SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FATHERS

A Training Manual for

Human Service Workers

A project prepared by
Calgary Immigrant Aid Society

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by Dawne Clark, Ph.D. and Rena Shimoni, Ph.D.,
Mount Royal College
and
David Este, Ph.D.,
University of Calgary

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FOREWORD

The report of the Federal/Provincial Territorial Advisory Committee on population Health (1998) summarizes over two decades of child development research in the statement, "A key requisite for healthy child development is secure attachment to nurturing adults who provide consistent, caring support and affection early in life. Family stability (including socio-economic), close, warm, and supportive relationships and security (are) protective factors in the lives of children. It is parents and families who provide the primary social support network for children and such support promotes well being, increases the use of effective coping strategies, and decreases stress (National Crime Prevention Council of Canada, 1996).

Until just over a decade ago, most of the research about the effects of fathers on the development of children centred around father absence. That is, psychologists looked for (and found) negative effects on children whose fathers were not a part of their lives (Wells and Rankin, 1991). In recent years, studies have attempted to shed light on the contributions that fathers make to the well-being of their children and the factors that mediate the father's role in nurturing and caring for children.

There are many prevention and intervention programs that aim to provide support, education, and other strategies to enhance the ability of parents to meet the developmental needs of their children. However, few programs have specifically addressed the roles of fathers and fathers have not utilized parent support services nearly to the extent that mothers have. The fact that family support services are usually staffed by women has been used to explain both the discomfort that many fathers feel in accessing services and the hesitancy service providers often feel towards men in their programs. Little is understood about the barriers to paternal engagement in child rearing or about effective strategies to reduce these barriers. It is, however, well understood that "the risk factors for paternal engagement have combined to create a worrisome situation of paternal disengagement, resulting in the breakdown of fathering and putting healthy child development at risk" (National Projects Fund Guidelines for Applicants, 1998-2000). Fathers who are members of visible, religious, or cultural minorities face multiple barriers to support services. The specific barriers to paternal engagement facing immigrant and refugee fathers have not been studied or identified nor have strategies been developed to ensure the needs of this population are being met in new and existing services.

The Purpose of this Manual

It is the intention that this manual will comprise a major step in understanding the barriers to paternal engagement in general and specifically in the population of immigrant and refugee fathers. Ultimately, children and families will benefit from increased sensitivity of service providers and increased competency in planning and implementing family support services that are accessible and meaningful to fathers. It is hoped that this project will address the lost opportunities for child focussed services to build upon the strengths that many men bring to the parenting situation (McBride and Rane, 1997), strengths that, if fostered and supported, will strengthen families and enhance the healthy development of children.

MODULE I

ENHANCING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FATHERS

INTRODUCTION

This is the first module in the workbook: Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Fathers. The goal of the workbook is to provide all human service providers, and specifically immigrant serving agencies, with some tools to assist them in the development and implementation of supportive and inclusive programs and services.

The best way to gain an understanding of the special strengths and challenges facing any population is through personal acquaintance, and personal and or professional relationships with people from diverse populations. However, as few of us have had the good fortune of working with or knowing people from every corner of the globe, it is helpful to learn from others' experiences and knowledge. We have therefore included reviews of the research literature on fathers and fathering from different cultural perspectives throughout the module.

Module 1 is divided into five parts:

- ♦ Starting the Process
- ♦ Who are Canadian Fathers?
- ♦ Coming to Understand Fathering in Different Cultures
- ♦ Using Cultural Information without Stereotyping
- ♦ Mediating Differences in Cultural Expectations of Fathering.

Part One of this module, **Starting the Process**, presents some questions and exercises to help participants reflect on their own values and perceptions about fathering. In order to understand and accept others, it is important to understand and accept yourself and the perceptions and values that you hold. The values and the perceptions that we hold about families are deeply embedded in who we are, and are often seen as natural and universal. Yet, these perceptions are learned from our earliest socialization. It is these learned perceptions that often create barriers to accepting and understanding others. Inclusive supportive services for immigrant fathers require that service providers engage in some self-reflection and commitment to understanding and perceiving other world views.

Part Two, Who are Canadian Fathers?, begins to explore the many societal factors that impact the roles fathers play in their families. These include culture, social class, stress, employment, marital status, and supports. The roles and expectations of fathers have undergone significant changes in Canada in the last two decades. The move from the traditional image of the father as the provider and disciplinarian, to the new image as equal partner and nurturer, has by no means been a smooth one. Role change and ambiguity is often accompanied by stress. While the focus of this workbook is on immigrant and refugee fathers, it is important to understand the context of Canadian fathering as a backdrop to the transitions and experiences of new Canadian fathers.

Part Three, Coming To Understand Fathering in Different Cultures, then moves to an initial examination of how the roles of fathers vary in different cultures. Using the backdrop of our own understanding of what we perceive fathering to be and some of the societal pressures on fathers within a Canadian context, this section addresses what may be seen as highly diverse values of the role of fathers.

Information about cultures needs to be utilized with caution. There is a natural tendency to assume that the little information provided will refer to all families with a similar cultural or ethnic background. We need to be aware of the evolving nature of culture which often also affects immigrants who have been in Canada for some time. We cannot assume that the culture an immigrant brought upon immigration to Canada twenty years ago will be the same culture brought by a new immigrant from the same area. **Part Four, Using Cultural Information Without Stereotyping**, will provide some exercises to look at the evolving nature of culture and strategies to become aware of and to avoid the dangers of stereotyping.

Fathers who are immigrants and refugees often face unique challenges when they enter Canadian society. In addition to the societal factors facing all fathers in Canada, the experience of being an immigrant or refugee may have significant impact on their fathering. They have strong beliefs, values and traditions about the nature of the family and father-child relationships that may or may not be supported in this country. **Part Five, Mediating Differences in Cultural Expectations of Fathering** will help to provide human service providers with strategies to understand and respect these beliefs, and to mediate between conflicting beliefs and behaviors. Successful mediation preserves the family in its dignity and tradition, while accommodating to the requirements of the new society.

