis of the data revealed that participants hoped that their children would inherit the traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices that the parents saw as significant to character formation. This is consistent with Maiter et al.’s (2003) research in that, in their participants’ view, adherence to cultural values (respect for elders, humility, persistence, perseverance, and discipline) was reflected in good behaviour that ultimately resulted in success for their children. Their research also emphasized that the participants felt that following religious beliefs and practices aided in attaining the desired positive outcome. All of the participants in my study stressed the value of respect, the importance of family, the role of extended family, religion, and the continuing practice of specific cultural traditions (festivals, celebrations, language, etc.). Inman et al.’s (2007) participants agreed that engaging in cultural celebrations and related activities helped immigrant parents in their own “ethnic identity retention”, as well as providing multiple opportunities “to transmit a sense of cultural identity to their second-generation children” (p. 94). A few participants in my study regretted that time
constraints imposed by professional commitments or housekeeping chores acted as a barrier to establishing stronger ties to their traditional culture. It is not uncommon in traditional Indian culture for families to have regular hired help at home.

In general, participants were positive about their children’s future in Canada. They discussed the advantages of living in Canada and raising children away from India, including personal growth. By escaping the “rat race” in India, some participants felt that they had achieved better academic and social opportunities for their children. The participants wanted their children to gain from the opportunities that Canada had to offer yet maintain some of their own cultural and religious values. Participants unanimously stressed the importance of academic achievement, and selfless dedication in supporting one’s children emotionally and financially. By doing so, these parents signified their responsibility to fulfil the aspirations they have formed for their children. This result is aligned with the findings of earlier research studies (Anisef & Kilbride, 2001; Chang, 2007; SPCO, 2010) that demonstrated that the importance placed by immigrants on their children’s educational success often translated to high academic achievement, and ultimately to better career options.

**PARENTING STYLES**

For most participants, the goal of a parenting style was to effectively implement parenting practices that would help their children achieve the good (i.e., healthy and productive) life the parents planned for them, not unlike fellow parents born in Canada. Participants hoped that, whatever career choices their children would make, they would remain good-natured human beings and always be respectful to others. Participants in my study explained that they were very understanding of the fact that their children were trying to navigate two dissimilar cultures. Participants used parenting practices that were predominantly traditional, hybridizing those with
Canadian parenting practices. According to research by Inman et al. (2007), immigrant parents realized that children raised only in traditional ways would not be effective in their new cultural context, whereas encouraging a bicultural identity utilized traits of both their host culture (open-mindedness, respecting differences) and traditional culture (interdependence, respecting elders). Participants stated that they were very supportive of their children being functional within two cultures (bicultural identity). Sam & Berry (2010) actually made the claim through their research study that some immigrants had shown better adaptation outcomes because their increased bicultural competence made available doubled resources. Such immigrants made use of both their own learned ethnic beliefs and values, and newly incorporated beliefs and values from the host culture.

Consistent with previous literature, my participants affirmed that they nurtured strong parent–child bonding by being there for their children and fostering a close relationship with grandparents and other relatives. They felt that interaction with close family on a regular basis strengthened cultural ties: the participants firmly believed that adhering to certain selected Indian cultural norms could contribute positively toward their children’s physical and mental well-being, even in their new cultural context. As one of the participants in the Inman et al. (2007) study stated, “I have very strong ties to people back home and also to my family here” (in host country) and similarly presence of an aging parent allowed her to hold onto the Indian tradition (p. 96). Scholars also found in earlier studies that immigrant parents foster in their children a sense of interdependence to maintain closeness with family and community, in contrast with Canadian culture where many parents try to introduce a sense of individualism in their children early on. For example, Dosanjh et al. (1997) asserted in their study that “immigrant parents encourage their children to be conscious of and to appreciate the custom of familial
interdependence rather than to follow and absorb the Euro-American style of rugged individualism” (p. 35).

Participants asserted that the influence of living with people of their own community weighed heavily in their continuing to practise cultural traditions, and that it resulted in them maintaining ties with traditional values and beliefs. These findings also support research studies (Greenfield, 2009; Inman et al., 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007) that have shown that living within a large ethnic enclave helps newcomer immigrant families to “slow the pace of losing ancestral values” that are important for their ethnic identity (Greenfield, 2009, p. 412). Conversely, as has been described in the Indian context, lack of support for traditional practices and culture from one’s own community group essentially facilitates “the abandonment of traditional Indian customs” (Inman et al., 2007, p. 97).

**CANADIAN CONTEXT**

Participants in my study noted a striking contrast between immigrants’ traditionally influenced parenting and the application of local parenting beliefs and practices (see “Canadian Context — Perceptions of Canadian Parenting”). Participants noted fewer similarities and more differences between their respective parenting beliefs and those found in generalized observation of local Canadian parenting. Among the similarities, the bond created through loving and caring for children remained present. Parent–child affection is a connection that all parents want with their children. “Being close and connected to one’s child is likely a universal parenting desire, however, a strong mother-child bond may be more salient and important for Asian Indian families relative to families from more individualistic societies” (Raj, 2015, pp. 43–44).

