



The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

MEN IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

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1994 was the Year of the Family, and around the world there were conferences, seminars, workshops and activities designed to make us all more aware of the importance of the family and to encourage us to develop appropriate ways to support families. However, when we look at the actions taken, it becomes evident that when addressing the family of the very young child, efforts are commonly devoted to providing supports to the mother in her caretaking role. Little serious attention has been paid to working with the men in children's lives.

Men affect children in profound and diverse ways. As fathers and family members both their contributions and their failures to contribute have great impact on the health and development of young children. In their roles outside the family, as teachers, community leaders, religious leaders, health providers and policymakers men make decisions that often shape the capability of families to help young children thrive. When these influential men have supportive attitudes toward young children and when they are well-informed about young children's needs, they are more likely to facilitate the establishment of solid programming efforts. When, by contrast, influential men are dismissive of the importance of the early years, or carry misconceptions about what young children need, then programs to help young children are often blocked, or unsustainable. Both children and women are interdependent with the men in their lives, and

with the men whose decisions affect them. *Programming for young children and the family needs to reflect and address this reality if it is to effectively support quality experiences for young children.*

Within the last few years there has been an increasing interest in looking at the relationship between fathers and their children. In December 1993, a meeting was held in Mexico.¹ Researchers and practitioners from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and the United States met to discuss the roles and responsibilities of fathers in relation to their children. Recommendations were made regarding research, policy and program development. (Engle and Alatorre 1994) As a follow-up, in June 1994, UNICEF and the Population Council hosted a similar workshop for researchers from universities in Brazil, the Caribbean and the US. Topics for discussion included the traditional role of the father as it relates to health and nutrition programming and the relation of fathering to Early Childhood Care and Development. During the conference there was also a discussion of the ways to design programs to provide gender equality through making men and women's roles more complementary. (Engle 1994a)

Others have taken a broader view of men's roles in the lives of children and are looking at the role of men in the society as a whole as *carers*. For example, in May 1993, a meeting was held in Italy.² One motivation for the meeting was to respond to Article 6 of the European Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care, which suggests that member States promote and encourage increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. While Article 6 focuses on the parenting role, there was discussion at the meeting of larger issues: the involvement of men in childcare services; changing the culture of the workplace to support increased participation by men in caring for children; the role of the media in helping to increase awareness of the importance of men's participation in caring for children; and other social actions that provide support to men as they take a more active role in young children's lives.

In this article we take an even broader view, and attempt to look at the ways men, as fathers, carers and in other roles, have an impact on the lives of young children. We will illustrate the ways in which educating men about the needs of children and getting them more involved in the programming process have strengthened programs which promote the growth and development of young children. We will also offer a set of strategies that can be employed to increase men's awareness of the needs of and involvement in the lives of children.

Men as Fathers

In recent years men as fathers have been the subject of a number of research studies and reviews.³ Nonetheless, it is important to note that this is a relatively new area of inquiry. There are many dimensions of the contributions of fathers that have yet to be examined, in contrast to what is known about interactions and inter-relationships between mothers and young children. The studies conducted to date have examined the ways in which fathers are directly involved with the family, through caring for and interacting with the child and/or through their relationship with the mother. They also examine the other ways fathers contribute to the family through the provision of material goods, economic support, and shelter. In essence, research shows that fathers can positively affect their children's development through appropriate interactions.

And while there are many questions left unanswered, what follows is a summary of what is known to date.

■ DIRECT INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FAMILY

The nature of the interaction with the child. Most of the studies looking at the attachment of fathers to their infant and the involvement of the father in the child's early life have been conducted in the North. These studies show that when fathers are a significant part of the child's life from birth, the children score higher on intelligence tests than children whose fathers are less involved. (Engle and Breaux 1994, 19). Specifically, a study in Barbados by Russell-Brown, Engle and Townsend (1994), shows that "children who have good or ongoing relationships with their fathers appear more likely to do better at school and to have fewer behavioral problems." (pg. vi) The factors that emerge as significant are the level of involvement and the type of involvement the father has with his child, rather than the amount of time that the father spends interacting with the child. (20) There is little data available on other outcomes, beyond IQ and school performance and behavior.