We hope that this material will be used in a wide variety of contexts, from inservice training, training within agencies, college and university classrooms, and specialized workshops. Therefore, some of the participant groups will be total strangers in the beginning while others may be close friends and colleagues. The facilitator will need to assess the need for trust building and ice breaking exercises. We suggest A Handbook of Interactive Exercises for Groups by Constance A. Barlow, Judith A. Blythe, and Margaret Edmonds as one source of interactive exercises.

The success of training programs is often dependent upon the level of comfort and trust amongst the participants and between the trainer and the participants. The facilitator needs to be competent in group processes. Discussions of fathering inevitably involve reflection on one's own family experience. Training groups are not the appropriate forum for dealing with deep personal issues. However, trainers need to be aware of the fact that discussions about fathering are very likely to evoke strong emotions. It is important to establish clear boundaries for disclosure, and at the same time, acknowledge the existence of these emotions, and their potential impact on participants' work with fathers.

STARTING THE PROCESS

As we begin to enhance our understanding of fathers, we need to rely on both the research that is available to us as well as our own feelings, values, and perceptions about fathers and fathering. Studies dealing with cross-cultural fathering are not numerous and are very rare if limited to exploring fathers' roles with preschool children. Considerable parenting literature exists; however, it appears that the roles and activities of mothers are the primary focus of this literature. Another interesting but not surprising pattern is the lack of studies examining the roles that immigrant and refugee fathers play in the development of their children in the Canadian context.

The literature does provide some information on when and how fathers tend to become engaged with their children. Marsiglio's (1991) study is important from the perspective of providing some empirical evidence of paternal engagement with children. Fathers' activities with three cohorts of children aged 0-2, 3-4, 5-18 years represented the focus of the investigation. Marsiglio reported that the extent of fathers' engagement with their children was positively related to the extent of their partners' activities with their children. He also contends that fathers were more likely to engage in activities such as play, leisure activities, and specific tasks if the children were all males (versus all females), of biological relationship, younger versus older, and large in number.

Marsiglio's work also pointed out that the father's level of education (higher versus lower) was positively correlated with reading to his children and assisting them with their homework. Secondly, a father's employment status was found to be predictive of engagement levels, in that unemployed fathers spent less time in activities with their children than did employed fathers. Marsiglio hypothesized that this may be due to increased stress of the father job-searching or possible depression associated with the lack of a job. The employment factor may be extremely critical in understanding the challenges immigrant and refugee fathers may encounter in engaging with their preschool children as these men may be unemployed or underemployed.

We likely have an opinion about whether our fathers fulfilled our own vision of "good fathering" that we then extend to our understanding of how the fathers we work with should behave. Therefore, Part One begins with a self-exploration of the values, beliefs, and perceptions we each hold with regards to fathers and fathering.

Say the word "father" — what comes to your mind? Now think about that picture. Where did it come from? How did it get there? How might that picture be similar to or different from the picture that is evoked in the mind of your co-participant? In this section, we will be asking you to reflect on your emotions, attitudes, and beliefs about fathers and fathering. What are the "Fathers are . . .", "Fathers must . . .", "Fathers should . . .", that frame your views about fathers? Which views do you believe are universal, held by all fathers everywhere? Which views might pose barriers to working effectively with fathers who don't share them?

We start our module with value clarification exercises that are specifically related to working with fathers who are immigrants and refugees. Obviously a certain level of comfort and trust in the group is desirable for these exercises to be effective. The following exercises are merely guidelines. Feel free to adapt them as necessary for each specific group of participants.

EXERCISE I-1
"FATHERS ARE . . ."

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage reflection on participants' images of fathers and the factors which have influenced those images.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.   Provide participants with the sentence starters handout. Ask them to complete the handout individually, without discussion with others.

2.   When participants have completed the exercise, have each share with a partner to examine similarities and differences.

3.   Bring the discussion back to the larger group, highlighting common themes, and significant differences.

4.   Ask the participants to reflect on the factors that influenced their images of fathers, and the similarities and differences that they have discovered.

HANDOUT I-1

"FATHERS ARE . . ."

Complete the sentences below. Don't think about this for too long, the first thing that comes to your mind is often the most useful.

Fathers must

_____
_____
_____

Fathers should

_____
_____
_____

Fathers could

_____
_____
_____

Fathers do

_____
_____
_____

Fathers don't

_____
_____
_____

Fathers are

_____
_____
_____

EXERCISE I-2

MY FATHER (OR FATHER FIGURE) WAS . . .

RATIONALE:

Note: This is an exercise that could evoke strong emotions, particularly if participants have undergone traumatic or unpleasant experiences in relation to their fathers. If you feel that you do not have the professional experience or background required to facilitate this discussion, you may wish to co-facilitate this with another professional, or omit this from the training session.

The purpose of this exercise is to help participants reflect on the impact of their own background on the development of the "image of fathers".

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Prepare participants for this exercise by explaining that you are going to be asking them to reflect on their own experiences with their fathers. You will not ask them to disclose any information about their fathers to the group, but only to discuss how their experiences have impacted their vision of fathering, and their ability to work with fathers.

2. Distribute the handout "My father was . . ." to the participants, to be completed individually.

3. In pairs, discuss how these perceptions impacted the responses to the previous exercise on "fathers are, fathers should," etc.

4. In the large group, share highlights from each dyad.

5. Based on the information shared, lead the group in a discussion of a) how personal experiences shaped the participants' views of fathering and b) how these views may either facilitate or impede the ability to effectively support fathers who "don't fit the vision".