In comparing traditional Indian parenting with local Canadian parenting, major differences observed by participants were the degree of closeness between the nuclear family and
the extended family, and the fact that their children were being raised by both biological parents; whereas in many local Canadian families, the family unit may be split, often due to divorce or other factors less common in India. Participants also believed that they, like their parents back home, took a very serious view of parenting and that their lives were child-centered compared to the generalized approach of Canadian parents. This finding resonates with the result of the Janzen et al. (2001) focus group discussion, which found that immigrants took their parenting roles seriously, having a strict approach to discipline and maintaining close family dynamics within a patriarchal system. This patriarchal system is in contrast to the Canadian norm, where families are equality-focused, with the mother serving in an equal or greater role to the father in family decision-making, challenging the outlook of this traditional family system.

Participants’ educational expectations were also higher than what they had observed in their local Niagara-region counterparts. This result is aligned with previous studies (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007) that linked immigrants’ high educational expectations and aspirations to their children’s academic performance. Studies have repeatedly shown that immigrant parenting (with reference to Asian parents) differs significantly from mainstream Canadian parenting due to their collectivist cultural norms as well as their desire to prepare their children to socialize within two cultures (Maiter & George, 2003).

**PARENTING MODIFICATIONS**

Though the lives of all human beings are culturally shaped, every culture provides a unique identity to its members. This identity is not rigid, but fluid and adaptable, therefore it cannot be completely remade (Parekh, 1999). Consistent with Parekh’s views, most of the parents in my study reported that their parenting practices and beliefs could be seen as a hybrid form of traditional and Canadian culture. Zalipour et al. (2014) also drew similar conclusions,
observing that, “The cultural identities of diasporic individuals are constantly being transformed and redefined as they explore and experience new similarities and differences with the cultural and social characteristics of the host country” (p. 778). Many of the modifications are found in language, food practices, and discipline.

Some participating parents in my study, as in the 2008 Adair and Tobin study, felt the necessity to learn English in order to make their children feel comfortable in English-dominated schools and thus assist their academic success. Often, learning English happens at the expense of losing their mother tongue. Participants found it harder to maintain bilingualism in their new multicultural society as compared to back home where they had been able to learn multiple languages (their mother tongue as well as English or Hindi) at the same time; one did not get more attention than the other.

The creation of communities through the collective self-transcendence of cooking traditional food, especially for religious rituals, reduces fear, anxiety, and feelings of alienation, but it can also establish barriers to visibility and participation in wider society. (Zalipour et al., 2014, p. 780)

To reduce the barriers encountered as part of a visible minority, and to foster participation in mainstream society, participants stated that they had started preparing some Canadian-style foods for their children to pack in their school lunchboxes. Participants in my study felt that having a lunch that fit within a general Canadian norm reduced the likelihood of other children’s ridicule and demonstrations of prejudice in the school. These changes were made by the parents whose children went to schools in the Niagara region, schools that were dominated by nonvisible minority children. However, outside of school, children were still provided with traditional food at home or during community social functions. Participants felt that the traditional food, cooked with fresh ingredients (i.e., vegetables and spices) offered a healthier alternative to the canned or pre-prepared food available in local Canadian stores. Their views resonated with participants of
both the Dyck (2003) and Janzen et al. (2001) studies. Participants in the Janzen et al. study shared that their children ate healthy food with minimal consumption of fast food. Women in Dyck’s study were found to prefer cooking at home with fresh ingredients as an aspect of keeping healthy, but admitted to occasionally eating at McDonalds, which they felt was not healthy but served only as a validation of their integration into Canadian culture.

Sixteen participating mothers in my study did not experience much role reversal or role flexibility in parenting. These mothers actively participated in raising their children in their new cultural environment with occasional support from the fathers. Three parents expressed that parenting on their own, without the support of extended family, was challenging but became a great learning experience as both parents shared the child-rearing responsibility. Some participants remarked that they were lucky to have members of the extended family to support them in child-rearing; they felt that the additional support allowed parents to have better physical and psychological well-being. Moreover, the presence of elderly members of the family helped their children experience and learn about Indian traditional culture, religious values, and practices.

Migrating to a different part of the world means adjustment, flexibility, and being critical yet open-minded. Participants agreed that they came with an open mind and willingness to adjust to their new cultural environment. Their intention was to maximize their life opportunities by integration into the Canadian system without fully rejecting their cultural identity. Willingness to integrate serves to minimize the stress that new immigrant families generally feel when entering a new cultural environment; as Dweck (2007) proposed, individuals who are inclined to view change and transition as opportunities for growth and learning benefit in their new way of life.
The participants in my study embraced a number of changes to adapt and grow in their new cultural environment, enhancing their life opportunities through experience and application.