In their review of the literature Engle and Breaux (1994) note that one of the most significant impacts of father involvement with the child is on the father himself. The more the father cares for the child, the more he becomes involved with the child. (21) Fathers who have exclusive responsibility for the child at some points in time develop caregiving skills and gain confidence. Extrapolating from the research, one could make a strong argument for increasing the father's role in parenting young children because, in general, when fathers are involved there are positive outcomes for children.

"Involvement" does not mean that the father must be the primary caregiver; to have an impact on the child's development he simply needs to be an active part of the child's daily life.

However, studies show that fathers are conspicuously absent in terms of spending time with young children. In a cross-cultural study conducted by High/Scope Foundation (Olmsted and Weikart 1995) examining the lives of 4-year-old children in eleven countries,⁴ researchers found that on average, the 4-year-olds in the countries studied spent at least five of their waking hours under their mothers' supervision and less than an hour under the supervision of fathers. The U.S. children spent about 11 waking hours a day in their mothers' care, one hour with both parents, and 42 minutes in their fathers' care. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of waking hours that 4-year-olds spend with their caregivers.

TABLE 1—NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY 4-YEAR-OLDS SPEND WITH VARIOUS CAREGIVERS

<i>COUNTRY/TERRITORY</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>Other Relative</i>	<i>Other Caregiver</i>
Belgium	5.2	0.5	1.0	6.1
China	6.8	0.9	1.5	3.1
Finland	7.7	0.8	0.5	4.8
Germany	10.0	0.6	1.1	2.3
Hong Kong	7.5	0.1	1.7	4.0
Nigeria	10.0	0.7	1.2	2.5
Portugal	8.2	0.4	2.6	3.1
Spain	7.6	0.3	1.0	4.7
Thailand	8.0	0.2	2.7	1.0
U.S.A.	10.7	0.7	0.8	2.9

Entries are based on 16 waking hours each day, but the figures do not include time spent with both parents, time the child is with no one, and time for which no information was provided.

Source: *Families Speak: Early Childhood Care and Education in 11 Countries*, by P.P. Olmsted and D.P. Weikart, 1995, High/Scope Press, 600 N. River St., Ypsilanti, MI 48198-2898. Tel:(313)485-2000, Fax:(313)485-0704.

Similar findings emerged in a study from India, titled *The Girl Child and the Family: An Action Research Study*. (S. Anandalakshmy 1994) Based on research with a national sample of 13,200 Indian girls and households, the study drew the following conclusion about the role of fathers in childrearing:

The role of the father in sharing activities with his daughter is so marginal that it reflects one of the great tragedies of Indian family life. It is our observation in the field (and supported by earlier findings from several studies on socialization available as theses and dissertations) that the Indian father has abrogated his responsibility of parenting. The tasks of providing for food, education and marriage are in a sense the economic duties of the father, but beyond what is the basic minimum the father steps out of the scene, surrendering his socialization role and losing the opportunity to develop emotional closeness with his children. (66)

There are no data to identify minimum amounts of time fathers would need to spend with their children in order to have a positive impact. However, it is clear from the data that despite any rhetoric about the desirability of men taking a more active, engaged role in their young children's lives, this is not yet occurring in a widespread, significant way, in the North or the South.

While it would be ideal if all fathers could be encouraged to become significantly involved in the lives of their children, the reality is that in many parts of the world, fathers are not even present. Looking at data on the percentage of households that are female-headed in various parts of the world illustrates the point. In Botswana it is 45%, in Malawi, 29%, in Jamaica, 42%, in Peru, 23%, in Thailand, 22%, (Bruce 1994) and the numbers are increasing.