HANDOUT I-2
REFLECTING ON MY FATHER (OR FATHER FIGURE)

Complete the following sentences. In each case, substitute father-figure for father if you prefer. You will not be expected to share your responses with the group, but rather, to reflect on how your own experiences have impacted your views on fathers and fathering.

My father/father-figure is/was
_____
_____
_____

My father and I
_____
_____
_____

What made me laugh about my father was
_____
_____
_____

My father was best at
_____
_____
_____

My father was not so good at

_____

_____

_____

My father fathered by

_____

_____

_____

My father always taught me

_____

_____

_____

A good metaphor for my father is

_____

_____

_____

PART TWO
WHO ARE CANADIAN FATHERS?

The roles and expectations for fathers have been changing drastically in our society (Shimoni and Baxter, 1996). This change has involved a transition from the traditional image of father as provider and disciplinarian to a new image as equal partner in child rearing (Glossop and Theilheimer, 1994). As with all family roles, the role of father is shaped by economic, social, cultural, and personal factors.

It has been suggested (Lupri, 1991) that in the majority of families, the mother is still the primary caregiver and the one on whom the joys and burdens of child-rearing fall (Decoste, 1994). Writers inform us that for some time to come we should expect fatherhood roles to range between the traditional "provider role" and what is referred to as the "emerging adrogynous role" where men perform all the tasks of child rearing traditionally associated with mothers (Shimoni and Baxter, 1996). It appears, then, that in Canada today, committed fathers are facing very real difficulties in taking on new roles and adapting to expectations that may or may not fit with their comfort level. At the same time, increasing concern is being expressed about fathers who, for a variety of reasons, do not assume responsibility for the growth and development of their children.

The nature and effectiveness of paternal engagement is mediated by several factors. Lamb (1981) suggested four variables: motivation, skills and self-confidence, support, and institutional practices. Furstenburg (1994) summarizes much of the literature on father disengagement in suggesting that "some fathers are pushed out of the family . . . geographic mobility, increased economic demands, and new family responsibilities which occur after divorce and remarriage." More current research conducted over the past few years has highlighted both the cumulative negative impact of stress factors on effective parenting and the importance of social support. In fact, recent studies of traditional families (Woodworth, Belsky, and Crnic, 1996) found social support to be the strongest determinant in positive fathering.

This section provides some exercises to help participants explore what is perceived to be a "typical" Canadian father, an "ideal" Canadian father, and then to examine the gaps between the two perceptions. If it is difficult identifying what a Canadian father looks like for those who are familiar and comfortable with Canadian culture, consider the conflicts fathers new to Canada might feel.

This section may help participants become more aware of the mitigating factors which influence the way a father fulfills his role.

EXERCISE I-3
TYPE AND PROTOTYPE

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to provide an active and "fun" way of developing a visual image of fathers that may help participants gain a better understanding of both their own ideas about their prototype of fathers, and the gap between the prototype and the typical. Comparing the participants' visual representation of both typical and prototype usually results in an acknowledgement of the diversity of both.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Provide participants with large sheets of construction paper, magazines with pictures of families, scissors, glue, markers, and any other collage materials.

2. Divide participants into small groups or dyads. The goal is to produce two or three (or more) collages of a "typical" father and two, three (or more) of a "prototype" of a father. It is important to facilitate conversation during the collage making process.

3. Display the collages, and engage the group in a discussion that focuses on:

   ♦ The ease or difficulty with which consensus occurred as to what is the typical and prototypical.
   ♦ A comparison of the typical to each other.
   ♦ A comparison of the prototypical to each other.
   ♦ A discussion of the factors that impact similarities and differences in "visions of fathers".
   ♦ An exploration of the gap between the prototype and the typical.
   ♦ An examination of the factors that impact the gap between the prototype and the typical.
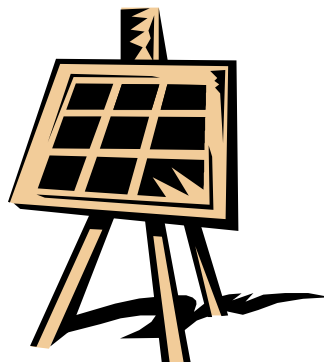
EXERCISE I-4

MEN'S ROLES AND FATHERS' ROLES

RATIONALE:

The changing image of fathers in Canada is closely connected to the roles we ascribe to men in the family. In the previous exercise, we examined the differences between what was seen to be the "typical" father and the "ideal" father. Many of those gaps occurred in areas relating to family roles. This exercise will ask participants to look carefully at what they believe the roles of fathers should be and where those beliefs might have come from.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In small groups, brainstorm and create a list of all the tasks that are involved in maintaining a household and rearing preschool children.

2. Next, participants should talk about their own families in terms of who did what tasks.

3. Finally, discuss the beliefs that went behind the designation of tasks. Was the assigning of tasks based on expedience (the husband can earn more than can the wife outside the home, so the wife does domestic tasks), or beliefs (girls need to be raised by their mothers)?

4. Discuss how each participant's culture impacted those beliefs.

5. Discuss how changing the roles would impact each member of the family and if it would have become necessary to reassign domestic roles and tasks.
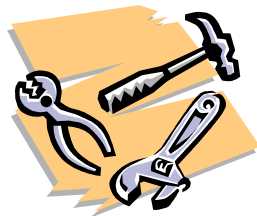
PART THREE

COMING TO UNDERSTAND FATHERING IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

I
t is likely clear from the preceding exercises that our perceptions of fathers and fathering vary considerably even within the Canadian context. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that people from differing cultural backgrounds will provide even greater variations in their perceptions and beliefs concerning fathering. The work of researchers such as Waxler-Morrison, Anderson, and Richardson (1990) provides some insights into the roles assumed by fathers in their families. In their work, these editors profile a number of ethnic/cultural groups which include brief summaries on family structure. We have included a few of these summaries for your reference.