The participants reported that most of their parenting practices within the privacy of their homes were very much influenced by traditional culture and their ethnic identity. However, in their public lives, participants demonstrated a Canadian identity in order to reduce psychological stress and help their children fit into Canadian society. They recognized that the pressures of the new cultural surrounding on their children were greater than the pressures on the parents themselves. Participants tried to be lenient and proactive towards their children’s behaviour. They accommodated the fact that their children were born and brought up in Canada by giving them freedom of expression and taking their views into consideration. Participants did not impose their traditional values and beliefs on their children; rather, they used reasonable explanation or negotiation. Participants also wished to serve as role models who would bring their children closer to their traditional culture. Published literature (Jambunathan et al., 2000) supports the way my participants facilitated their children’s bicultural adjustment by altering their parenting style.

PARENTING CONTRIBUTIONS

Some suggestions from participants focused on how to encourage Canadian society to acknowledge and embrace the reality of immigration from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants stressed that the education system should be used to lay a foundation for knowledge that would result in more acceptance and respect for immigrants. In the participants’ opinion, the acknowledgement of different cultures is significant and would be a step forward for multiculturalism in the Niagara region as there are potential benefits from the knowledge these ethnic groups bring. Their views are not applicable to all regions across Canada, as most have
not experienced the dramatic influx of immigrants of Asian backgrounds that has occurred recently in the Niagara region. Through hearing and exploring the suggestions provided, regions across Canada could do more to assist the adaptation of immigrants.

Participants in my study were appreciative of much that Canadian culture had to offer but found a few areas in local Canadian family dynamics that could be improved, which they felt would provide positive developmental outcomes for local children. Some suggestions were made pertaining to strengthening Canadian child–parent interactions and bonding. In a study conducted by Janzen et al. (2001), similar suggestions were made by participants who felt that Canadian families could learn from immigrant parents in such areas as the “behaviour of children” (e.g., respect towards elders, reducing fast food consumption); “how children care for parents and others; greater emphasis on education; more directive role in parenting” (p. 63).

Participants emphasized that there should be more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange between local and Indian parents; the same argument could be made for parents of other cultures as well. By speaking with other parents, participants felt that immigrant parents would learn and grow in their parental roles under this new cultural context. Parekh (1999) also reinforced that cultural diversity plays a significant role in presenting a different perspective on the concept of a good life in Canada, with the presence of ethnically diverse cultures serving as a complement to enrich society and offer various means to sustain individual well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, I am going to focus on the final category of the immigrant parenting framework (Ochocka & Janzen, 2008): the supports needed to empower immigrant parents to fulfil their parenting responsibility within a new cultural context. Please keep in mind these suggestions are made on the basis of the 19 participants’ (immigrant Indian parents) parenting
experiences in Niagara and surrounding areas. Still, the access to and understanding of the information gathered in the previous section of my discussion about culture-specific parenting beliefs and practices, parenting challenges, and adaptive strategies adopted by participants can be used to recommend delivery of modified policies and programs that further explore cultural diversity. The information can encourage individuals from different cultural backgrounds to learn about each other so that our cultural communities interact. Communication and interaction may result in the successful integration of immigrant families into their new local culture. Successful interaction would be a step forward to a more inclusive and democratic society.

Although Canada is officially known as a multicultural country, participants felt that the representation of ethnically diverse cultures was lacking in the Niagara region. Canadian multicultural society celebrates multicultural aesthetics but power and privilege at the political and institutional levels are not readily available to many ethnic groups. Participants noted that the Canadian support system for newcomer immigrants was in place but felt that these supports tended to encourage assimilation more than integration. This could be a leading cause as to why they shied away from using the existing support services offered in the Niagara region. Most of the time, immigrant families heavily rely on their own community and on family members or relatives already residing in Canada for social support; they prefer living within the shelter of their own ethnic enclave. Such a living structure helps Indian immigrant families stay rooted in their culture of origin and helps in the transmission of specific cultural values (interdependence, family ties) and religious values to their children.

In the participants’ opinion, maintaining connection with traditional values as well as integrating new ways of parenting while transitioning into a new cultural environment were considered beneficial for their children’s growth and development. Parekh (1999) emphasized
that every culture has its own significance to its members and demonstrates the meaning of human life to them. Individual cultural traits should be respected when people come in contact or interact with a dissimilar culture and should not be looked down on.

Participants stated that the authorities were aware of how many immigrants were entering Canada and of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Participants thought it their moral duty to bring changes to the system so that every culture in Canada would get recognition. They noted that since a few visible minorities (e.g., Chinese) had been given informal recognition in Canada at an institutional level, now would be an opportune time to establish an understanding of the Indian visible minority, the second-largest community contributing economically and socially to the Canadian multicultural society. Their suggestions indicate that multiculturalism should be understood within the context of immigration and the overall presence of cultural diversity in Canadian society. In summation, my participants simply desired more opportunity to be understood as people and as parents.