Although the number of female-headed households is one indicator of whether or not fathers are present in children's lives, Bruce (1994) argues that this is not the most accurate way to portray the lives of women and/or hypothesize about father presence. Not all mothers without partners are in female-headed households. Some live with their parents, grandparents, uncles or in other types of households. Thus rather than making policy based on female-headed households, and assuming that the percentage of male absence is the same as the percentage of female-headed households, Bruce argues that it is more accurate to look at women's living arrangements. She presents data on the percentage of women who live with a resident partner, providing quite a different portrayal of women's lives. For example, when one looks at female-headed households compared with women living without resident partners, in Ghana there are 20% female-headed households compared to 50% of the mothers who have no resident partner. The comparable numbers for Kenya are 17% female-headed households with 43% of the mothers living without a resident partner; for Mali these are 5% and 20%; and for Senegal 2% and 33%. The lack of a resident partner is a much more significant variable if we are looking at the potential for fathers to be involved in the lives of their children.

The nature of the interaction with the mother. Another way that men can have a positive impact on their children's lives is through the kind of relationship they have with the child's mother and the kind of emotional support they provide. After a review of the literature on studies conducted primarily in the North, Engle and Breaux(1994) conclude "The quality of the marital relationship is significantly associated with the nature of both the father-child and mother-child interaction. The more positive the relationship, the more involved the father is likely to be in childcare and vice versa. Of course causality can go either way." (33)

They also note that "the quality of the father's relationship with his child is much more dependent on his relationship with his spouse or partner (the child's mother) than it is for the mother's relationship with her child.... In other words, the father-child relationship is more contextual than the mother-child relationship. Hers tends to be consistent regardless of the strength of the marital or sexual bond." (33) One implication of this research for programs that support families is that when there is disruption in the relationship between partners, men may need support if they are to maintain or strengthen their commitments and ability to relate appropriately to their children.

Other Contributions to the Family

One way that men in many cultures contribute to the wellbeing of their children is through the provision of income to support the activities of the family. However, men are not the only ones who contribute financially to the family. Increasingly women are making substantial and sometimes even majority contributions to the family income. For example, in Madras, India, women contribute 46% to the family income while men contribute 42%, with 12% coming from joint income. In Nepal women contribute 50% of the family income; in the Philippines women's income exceeds men's by 10% when home production is taken into account; and in Ghana women maintain 33% of the households. (Bruce 1994)

Studies have been conducted which look at the relationship between men's and women's income and how that affects children's growth and development. In essence they suggest that men and women allocate the resources they control differently. Women are more likely than men to use funds available to them to meet the needs of children. In view of these findings, Engle (1994b) raises the question of whether or not policy should be directed toward increasing the amount of work available to women in order to improve children's health status. She suggests it might be more appropriate to put greater effort into helping men change their priorities in terms of their spending. She goes on to state that since women's work load is already considerably greater than men's, strategies should be developed to encourage men to give greater priority to the needs of children in the allocation of their income, rather than creating strategies that focus on increasing women's income through increasing their workload. (1)

In sum, the literature would suggest that it is important in terms of the child's well-being for the father to be involved (in appropriate ways) with the child. It needs to be noted, however, that the studies addressing fathers' direct involvement in the family (with the children and with the children's mothers) have been developed from the vantage point of those living in the North, and the majority of the studies which provide us with these conclusions have been conducted in the US or Europe. While there has been some cross-cultural research to support a universal argument that fathers need to be more involved in the lives of their children, (as described below), it is critical to look more fully at what is known about cross-cultural differences, the impact of different religious beliefs, and differences across cultures in maternal behavior. We do not want to give the impression that there is a 'right way' to father. There are a variety of cultural dimensions that determine the effectiveness of the roles fathers play in relation to their children.

Is There a Father Instinct?