Assanand, Richardson, and Waxler-Morrrison (1990) in their discussion on South Asians, report that the family is usually headed by the most economically stable male. Gender roles are clearly outlined with the wife traditionally seen as the husband's possession. The use of physical discipline is common.

Behjati (1990) asserts that mothers in traditional Iranian families are subordinate to the fathers, who are responsible for disciplining the children. In modern Iranian families, the father remains the head although female roles have dramatically changed allowing for the mother to pursue opportunities outside of the family.

In West Indian families, Glascow and Adaskin (1990) maintain that when it comes to family matters, the wife plays an important role and the father takes the lead in regards to matters arising outside the family. However, fathers typically become more involved in the child rearing activities if the mother is employed.

Gleave and Manes (1990), in their review of South American families, state that males are responsible for financial stability and meeting the material needs of the family. Mothers look after issues of the household including raising the children. Married couples maintain close ties with parents on both sides and the extended family is often involved in child rearing and child care.

According to Lai and Yue (1990) the father in Chinese families is responsible for financial security, disciplining children, and decision making. Members of the extended family are frequently involved in making major decisions. Parents see their main parental commitment as providing the necessary material needs for their children's development.

Okabe, Takahashi, and Richardson (1990), in their description of Japanese families, explain that fathers are expected to be hard workers who provide the material necessities for the family. A primary role for mothers is to nurture both her children and her husband. Fathers are not likely to help their children in education-related work as this is seen as the domain of their wives.

No matter how much preparation we do in terms of reading the literature and examining our own attitudes, we need to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific population and people with whom we are going to work. We need to understand that moving to Canada involves changes in many deeply rooted perceptions, habits, and ways of viewing the world, all of which impact childrearing. This section of the module will focus on helping participants come to appreciate the diverse ways in which fathers interact with children and the cultural norms and expectations that contribute to this diversity.

EXERCISE I-5

COLLAGE OF INTERACTIONS

RATIONALE:

Fathers are fathers precisely in the way they interact with their children. In the previous section, participants explored their own memories of how fathers behaved and what they did. This exercise will help participants explore multiple ways in which fathers and children interact to have a better understanding of how an "engaged" father might be defined.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.   Provide a variety of collage materials for participants — magazines with family pictures, paper, scissors, glue, markers.

2.   Divide participants into small groups of approximately three.

3.   Ask the participants to search for pictures from the magazines or to create composites of pictures that would show a representation of father/child interactions. The wider the variety of perspectives demonstrated, the better.

4.   Share the collages with the large group. Explore the expectations of each group looking for common themes.

5.   In what ways do the expectations differ? Why might the differences occur? For example, would rural fathers interact with their children in different activities and in different ways than urban fathers? Is there a difference in the ways fathers might interact with daughters and with sons? If the father is a single parent, might the interactions be different from the interactions in a two-parent family? How do cultural expectations impact interactions? Brainstorm as many possible sources for variations of interactions that you can.

6.   Is it possible to define optimum amounts or types of interactions between fathers and preschool children? How might this understanding help us when working with fathers of preschool children?

EXERCISE I-6

FATHERING IN . . .

Case Studies

RATIONALE:

This exercise will encourage participants to explore case studies of fathers in other cultures for possible differing expectations and patterns of interactions and to examine how these expectations and interactions may evolve after time in Canada.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide participants into small groups of approximately three. Ask them to read the case studies provided and discuss the following:

    ♦   What appear to be the patterns of interaction between father and child?
    ♦   Based on these patterns, what would seem to be some expectations the father would have for his child(ren)?
    ♦   How might these expectations be different from those typically identified for Canadian fathers (as discussed in previous exercises)?

2. In the large group, discuss what cultural expectations in Canada may impact the patterns evident in the case studies.

3. Discuss how having some knowledge of cultural fathering practices might be helpful. How might this knowledge be restrictive? What problems could occur as a result of assuming that all families from a similar cultural background will parent in similar ways?
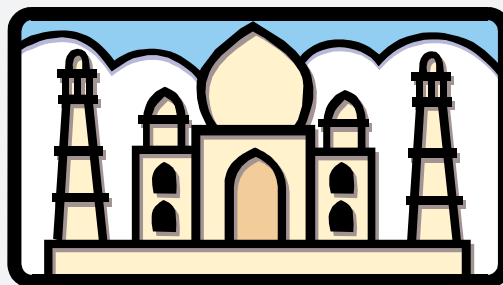
CASE STUDY
Pradeep — India

Pradeep heads a large extended household in India. In his culture, the family represents the most significant component of life and the extended family represents the most typical family configuration. Pradeep is not the oldest of the brothers but has taken on the responsibility of head of household because he is the most economically stable male. Major decisions, however, result from input from the extended family members. Loyalty to the family as a unit is placed above the desires of the individual. Children are expected to be respectful, attentive, and obedient to all elders' decisions.

In the family, gender roles are clearly outlined and Pradeep's wife is seen as subordinate to his higher social status. There is a definite bias towards having sons over daughters and Pradeep feels fortunate in having three sons and only one daughter.

Pradeep's responsibility towards his daughter is to ensure that she is socialized to be able to accommodate to new environments, to attend to the needs of others, and to develop polite social manners. As she grows older, Pradeep will require that his daughter begin to distance herself from the family as it will be necessary for her to sever all family relationships when she marries and moves into her husband's household. Pradeep's sons are socialized to adopt a protective role over their wives.

Pradeep's role as a father is defined primarily by his ability to look after his family financially. He takes pride in caring for his aging parents and is comforted in knowing that his sons will do the same for him when the time comes. His major interactions with the children are as the disciplinarian; the use of physical punishment is common in his household. (Assanand, S. *et al*, 1990; Patel *et al*, 1996; Sinha, 1995)

CASE STUDY
Murad — Iran

In Iran, the family is of supreme importance for instilling beliefs and fostering relationships. The social interconnections which are provided in the large extended families benefit the individual family members in a variety of ways: employment, social connections, and safety.