The most frequent suggestion made by participants in my study, which is consistent with previous studies (Guo, 2012; Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Pedersen, 2001), was to have a stronger emphasis on a multicultural perspective in schools in order to help children to learn about other cultures. A second suggestion that was common among participants was to encourage the local population to develop their understanding of the benefit to Canada of having immigrants and the many ways that immigrants of diverse ethnicities can contribute to the country. Participants elaborated that increased availability of resources in the educational context would enhance the learning environment and foster awareness of other cultures. The concept of learning about other cultures through the academic landscape is consistent with Dei’s (2008) findings.
Participants stated that in the Canadian context, multiculturalism was all about equality and human rights, but that to make those rules more effective, the multicultural perspective should be implemented at the grassroots level. These views are very much in line with Pedersen’s (2001) views on multiculturalism. Pederson explained that using a multicultural perspective in clinical practice and education creates an understanding of behaviours that are “learned and displayed in cultural context” (p. 19). In addition, the communication and implementation of multicultural policies need to be synchronized with the economic, social, and political systems in order to make Canada a truly multicultural society.

In a study by Kunz & Sykes (2007), similar recommendations were made by roundtable participants who strongly felt that government efforts were needed to create public outreach through public education to communicate the principles of multiculturalism and enrich Canadian society with knowledge of the participants’ specific traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

Two participants reported incidents of discrimination that their children had encountered in the school setting. In one case, a decision made by the school authorities was felt by the participant to be biased. Incidents of discrimination and systemic racism were also documented in a research study by Guo (2012) in which participants reported that, because teachers had knowledge only of Eurocentric child-rearing beliefs and practices, and not of multicultural belief systems, they risked misunderstanding the use of culture-specific parenting actions in disciplining children. Guo’s study is an appropriate illustration of systemic racism in Canadian schools. Participants’ reports of incidents of discrimination, of being teased or ridiculed for being Indian or bringing Indian (traditional) food, clearly demand further research that examines experiences of race-related ridiculing, teasing, and discrimination among Indian children.
Participants proposed that multiculturalism should be incorporated into local community celebrations, such as food and dance festivals, both in schools and community centres. Such opportunities in a multicultural setting would encourage students to exchange experiences and learn about different cultures, as well as provide a chance for immigrant parents to get involved in school activities and events. Families from diverse ethnicities would be able to share their individual opinions and experiences as parents. Participants realized that although information was available on the internet for anyone interested, seeing and experiencing diversity at a social level, through live interaction, could have a more powerful impact by involving the individual to a greater degree. Leung (2011) states that multiculturalism is considered one of the most essential concepts to manage a multicultural and religiously diverse nation with a goal to achieve meaningful cultural understanding and productive intercultural exchange in global context.

**Parental Involvement in Education**

Participants strongly felt that the education system should be more interactive and encouraging of parental involvement so that they could guide their children appropriately. Teachers should send the curriculum home to let parents know what strategies are being utilized in the learning process. The information regarding instructional strategies and educational resources might encourage immigrant parents to help their children at home and so advance their learning. Participating parents often found themselves lost and helpless in this new educational environment.

In earlier published literature (Ali, 2008; Ladky & Peterson, 2008), immigrant parents have raised similar concerns about losing the ability to be involved in their children’s learning process, and their sense of self-efficacy, due to their incomplete understanding of institutional rules and limited access to academic resources. Multicultural policies in Canada are supposed to
address these differences among local Canadians and new immigrants. In actuality, these policies are implemented in such a way that immigrant parents end up experiencing “systemic discrimination and a feeling of exclusion at the institutional level despite the policy and pervasive rhetoric of multiculturalism” (Ali, 2008, p. 157). Ali (2008) added that immigrant parents sometimes feel guilty over not being able to fit successfully into the Canadian system when this is actually due to the fact that, coming from a different system, they could not obtain official recognition of their experience and credentials. As Razack (1998) suggests, this perception of “difference” being created at an individual level rather than as a social construct helps the host cultural majority maintain their institutional power and legitimizes their Eurocentric ways of parenting.

**Multilingualism**

For some participants, a multicultural atmosphere would ideally offer the opportunity and support for their children to retain their first language (mother tongue) in the school setting. Participants believed that children should have the chance to learn different languages in school just as they did in their country of origin. In their opinion, school authorities should create opportunities for students to learn a wider variety of languages so that children from linguistically diverse cultures could stay connected to their native languages. They felt that such an effort would support participants’ children in maintaining familial interactions across generations and access to the support systems of their community.