In their work, *Is There a Father Instinct?*, Engle and Breaux (1994) review cross-cultural descriptions of fathering. From the review they conclude there are some aspects of fathering that are common in all cultures. (13-16) They are paraphrased as follows:

The father role is recognized in all cultures. Although the individual who takes on a fathering role may not be the biological father, in all cultures there are gender-specific roles for men and women in the lives of young children.

Fathers can be as nurturing and affectionate as mothers; they are as capable as mothers of providing infant care as well as older-child care. Fathers have the capacity to provide care early on in a child's life. There is nothing inherently different between men and women in terms of their ability to be responsive to children's needs, to nurture and be affectionate.

The father has a more limited role in infant and young child care than the mother. The younger the child, the less the father is involved in the child's care. As children get older the father's role increases, particularly when the child is being socialized. Fathers often play a key role in disciplining the child. In reviewing the literature on fathers' role in caregiving during the early years, Engle and Breaux(1994) conclude, "Fathers are consistently reported to spend

approximately one third the amount of time in providing childcare that mothers do (slightly lower if the mothers make the time estimates)." (15)

A fairly typical scenario of the limited roles men play in infant and young child care comes from a study of childrearing practices in Lao. The study revealed that fathers do not get involved in any childcare until the child is three to four years of age. The father's task is to provide food, clothes and general support during this time. At times the father will carry the child, but he is not involved in feeding, bathing or 'watching' the child. As the child grows older the father takes a dominant role in teaching and disciplining the child. The father makes decisions related to illness, attendance at school, division of work within the household. Fathers are also involved in making toys for the children. (Phanjaruniti 1994, 12)

Fathers do not increase time in childcare when the mother is working. Studies of the work and caregiving of families in the United States, Jamaica and India all indicated that the amount of caregiving provided by the mother is more or less the same (she does 90% of the caregiving) regardless of whether or not she is working. (Engle and Breaux 1994, 16) Thus while the arrival of a baby and care for young children significantly increases women's work it does not make much difference in the father's workload.

Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Fathering

In looking at cross-cultural studies in terms of the father's role in the lives of young children, it can be concluded that the more cooperation and communication required of men and women in their daily activities (i.e., if they are both involved in securing food for the family or both undertake similar tasks on behalf of the family) the more they are likely to be jointly involved in childcare. The more separate men's and women's roles and tasks, the more prescribed men's roles are in relation to children, and generally the more limited men's roles are in terms of caregiving.

There are many variables that determine the kind of roles that fathers have in relation to their children.

Authority and Power. The ascription of power and authority is important in terms of a father's relationship with his family. In many cultures men are the decision-makers in terms of what happens both within the family and as the family interacts with the world. Historically this power comes from the fact that men have been the major providers for the family. In many cases this authority has been given to them as a result of the dominant religious beliefs. If men have difficulties fulfilling the bread-winning role and women increase their capacity to support the family financially, men's authority role is undermined. This sometimes leaves them at a loss in terms of how they should now relate to family members.

In Brown's work in Jamaica she noted that men's "role as economic providers was clear, but if they were not able to fulfill this role, they could find no other place in the family for themselves." (as summarized by Engle 1994, 22)

Family Structure. The structure of a family—who is present, how the household is organized, and expectations of males and females in that setting—all contribute to a definition of how men relate to young children.

In traditional families with an extended family system, in which there are grandmothers, aunts and/or other wives available to help care for young children, the father's role is limited and prescribed. However, as families become more nuclear in composition, caregiving roles traditionally taken on by others may fall on the father. Zeitlin (1993) reported on what happened to some families in Nigeria as they moved from the traditional extended family culture to the modern nuclear family configuration. In essence, the move to urban living and the nuclear family meant that fathers had to change their roles. Some became more involved in the lives of their children; others withdrew. If there had been more support for fathers in the transition, perhaps more of them would have been comfortable in increasing their involvement with their children.