Murad is the head of his extended household because he is the oldest of his father's sons. His father has just arranged Murad's third marriage and Murad's family is looking forward to the additional strong bonds which this new marriage will assure. His first two wives have a total of five children between them and are seen as subordinate to Murad. His prime interaction with the children stems from his responsibility to discipline all of the children in the family.

Murad's family still holds to many of the traditional Iranian views of family. Some modern families are shifting their perceptions of the roles of females slightly. While the extended family is still important and the father remains the head, some female family members are finding doors opening allowing them opportunities outside of the home, for pursuing education for example. Murad finds himself thinking about these shifting roles and wonders how they might affect the female members of his family, primarily his much younger sisters and his daughters. (Behjati-Sabet, A., 1990).

CASE STUDY
Ng — China

Ng and his family live in a rural area of China. Despite China's "one child" policy, Ng and his wife have been given permission to have a second child because their first child was a daughter. It is acknowledged that families will need a son to help work on the farm. Several generations live under one roof including Ng's parents, a married sister and her husband and children, and two unmarried siblings.

Ng is responsible for financial security, disciplining his daughter, and making decisions for the family. Ng does not take an active caregiving role with his daughter primarily because his wife is not willing to give up any aspect of this role to her husband. Because of the care and attention which Chinese mothers must provide both to their husbands and their children, Ng is conscious that his daughter must receive appropriate training requiring her to display caring and concern. He instructs his wife to take her duties seriously and watches for signs of these desirable traits as his daughter develops. His wife desires to remain physically close to her daughter at all times and so the child shares her parents' sleeping quarters.

In order to maintain harmony in the family, the Confucian principles of instructing, disciplining, and guiding are followed by both Ng and his wife. He expects his daughter to be respectful and loyal both to himself and to his parents. He also expects unquestioned obedience from his daughter and encourages her to control her affective and emotional behaviours. While his parents currently indulge his daughter because she is still so young, Ng knows that they will soon expect her to begin achieving the goals they have set for her. At that point, Ng will encourage his daughter through a larger tendency to punish physically and by rejecting her behaviours. While Ng loves his daughter, he will not openly show her any affection. He sees his main parental commitment as providing the necessary material needs for her development. (Chao, 1994; Chen, *et al*,1998; Lai & Yue, 1990)

CASE STUDY
Jacob — West Indies

Jacob's family is an extended family including his mother and two younger sisters. His older brother has been living in a common-law relationship for several years, something quite familiar in Jacob's town. However, Jacob chose to marry and has found his marriage to be an unhappy one. He maintains a mistress outside of the family of whom his wife is aware. This does not distress her as much as the admission of an unhappy marriage which would cause public embarrassment for them all, especially if either of their characters were to be attacked during the divorce proceedings. Some of Jacob's friends have even established a second family with their mistresses. Jacob allows his wife to look after all the family details including the care and education of their two young sons. Jacob's role is to take the lead in all matters arising outside of the family. His major area of involvement with the children is in ensuring that they demonstrate socially acceptable behaviours when in public. All aspects of family life are strongly guided by the social impressions others have.

Lately Jacob has been thinking a great deal about emigrating to Canada. His friend made the move three years ago. In his letters, Jacob's friend has talked about some of the difficulties finding work in Canada and what that has meant for their family structure. The friend reports that many West Indian women are finding jobs leaving their children in the father's care. Jacob wonders about whether he could handle that change in his role. (Glascow & Adaskin, *1990*)
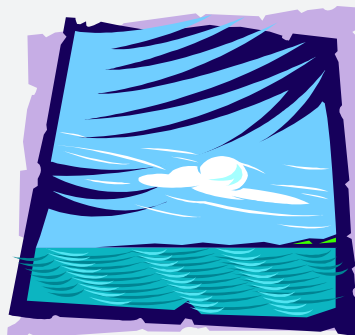
USING CULTURAL INFORMATION WITHOUT STEREOTYPING

From the results of previous exercises in this module, it is clear that fathering is influenced by different cultures, different personalities and belief systems, and different goals for self and children. In this section of the module, we will explore the reasons why we tend to stereotype and how to avoid stereotyping when we are using cultural information about fathering.

Stereotyping refers to the process of categorizing people into groups and assigning similar characteristics to all members of the group. For example, we might believe that all teenagers are lazy, directionless, into trouble, and messy. We might be convinced that teenagers avoid doing homework, are 'lippy' to their teachers, and refuse to clean their rooms. However, when we think about individual teenagers that we know, we can pick out those who do work hard at school, are respectful towards their teachers, have a sense of direction, and work hard in their communities. As participants in this training session, you likely belong to a common or related disciplines. Can you think of stereotypes that others might hold of your profession?

It seems almost "natural" for people to stereotype and, in a sense, it is. When we learn new pieces of information, our brain sorts those pieces into existing categories (or schemata in Piaget's language). In this way, we can begin to make sense of what we are learning and relate new pieces of information to already known pieces. Our schemata are only challenged when a new piece of information comes along that doesn't seem to fit neatly. For example, we may come to believe that all Valentine's hearts are and should be red. When we are given a blue Valentine heart, that will challenge our existing category and cause us to reconsider the characteristics we have assigned to Valentine hearts. If we have not had direct contact with teenagers (other than when we were one and of course we were different in those days!), our stereotype of teenagers may never be challenged. When we are fortunate to meet a non-stereotypical teenager or raise one of our own, our schema is challenged.

EXERCISE I-7
STEREOTYPING IN HUMOUR

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to become aware of how easily we stereotype others and use shared characteristics as a foundation to humour.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.   Make copies of a popular comic strip from the local newspaper. Dilbert, Calvin and Hobbes, and Sally are possible choices.