Guo (2012) and Ladky & Peterson (2008) argued that teachers should view multilingualism not as a problematic barrier but as a prospective resource. These scholars further recommended that teacher education must be conceptualized in the context of immigration to tackle the linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity in Canadian classrooms. Two participants in
my study recalled receiving mixed messages, one from a schoolteacher and the other from a pediatrician, regarding their children learning an additional language (their mother tongue) at the same time as they were acquiring fluency in English. Some participants indicated that certain teachers appreciated the effort immigrant parents showed in teaching their children their traditional language, while a few teachers discouraged such efforts on the grounds that it would hamper the immigrant child’s communication skills in English. Some scholars have also suggested that clinicians need to be brought up to date with information provided by research studies on bilingual development so that they know not to discourage immigrant parents from speaking their native languages with their children while the children are learning a new language (Hoff & Core, 2014). The result of a bilingual development study has shown that dual language exposure does not confuse or hinder children’s learning ability (Hoff & Core, 2014).

Cultural awareness, taking into account research studies, should be implemented as a refresher program for teachers and health professionals.

“Non-dominant cultures should have the self-confidence and the courage to challenge the hegemony of the dominant culture and to demand respect for their values and visions of the good life. They then question its assumptions, moral vision and values, ask it to justify them, and precipitate a dialogue” (Parekh, 2005, p. 16).

Limitations of the Study

My findings are limited in their generalizability. In my qualitative study, efforts were made to recruit Indian immigrant families who were representative of Indian immigrant families in the Niagara region. However, not all Indian communities or subcommunities (groups with limited geographic diversity) were represented in the sample that I collected from the area. Recently, the Niagara region has experienced an increased influx of Indian communities that may
not be representative of the Indian immigrant population generally. Demographic information about the participants should be taken into consideration when attempting to replicate these findings with other Indian immigrant families. Binary representation of complex Canadian and Indian cultures can be a potential limitation.

This study focused on the parenting experiences of Indian immigrants who have lived in the country for more than 3 years. Therefore, its findings may not be applicable to other immigrant populations who have lived in the country for a shorter period. It is important to consider the possibility that these families were more successful relative to other Indian families in the area. It is also possible that their perspectives or parenting experiences may not be the same as that of other Indian immigrant parents residing in other regions of Ontario or other provinces of Canada. Participants who had had fewer positive experiences might have avoided participating in this study.

Although a sample size of 19 participants is adequate for exploratory qualitative studies such as this one, the small sample further reduces the generalizability of my findings. Another limitation is related to the demographic information regarding participants’ immigration status, education, and fluency in English. A majority of the participants were well-educated, fluent in English, and immigrated to Canada on a student visa or under the economic category as opposed to the family reunification category. Indian families whose migration is not voluntary, who are not fluent in English, or who are less educated might face different acculturation challenges that need to be documented.

During the interview process, the perspective of only one spouse or parent (all of them mothers) was collected. Fathers’ perspectives on parenting are important to take into consideration as fathers are the authority figures in the majority of Indian families. Children were
not included in the study, but it would be interesting to explore their views regarding their parents’ child-rearing practices and the applicability of those practices in the Canadian context. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in either the participant’s native language or a mix of English and the native language. There is a common perception that participants are more expressive narrating their experiences when they use their mother tongue. Some information may have been lost in translation when data were transcribed.

In this study, only the core components of the Indian family system were explored: interdependence, family and kinship, traditional food, religious beliefs, and educational goals. Interviews were conducted only once and were recorded. The feeling of being audiotaped could have made the participants a bit self-conscious and uncomfortable. A last possibility is that Indians’ cultural tendency, as documented by Sheriff (2009), to be reluctant to share personal problems (such as acculturative stress or other painful event) and their tendency to endure issues privately, rather than confront issues and show resilience, might have had an impact on their responses to interview questions. More research studies need to be undertaken targeting this specific immigrant population to explore issues relating to mental health and acculturative stress.

**Future Research**

The results of this study provide insight into the parenting challenges that most Indian immigrant families face on immigration and shows that their parenting styles are still often influenced by traditional culture; studies in other Indian subcommunities in different geographic locations in Canada may be able to replicate these findings. Additional methods such as multiple interviews and focus groups could be used. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore Indian immigrants’ views regarding gender parenting, gender-related issues, parent and child functioning (e.g., psychological health, child academic performance, parent and child self-
esteem), and intergenerational conflicts, and how they perceive these issues in their new cultural context.

Only the perspective of one parent (the mother) has been collected. Although mothers are generally the main caregivers in Indian families (Jambunathan, et al., 2000), fathers now play an increasingly important role in child-rearing, especially with the recent changes in family dynamics globally. Future studies should focus on documenting the father’s perspective on parenting in the new context. More research studies need to be undertaken to explore the views of both Canadian-born and immigrant parents regarding the education system.

Before choosing a school for her son, one participant in my study gathered information from Canadian-born parents in the Niagara region about the education system. These Canadian-born parents expressed their disappointment that the current education system was not helping students reach their potential (too easygoing) as compared to the system they had experienced as students. Indian immigrant families’ experiences with the education systems of other provinces (e.g., Quebec) need to be explored to document their parenting challenges. More comparative analysis between Indian immigrants and Canadian-born families should be done regarding family dynamics in modern Canada. Finally, the lives of second-generation Indian young people should be explored to uncover any challenges they may face in maintaining a bicultural identity, and to ascertain whether they perceive it as beneficial in their new cultural context.