Another family structure that is found in various parts of the world is the incorporation of the young family within the husband's household of origin where the mother-in-law plays a dominant role in determining how the household is run and how children are cared for. In many instances fathers are systematically excluded from providing care for their children, although they may play with children and be a part of the socialization process as the child grows older.

In Botswana there is yet another family structure in place. Anthropologists, Townsend and Garey, studied the fathering patterns in rural Botswana. In one rural setting the person who took on the father role was not always the biological father. The mother's father and/or brother were expected to be the father during the child's early years. They became the 'social fathers' for the child. One explanation for this may be related to the pattern of men's employment. In the area being studied the men migrated to other countries for as long as 10 months a year. Thus they were unlikely to be present during the child's formative years. Another explanation has to do with the marriage process itself. Many children were born before the couple actually married as the marriage negotiations could take as many as ten years, even though the couple was committed to the marriage. Before the marriage the woman lived with her own mother. Thus when a couple married they could have adolescent children. Again, this did not place the biological father in the position of 'fathering' the child. The mother's father or brother, who were present in the household, served as fathers. Before marriage the man's loyalty was to his family of origin. Thus he sent money to support them rather than his wife (to be) and children, who lived in a different household. (as reported on in Engle 1994a, 18)

There are other instances when a man's first loyalty is to his family of origin rather than to the mother of his children. In Nicaragua and parts of the Caribbean the father's loyalty is to his own mother first and then to his wife and family. (Engle 1994a, 23) As Brown notes in her work with Jamaican men, "the man's links and obligations to his mother and sisters were very strong, and perhaps stronger than linkage to his children. Men felt that they could not satisfy anyone because of these multiple demands." (from Engle 1994a, 22). Thus it is important to understand where a man's loyalty lies in evaluating his contribution to the family.

Religious differences. All the major religions of the world define the roles for men and women clearly and separately. Yet within each of these religions there are significant differences in interpretation, presenting us with a continuum in terms of how strictly these definitions are adhered to in modern times. Thus it is not possible to say that "in all Muslim countries the belief is that...", or "in all Catholic countries men are expected to...." Rather it is important to understand how religion interacts with other variables in a given culture to have an impact on the relationship that fathers are likely to have with their children.

For example, Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and in Northern Pakistan there is strict adherence to differentiation of sex roles. In fact, for the most part, women are sequestered in the home and are not seen on the streets. Women are not allowed to interact with males outside of their family. While many would view this as negative in terms of women's rights, it has one potentially very positive outcome: Men have to be involved in their children's lives. Women cannot take the child to visit the doctor. They cannot take the child to school. The father is the interface for the child between the home and world. To play this role the father needs to have an understanding of the child's needs and take appropriate actions to support the child's development. A parent education program in this part of the world would certainly need to focus on providing the father with appropriate child development information and support him in his role as caregiver.

Women's role in facilitating/hindering the father's role. The way in which roles for men and women have been prescribed culturally and over time affects what both men and women see as their responsibilities in terms of caregiving. In many cultures women are seen as the exclusive caregivers in the early months of a child's life. The extent and the timing of the involvement of others (the father, extended family members, community) in the child's life differs across cultures. In seeking to define an expanded or different role for fathers it is necessary to evaluate what that would mean for mothers and others already involved in caring for the child.

For many women, their status within the community is defined by their parenting role. The woman is respected and given identity based on her ability to care for and nurture her children. If program developers seek to relieve women of that responsibility by an expansion of men's roles in the lives of children or through the provision of alternative childcare, it may be quite reasonably blocked by women. An example of this phenomenon occurred in Pakistan. In Chitral those involved in the Women in Development program were working with local women to develop an informal cooperative village-based childcare system that would make it possible for mothers to leave their young children with one of the village women whenever they went to work in the fields. This was seen as very positive by the women, as they would find it easier to walk the long distances back and forth from the fields without having to carry children, and they would not have to constantly monitor what their child was doing while they were working.