2.   Ask the participants to work in small groups of approximately three.

3.   Distribute a copy of the comic strip to each small group and ask the groups to list all the characteristics of each of the characters in the strip. Describe how those characteristics are used as the basis for the cartoonist to play on.

4.   Compare the list of characteristics among groups. Was there consensus around the characteristics? What differences emerged? How were the characteristics used as the basis of humour by the cartoonist?

5.   As a large group, discuss how stereotypes can be useful and when they become dangerous. Is there an issue with cartoonists using stereotypical characteristics as a basis for humour?

EXERCISE I-8
THE EVOLVING NATURE OF CULTURE

RATIONALE:

Hall (1959, p.43) defines culture as "a way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes, and material things". An expanded definition suggests that culture is the "behaviour, values, beliefs, attitudes, traits, artifacts, and products shared by and associated with a community of people. As these characteristics are passed from one generation to another, they evolve and change through experiences" (Calgary Board of Education, 1993, p.1). This exercise will help participants explore how the culture they honour has changed from the way it was experienced by their parents and grandparents.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In groups of two or three, ask participants to share a family celebration or tradition. As part of the sharing, talk about how the celebrations may have changed through accommodation to spouses, differing family situations, locations, and so on. How might the traditions continue to change as children grow up, as new family members are added, and as families move from one location to another?

2. In the large group, explore some of the traditions shared and the cultural backgrounds they come from. Once families have been in a new country for several years, they tend to adapt their traditions and incorporate nuances from the new country. Can the participants provide any examples of how their own traditions have been influenced?

3. Discuss how this affects the ways we might use cultural information with families in Canada. While fathers may have interacted with their children in one way when in the home country, those patterns of interactions likely will have changed, adapted, and evolved once in Canada. Ask participants to share any examples of this evolving nature of culture that they may be familiar with.

PART FIVE

MEDIATING DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF FATHERING

RISK FACTORS

As has been explored in previous sections of this module, the roles that fathers play are determined by a variety of factors including cultural expectations. When those cultural expectations change as a result of immigration, there is a risk of significant pressure to either adapt or adopt new roles. Many immigrant and refugee fathers are at risk for stress factors, which strengthens the need for increased social support. Several relevant stress factors are discussed below.

Underemployment or unemployment. These factors can be devastating to the self-esteem of fathers. The loss of the traditional role as breadwinner has been linked to the use of more punitive measures with the children, increased alcoholism, and domestic abuse (Skolnic, 1992).

Social isolation. Many of the immigrant and refugee new Canadians are of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Feelings of isolation and discrimination intensify the social, psychological, and economic pressures faced. In addition, many of the immigrants and refugees come from countries that were at war with one another and, as a result, the clashes and hostilities that came with them to Canada further prevent community integration.

Barriers to helping services. There is growing awareness of the barriers that prevent new Canadians from fully utilizing community social and health services that offer support to individuals and families. Fathers who wish for support related to this role face an additional barrier. Women provide most of the child-focussed services. Men often do not feel comfortable accessing these services and women workers are often uncomfortable in their role with fathers. Young and Roopnarine (1994) noted this situation in a study of fathers of children with special needs. In another study, Lewis (1981) described how the nature of father-child interaction varies in different settings and suggests that attempts to understand fathers (both from a research and practical perspective) seem to focus on and in domains where mothers dominate, i.e. the home. Lewis (1981) concluded that much needs to be done to understand the contributions fathers make to the development of their children.

Role reversal. Among immigrant families where the father is unemployed, many fathers are, through a lack of choice, fulfilling the primary care giving and child rearing roles. With appropriate support and training, fathers possess the potential to help their children make the transition to their new country and to provide for their healthy development. Without appropriate support, there are indications that these families are at risk for family breakdown, child abuse and neglect, or less than optimal parenting.

Trauma induced by war, enforced refugee status. It is well accepted that families who have been affected by trauma events or who are forced into refugee status require special intervention and attention. Adults appear to need to move through several stages as they seek to restore mental health after being uprooted and displaced. Overcoming the initial stigma of refugee status, acceptance of the refugee identity as self-identity, development of refugee pride, and then a transition from the refugee identity corresponding to the growth of a positive self-identity in the new country represent the primary stages refugees experience (Robertson, 1992). Immigrants and refugees need to deal collectively with the impact of family separation and their concept of a family following their move to a new country. Gilan (1990) worked with several refugee families to identify characteristics common to different refugee situations. These characteristics included guilt caused by flight (worse among families who left clandestinely), trauma caused by breaking apart and coming together again as a family unit, and issues of dependency and paucity of family ethnic resources.

Espin (1992) explores the experience of uprootedness encompassing not only the obvious losses of country, way of life, and family but also the more subtle pain caused by the absence of familiar smells, foods, and daily routines. The experience of uprootedness is linked with the realization that neither the old nor the new home is now fully home. Bylund (1992) has articulated the need to carefully examine the mental health status of people following migration. The Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (Health and Welfare Canada, 1988) notes the incidence of mental disorders, particularly Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, among refugees. Depression has been noted as one of the common problems among immigrants. This has a major impact on the child-rearing capacity of immigrant parents who, for extended periods of time, may be emotionally unavailable to their children. In addition, studies on immigrants report that many cases of depression go undetected due to the cultural barriers to appropriate services.

A CLOSER LOOK AT UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT[1]

A major factor when working with immigrant and refugee fathers is their employment status. This has major implications on which roles the fathers are required to play in Canada and how comfortable they are with these new roles as fathers. Often, the women in the family are the first to find employment (even though it may be at low paying menial tasks), leaving the father to take over a sometimes unfamiliar, culturally inappropriate role as caregiver. A discussion of recent research and implications of unemployment and underemployment is provided below.