**Significance of my Study**

Although immigrants from India currently represent the fastest-growing population of new immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017b), research on Indian immigrants in the Canadian context is very limited. My study adds to the small but growing research body on Indian immigrants in Canada. My study also provides an opportunity to learn from the experiences of
others, a valuable transfer of knowledge that will benefit not only a specific population of immigrant families undergoing transition and change but also other ethnic groups. The concept of adaptation is highly relatable and relevant, especially when people immigrate to a new and significantly different cultural environment and feel that adjustments are needed if the psychological well-being of their family members is to be maintained.

As for applicability, the present research can provide some insight into the lives of immigrant families to educators, health professionals, and policy makers, as well as new immigrants. All of these groups will benefit from learning how this specific culture drives family dynamics and informs essential differences in child-rearing practices between immigrant and dominant groups (e.g., co-sleeping, dietary habits, respectful demeanour), as well as from learning about the kind of parental challenges immigrant families face and how they deal with them. Understanding this context will help to create an acceptance of the diverse, culture-specific parenting practices of immigrant families that are intended to optimize children’s life chances. The information in the present study can be used to further the development of multicultural strategies and programs in educational settings (and perhaps health care settings as well) to effectively assist not only Indians but other ethnic groups to integrate successfully into Canadian culture while maintaining specific traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices. By maintaining their traditional culture, these immigrant parents may contribute positively towards Canadian multicultural society.

Educators who are searching for ways to ensure that schooling meets the needs of a complex, diversified population (Dei, 2008) could benefit from listening to the recommendations of these Indian immigrant parents, who have knowledge and experience of another multicultural society to offer.
Conclusion

Indian immigrant families in Canada face a number of parenting challenges, which include the passing-on of the native language to their children, preparation of traditional food, and religious practices. The findings from my study in the Niagara region and from related research offer an understanding of the traditional culture, values, and beliefs of Indian immigrant parents and of their parenting challenges. They use certain adaptive strategies such as hybridization or modification in their parenting styles to minimize the acculturation stress, fostering psychological well-being in their families. Therefore, an understanding of these families can assist and support other immigrant families in their transition and integration into Canadian society.

The main parenting practices adopted by participating Indian parents in their new homeland are: open-mindedness, willingness to change and negotiate, an expectation of high academic achievement along with participation in extracurricular activities, strong family bonding, freedom of expression within parent–child interactions, parenting actions (including reasoning and negotiating to inculcate good behaviour and a respectful demeanour), and, lastly, the parent as a role model and supporter guiding the children. Having strong cultural values and religious beliefs helped Indian immigrant families cope with the challenges of settlement and integration. They were hopeful for better life opportunities in their new cultural environment. Living within their ethnic enclaves (neighbourhoods) not only provided a comfort zone for the immigrant families but also proved to be a beneficial arrangement that strengthened their ethnic identity and fostered cultural and religious connections among their children.

The Indian community has a distinct culture, based on interdependence, strong family ties, family hierarchy, and a distinct religious background. The Indian immigrant participants in
my study demonstrated unique methods of integration, including bicultural functioning, that can inform future research with similarly situated immigrant groups. The participants’ recommendations, which were based on their cultural identities and their life experiences of living in India, a multicultural society, should be given consideration by policy-makers in the areas of law, education, and public policy, to make Canadian multicultural society truly inclusive and democratic. Consistent with Parekh (2005) who suggested that a newly emerged multicultural society in this era of globalization should look for motivation by considering other multicultural societies such as in India where they have judiciously managed a balance between unity and diversity successfully for over a century.

Furthermore, Canadian policy makers should rely on multicultural education to ensure that future citizens understand each other’s cultural values and are able to communicate and empathize across cultural boundaries. Information and understanding regarding the family dynamics of this Indian immigrant community and other Asian immigrant communities might help us find an answer to the question of why second-generation children of Asian immigrants are outperforming children belonging to families of dominant (majority) groups in various educational settings despite equal access to resources (Cui & Kelly, 2013; Watkins, 2017).
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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION

Title of Study: A Qualitative analysis of parenting challenges and adaptive strategies among Indian immigrant families in Canada
Student Principal Investigator: Maninder Sodhi, Graduate student, Department of CHYS, Brock University, ON. Canada.
Principal Investigator & Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tony Volk, Department Of CHYS, Brock University, ON. Canada.

I, Maninder Sodhi, am a graduate student, from the Department of Child &Youth Studies at Brock University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project titled “A Qualitative analysis of parenting challenges & adaptive strategies among Indian immigrant families in Canada”.

