

***Shifting Attitudes toward Physical Punishment in a Multicultural Context:  
The Case of Canada***

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Canada's Human Development Index ranks 9<sup>th</sup> out of 188 countries, placing it into the 'very highly developed' category. Yet physical violence against children remains a serious issue. Thousands of cases of physical abuse are substantiated in Canada each year. Most of these incidents occur in the context of punishment, a finding that has fuelled efforts to change attitudes toward physical punishment and to promote constructive approaches to resolving parent-child conflict. As part of these efforts, Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) is increasingly being implemented. With its highly diverse population, Canada presents unique challenges to the effective delivery of parenting programs.

This paper will describe a study of PDEP's implementation and impact in Canada's three prairie provinces – Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan – whose populations are multi-ethnic and wide-ranging in terms of education and English literacy. The program was delivered to 564 parents by trained facilitators working in community agencies delivering universal and targeted programming. The program was adapted when necessary for specific populations (e.g., immigrant/refugee parents, parents with low literacy) in consultation with community members. Facilitators administered either the 'standard' pre- and post-test questionnaires ( $n = 368$ ) or shorter 'low literacy' versions ( $n = 196$ ), depending on parents' English fluency and education levels. Both sets of measures included items assessing changes in parents' attitudes toward physical punishment. Both groups consisted primarily of mothers (> 80%) over the age of 30 (> 64%) with one or two children (> 54%). While 43.2% of the 'standard' group had completed at least one university/college degree, none of the 'low literacy' group had done so. At posttest, large and significant decreases in support for physical punishment were seen on all items in both groups ( $p < .001$  in all cases). PDEP has promise for shifting attitudes toward physical punishment among Canada's diverse population.