Immigrants often journey to other countries in search of greater economic opportunities in the hope of improving their standard of living (Christensen, 1988). For the first generation immigrants, this hope is often met with the harsh reality of, for example, job rejection and an interminable series of job search disappointments. Briar (1988, p.8) notes that, although immigration policy favours well-educated people, they suffer higher rates of unemployment that the general population" (report of the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees [CTFMH], 1988, p.29). Despite the claim that immigrants are entitled to "full participation . . . in all aspects of Canadian life" (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1992, p.25), many highly educated and skilled immigrants are forced into dead-end jobs and may repeatedly experience underemployment and unemployment for a number of years. Refugees who are even less prepared for their adjustment in Canada than self-sponsored immigrants commonly find themselves in menial jobs.

There are numerous barriers preventing immigrants from getting satisfying jobs. Westwood and Ishiyama (1991, p.130-138) single out several factors including language, lack of specific career knowledge and employment skills, culturally biased vocational counselling, racial/ethnic discrimination and intolerance, and psychological problems related to overall cultural adjustment.

The early entry and subsequent entrenchment in menial jobs over a prolonged period of time is, psychologically, a very taxing period for immigrant males. As Li (1988) observes, dead-end jobs further stigmatize minorities, which results in few opportunities to obtain higher paying and higher status employment. Ironically, for some immigrant

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[1] The material in this section is adapted from Austin, C. and Este, D. (1999). Group work with immigrant men. In G. Yong-Lie & D. Este (Eds.) *Professional social service delivery in a multicultural world.* Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

men, their educational and vocational qualifications actually handicap them in their competitive struggle to find skilled, decently paid work. These job seekers may be perceived as being overqualified for certain well-paying entry level positions. Immigrant men, who see themselves as skilled and well qualified, are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems when they experience difficulty in obtaining desired employment.

In Canada there appears to be few published studies directly exploring the way immigrant men adapt to assigned work circumstance. The lack of research may be partly due to the unwillingness of society at large to accept that qualified immigrant men who are willing to work and who are not "picky" about their first jobs are unable to get jobs that are commensurate with their qualifications. Further, many Canadians seem to think that those who do obtain employment have workmates to help ease the transition into Canadian society. Thus, Canadians appear to be more attentive to the plight of immigrant women, generally seen as alone at home and isolated from mainstream Canada. Men tend to be perceived as better able to cope with emotional stress than women, a false stereotype that has connotations of "man as warrior" (Keen, 1991).

CHANGING ROLES

Haddad and Lam (1988) conducted over 100 in-depth interviews with immigrant fathers from nine different national or ethnic backgrounds. When they spoke of their roles at home in their countries of origin, almost all fathers described their roles in terms of what we would call "traditional". That is, there was a sex division of labour in the household, and childrearing was predominantly the woman's role. Upon immigrating to Canada, life changed considerably. Of the 117 respondents, only 17 (referred to as "traditionalists") remained firm in their belief in this role division. Thirty-eight of the respondents, the "situationists", changed their view of participation in household tasks, not necessarily because they saw any advantage in it. The roles of fathers were simply due to changing circumstances, rather than to any belief that one way was better than the others. The largest group of immigrant fathers, (the authors refer to them as "adapters" or "prioritizers") adapted to changes in order to maximize the well-being of their families within the new environment of Canada (Haddad and Lam, 1988). Haddad and Lam conclude that "in order to understand the immigrants' experience, we must examine how they made sense of their situation and how they cope with the changes that shape their life".

The exercises in this section will help to develop some strategies for recognizing and mediating conflicts in cultural expectations for fathers between home country and Canada.

EXERCISE I-9

WHAT DO I WANT MY CHILD TO BE LIKE?

RATIONALE:

When immigrant and refugee fathers come to Canada, they are often confronted with child rearing practices and ideologies that are very different from their countries of origin. Child rearing practices are inextricably connected to factors such as family structure, neighbourhood structure, and legal structures. There is great diversity in those factors both within and between cultures. Roer Strier (1996) found that a common theme underlying child rearing practices is the "image" that parents have of what characteristics are desirable for an adult who is well adapted for success in their society. Parents then, in their child rearing practices, tend to reinforce behaviours that are congruent with these images, and engage in disciplinary practices to diminish behaviour that are not. When cultures share common perceptions of certain "adaptive adult" characteristics, it is more likely that common "rules" exist. For example, if two cultures share the belief that honesty is an essential ingredient of a successful adult, it is likely that children will be scolded or punished for lying, in both those cultures. When the host culture (i.e. Canada) and the culture of origin have different images, clashes are most likely to occur. Common examples of different images that may be prevalent are: the image of the adult who is suited to a collective society with respect for authorities, and conformity on the levels of family and society versus the values, norms, and expectations aimed at creating an independent, assertive person that is common in Western Society. Another common example of different images relates to gender. In some cultures, very distinct gender roles are promoted, while in others, boys and girls are encouraged to behave in quite similar ways.

The purpose of this exercise is to enhance our understanding of the connection between childrearing patterns and images of "the adaptive adult".

INSTRUCTIONS:

In dyads, share the responses to the questions below.

1. What was your parents' image of an adaptive adult?

2. How did they reinforce behaviour that was congruent with this image?

3. How did they discourage behaviour that was not congruent with this image?

4. What were the factors that influenced your parents "image of an adaptive adult"? What is your image of an "adaptive adult"?

5. How does your image of an "adaptive adult" differ from that of your parents?

6. What factors do you think influenced the change in image of the adaptive adult from your parents' generation to yours?