The purpose of this study is to explore various challenges faced by Indian immigrant parents and how they handle these parenting challenges during the integration process in their new Canadian cultural environment. Should you choose to participate, you will be interviewed with some open-ended questions about your experiences adjusting to Canadian culture after your immigration.

The expected duration of this interview will be 45-60 minutes, audio-recorded to ensure accuracy of the information. You will receive $20 cash for your participation.

Given that we will spend some of the time talking about your challenges and struggles as an immigrant parent, there is the potential for emotional or mental distress in your discussion of the difficult situations and adaptive strategies that you have experienced in these contexts. If you feel distressed at any time during our discussion, or if for any other reason you wish to end the discussion, please know that you can stop the interview without penalty anytime.

In terms of direct benefits of this study to Indian immigrant parents, participants will have the opportunity to share their parental challenges, experiences and social reactions regarding their child-rearing cultural beliefs and practices in Canadian environment. This research will provide
an understanding how immigrant parents reconcile with their parental challenges to adjust to Canadian-style parenting. Additionally, this study will document, participants’ recommendations on the basis their personal experiences how existing support system or approaches can be more effective for new immigrant parents of any ethnicity in their child-rearing practices in a way that will respect their traditional parenting values, beliefs and practices.

All information you provide will be confidential; your name will not be included or in any other way associated with data presented in study results. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you are interested to participate in this study, please contact me at the email address (ms16nv@brocku.ca).

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact either my graduate supervisor (Prof. Tony Volk, (905-688-5550, ext. 5368; tvolk@brocku.ca) the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca). If you wish to obtain a summary of findings after the study has been completed, please email at ms16nv@brock.ca. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,
Signature
Maninder Sodhi, CHYS, Graduate student, 9053575539, ms16nv@brocku.ca
Dr. Tony Volk, Assistant Professor, CHYS, tvolk@brocku.ca
This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board [17-161 - VOLK].
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: A qualitative analysis of parenting challenges and adaptive strategies among Indian immigrant families in Canada.

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Maninder Sodhi. Graduate student

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tony Volk (tvolk@brocku.ca), Department of CHYS

Brock University, St Catharines
Phone: 905-357-5539, ms16nv@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that will document various challenges faced by you as an Indian immigrant parent when migrated to Canada and to explore adaptive strategies and resources you used to cope with these parental challenges during the integration process in your new cultural environment (Canadian).

WHAT’S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be interviewed (face to face) and some open-ended questions will be asked. Participation will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio-recorded so I may accurately document the information. The questions that will be asked during interview will help us to identify and understand the importance of traditional parenting values, beliefs, and developmental goals of Indian immigrant parents in Canada; to explore parenting challenges you as an Indian immigrant parent face when migrating to Canada; to identify the coping strategies you use to reconcile cultural conflicts, acculturative issues, and the impacts of changes or adjustments on your child rearing practices. We will further discuss your evaluation/analysis of existing resources and preferences for types of supports and resources, particularly in the context of integration with host culture. Finally, we will discuss your general recommendations on the basis of your personal experiences, what type of culturally specific approaches or services should be provided to assist newcomer immigrant families of any ethnicity in a smooth transition to Canadian culture in a way that will respect their traditional parenting values, beliefs, and practices.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISK

In terms of direct benefits of this study to Indian immigrant parents, participants will have the opportunity to share their parental challenges, concerns and experiences as well as social reactions regarding their cultural beliefs and practices for child rearing in Canadian environment. This research will specifically provide an understanding how these parents address these challenges successfully to adjust to Canadian-style parenting. Additionally, this study will document, participants’ recommendations on the basis their personal experiences how existing support system or approaches can be more effective for new immigrant parents of any ethnicity in their child rearing practices in a way that will respect their traditional parenting values, beliefs and practices.

There is some likelihood of known or anticipated psychological risks associated with participation in this study who might recall their parenting challenges, difficult situations and
adaptive strategies during integration process in new cultural environment. If you feel distressed, you can stop the interview anytime. Moreover, if participants wish or need of support or psychological counselling, I suggest the following helpline that provide free mental health support and counselling over phone, maintaining confidentiality: (1) Mental Health helpline (1-866-531-2600) (2) Canadian Mental Health Association, ON (1-800-875-6213) or (3) Niagara Region Parent Talk Line (905-688-8248). You should also know that the Ontario Child and Family Services Act, section 72 (1) states that if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children (i.e., the researcher), has reasonable grounds to suspect any form of abuse or neglect, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a society.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information you provide will be confidential; your name will not be included or, in any other way associated with the data presented in study results. I will report the findings in this study using some participants’ quotes and these quotes will be treated with confidentiality – including removing any identifying features (personal names, dates, and places) that might inadvertently identify you. The interviews will be audiotaped to document the information accurately. The recorded audio will be transcribed immediately and stored in password protected computer. Afterwards, the recorded interview will be securely stored in private locker and destroyed once the study is completed. The electronic data will be protected on a computer that is password protected. Access to this data will be restricted to student principal investigator and the principal-investigator. The electronic data and all paper information will be destroyed/shredded after the completion of this study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you know me personally, you are not obligated to participate in the study as your non-participation will not impact my ability to graduate. You have all the freedom/authority to decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. The interviews will take place at a private and mutually agreed upon location (e.g. in your home) and will be audio-recorded to maintain the accuracy of the information. I (the researcher) will translate if the interviews are conducted in a language other than English and transcribe the interview. If you decide to participate, you will receive a total of $20.00 cash for your time and contributions to the study. As your participation is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time and will still be entitled to the $20.00(cash).

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Summary of finding of this research will be posted on the Volk Lab Brock university website (www.brocku.ca/volklab). Participant will be informed individually via emails about the same.

FORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Maninder Sodhi and Dr. Tony Volk using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock
University [17-161-VOLK]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.
Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.
Name: _______________ Signature: ___________________ Date:
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The main research questions to be explored are: “What kind of parenting challenges faced, and adaptive strategies used during their transition process in Canada”

First name: Age: Are you currently working? What is your country of birth? What city did you live in before coming to the Niagara region? How long have you been in Canada? Status: Did you know anybody when you landed in Canada? Language(s) you could speak before coming to Canada: Preferred language spoken at home: Level of education completed before coming to Canada: Additional level of education completed in Canada: Are you currently enrolled in school? Provide information? Were you employed in your country of origin? Yes No Are you currently employed? Yes: Full time/ Part time No If employed, what type of work do you do? Marital Status: Spouse information: Age: Occupation: in Canada In Home country How many Kids you have? Is anyone currently attending School? Yes No Age Gender Birthplace Grade level Family Structure:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tentative Interview Questions for participants:

- Reason to migrate and Ask about mother’s profession in Canada and why she discontinued, reasons, explore her satisfaction level.
- Discuss parenting practices that are traditional you followed while raising your child e.g. co-sleeping, feeding home prepared soft food for toddler.
- Did you find Canadian parenting practices differ from your parenting style? If yes, in what ways? What was the most striking contrast you found in mainstream parenting style?
- What are the developmental goals do you have in mind for your children? (kinds of values, beliefs, or practices you want to inculcate in your children, any expectations from you children)
- What kind of challenges do you find in fulfilling those aspirations?
• Ask about parents’ involvement with children’s education, their view about educational system, any comments on curriculum.
• How do you navigate through such challenging situations at a personal as well as social level?
• Do you think living in community helps in establishing traditions than living away from community?
• Which traditional values are important to you personally? What benefits do you see if your child carries those values and beliefs in the Canada?
• Did you have to adapt or modify your way of child rearing practices in Canada? If yes, how?
• Did you face any intergenerational conflict between you and your children, which disappointed you as a parent?
• What kind of support have you used while raising your child in Canada? Any support from relatives, extended family, daycare, or any support from childcare institutions?
• What do you think Indian immigrant parents can contribute to Parents in Canada?
• Any traditional value, practice, you think, that can contribute positively in any child’s development process.
• What kind of help (approach or program), in your opinion as parent, will be valuable for newcomer immigrant parents to maintain their traditional values in settling in Canada?

Note: Every question will have probes or sub questions to get in depth information about Immigrant parents challenges and adaptive responses e.g. “tell me about a time when………..”
APPENDIX D

PARENTS DEBRIEFING FORM

IMMIGRANT PARENTING CHALLENGES AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study of parenting challenges and adaptive strategies among Indian-Canadian immigrants. The goal of this study is to understand the cultural values, belief and practices in Indian immigrant families coming to Canada and to explore the challenges and successes that they face as parents during the transition to their new culture. This study will hopefully explore the child rearing practices and developmental goals (such as education, values, health, and happiness, economic security) that these immigrant parents exercise in raising their children that may differ from local cultural expectations. Whether these differences represent successful adjustment or potential cultural clashes, our goal was to study how these families interact with these differences at individual levels as well at broader social levels. As this is relatively new research being conducted on Indian immigrants, we view this as generally exploratory research. But earlier studies done on other ethnic groups (immigrant families) suggested that Immigrant parents often have different developmental goals with respect to raising their children. Exposure to a new cultural environment can challenge their ways of thinking, leading immigrant parents to develop child-rearing beliefs that allow them to function in both cultural mindsets and to have positive effects on their children’s psychological adjustment to the new culture.

If you wish to learn more about parenting challenges and adaptive strategies among immigrant parents, you can visit Dr. Volk’s lab web site at: www.brocku.ca/volklab. When we have finished analyzing the results of the current study, the overall results will also be posted on that web site.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, you may freely contact Dr. Anthony Volk at (905) 688-5550 ext. 5368 (tvolk@brocku.ca), or the Brock University Research Ethics Board at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035 (reb@brocku.ca). Should you feel necessary to seek counseling services, please contact Niagara Counselling Services at (905) 988-5748.