7. A representative from each dyad can share with the larger group some of the interesting themes that emerged in this discussion.
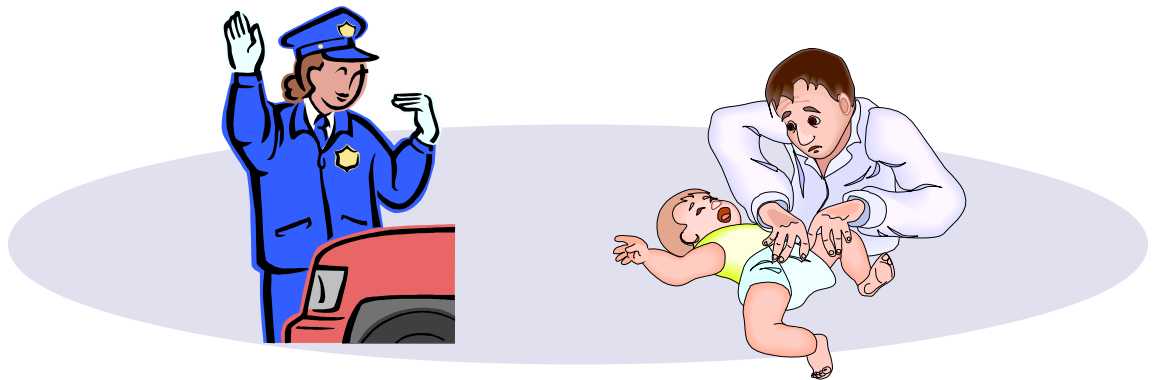
EXERCISE I-10
ADAPTIVE ADULT IMAGE CLASHES

RATIONALE:

Researchers have told us that the parents' images of the "adaptive adult" (Roer Strier, 1996) are very resistant to change. Child rearing ideologies, expectations, norms, rules and beliefs adhered to by parents are deeply rooted, and tend to remain fairly constant by the transition from one culture to another. It is more likely that external behaviours may change, if required, but the internal beliefs may not. Therefore, fathers may feel some discomfort and dissonance by the expectation to behave in a way that is not congruent with their beliefs. Furthermore, the child is likely to experience discomfort when the expectations of home and of other environments, such as the school, are very different.

The purpose of this exercise is to promote understanding of all the places in which immigrant fathers may find themselves "at odds" with Canadian institutions and systems, if their images of "adaptive adults" and the congruent childrearing strategies, are incongruent with those deemed acceptable and or desirable in Canada.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Instruct participants to imagine that they are fathers from a culture that prohibits contact between unmarried males and females after children reach preadolescence, that women (mothers) should have no interaction with males aside from their husbands and/or in the presence of their husbands, and that girls should never initiate contact with boys or men, whether they be peers or in positions of authority. You are the father of a little girl, who is having some difficulties in elementary school, which the teacher believes may be related to some health problems. You have received a letter from the principal of the school (a male) who wishes to meet with both parents and design a number of interventions inside and outside the school.

Provide an "eco-map" for participants to remind them of the number of systems (micro, exo, macro) which impact the parents. Ask participants to list and describe the possible places in each system where these different values may cause misunderstandings or clashes.

EXERCISE I-11

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES IN PARENTING BELIEFS

RATIONALE:

When differences in attitude, values and patterns of childrearing exist between immigrant families and the host culture, people need to find ways to deal with or cope with these differences. Roer Strier (1996) found that often parents find adaptive strategies to deal with these differences and that often people make these adaptations in a manner that is not really even fully conscious. She identified four different strategies that immigrant families utilize in dealing with "authorities" regarding their children. There is no inherent value in any one strategy but understanding them may help the service provider understand the family. The first strategy is described as the "uni-cultural" style, in which families attempt to raise their children according to the traditions of their country of origin, and to attempt to protect them from exposure to other ways of life. Other families, when they move to a new country, may believe that rapid assimilation of the child into the new culture is in the child's best interest. These parents tend to keep their beliefs and values to themselves, and encourage the child to take on the characteristics of the host culture. A third strategy is referred to as "the bicultural style" in which the parents attempt to preserve as much of their culture of origin within the privacy of their home setting, and encourage the child to behave and dress like others when outside of the home. Many factors will influence the parents' choice of strategy, including the motive for immigration, the depth of cultural differences, and the degree of tolerance for difference in the host society.

The purpose of this exercise is to examine the different ways new Canadian fathers may deal with different values in the various systems in which families interface. (The identification of agencies and systems from the previous exercise should be helpful here).

INSTRUCTIONS:

1.   Divide the participants into groups of 2 or 3. Review the scenario described in the last exercise, or provide alternative scenarios. Ask participants to imagine that they hold the beliefs described very dearly, and at the same time wish nothing more than for their children's success in the new country. How would the father in this case, deal with the child, the teacher, the principal, and all the other representatives of "systems" outlined in the previous exercise.

2.   After participants have described some of the strategies, discuss the three coping strategies described by Roer Strier (1996) discussed above (unicultural, rapid assimilation, bicultural) . Do the strategies suggested by the participants "fit" these categories?

3.   Discuss with participants the factors that may influence the choice of strategy, including the "openness to difference" of the host society.

CONCLUSION

Module One, Enhancing our Understanding of Immigrant and Refugee Fathers, has provided exercises in five different parts, moving from understanding ourselves and our image of fathering in a Canadian context to examining differing cultural expectations of fathering and encouraging the development of strategies for mediating cultural conflicts.

Working with fathers is a specialized area requiring sensitivity, awareness, and often new and different approaches than have been traditionally used with programs designed specifically for mothers. When issues of culture and differing expectations of the role of fathering are added, the work becomes increasingly complex and interesting. While there is not a significant amount of literature in the area of cross-cultural fathering, we have attempted to include most of the pertinent research with references to allow you to explore further. It must be acknowledged that the work we now do with immigrant and refugee fathers is ground-breaking and will itself form much of the literature for future projects to build on.

The next three modules of the manual will focus on developing programs for immigrant and refugee fathers with preschool children, interventions, and evaluating programs for immigrant and refugee fathers.