The men involved in the planning process (villagers and regional developers alike), anticipating the benefits of donor gifts of a vehicle and a building, pushed to expand and formalize the idea. They proposed that a childcare center be built where the women could drop their children off in the morning and collect them at the end of the day, leaving the children in care 10-12 hours a day. The women, feeling their children were being taken away from them and institutionalized,

were horrified by the idea. They wanted to care for their own children. The informal village-based arrangement they were contemplating allowed them to feel they still had control over and influence in caring for the children, while relieving individual mothers of some of the stress of the task. The men's plan did not really take the needs and perceptions of the women and children into account. As a result, no childcare program was developed.

This example illustrates how critical it is in planning programs to support parenting and provide care for young children to be sensitive to patterns of caring that currently exist. In seeking ways to either alleviate the stresses of women's responsibilities for children and/or to increase the active involvement of fathers in children's lives, it is crucial to pay attention to the expectations, fears, and desires of both men and women.

In their review of the relationship between the mother's attitude and the father's involvement with the child, Engle and Breaux (1994) conclude:

The mother's attitude toward the father's role in childcare can play a major role in his interactions with his children. Women who accept, encourage, and even model behaviors with children may have more involved spouses.... Mothers (are) more influential than fathers in deciding that the husband should take on a nontraditional primary caregiving role. (33)

The Changing Roles of Men and Women

In traditional cultures men's and women's roles were clearly specified. For the most part they were functional, given the geographical and political context within which people lived and the demands on men and women within that setting. But the context is changing rapidly, as are the lives of individuals. What follows is a discussion of some of the changes that are affecting the roles men play in children's lives.

Changes in the men's ability to provide economically. In all parts of the world there is a change in the kinds of work that men do and in their ability to provide financially for their families. With the move away from a rural subsistence economy into urban work situations, the changes in the nature of work, the reliance on other people as 'employers', and an international recession, many men are finding themselves unemployed and unable to support a family. To a considerable degree in most cultures, men's identity and self-esteem are derived from their ability to provide for their families financially. Thus, when they are unable to do so, it has an impact on their relationship with both the mother and the children and as a consequence men's parenting behavior changes, even to the extent of being absent.

A study in Brazil (Barros 1994) looked at the relationship between the number of fathers who lived with their families and the relative poverty of the family. What Barros discovered was that there is a nearly linear relationship between family poverty and fathers living in the house. The poorer the family, the less likely the father is to be living with the mother and child when the child is 12 months old: 15.7% of fathers were not living with their family when the income was less than \$50; 11.8% were not living with the family when the income was between \$151 and \$300; but only 5.2% were not living with the family when the income was over \$500.

A similar finding came from a study in Jamaica. There they identified two dimensions of the relationship between men's living with their partners and children and their ability to provide income for the family. First, fathers were more likely to stay if they could provide income, and second, women were more willing to allow the man to stay if he could provide. (Brown et al. 1993)

A related study in Chile looked at the relative contributions that fathers made to the family, based on their relationship with the mother and their ability to provide support. (Buvinic et al. 1992). The study found that a Chilean father was 17 times more likely to contribute to his child's maintenance if he and the mother were married. Further, if he was working he was five times more likely to provide financial support than if he were unemployed (as cited in Engle and Breaux 1994, 31) Those fathers who felt they could make a significant contribution to the family in financial terms were more present and confident about their role within the family.

When men can not find work in their community they are forced to migrate to other places. Sometimes fathers commute to the city while their families remain in the rural area. Fathers are then only available on weekends or during holidays. However, the search for work may involve moving to another country, as for example the men from Bangladesh and Indonesia who seek work on the plantations in Malaysia, the Indians and Pakistanis who work in Saudi Arabia, the men from Botswana who migrate to work in the mines in South Africa, and the Turkish guestworkers in Germany. When the only work that can be found is at a distance, fathers can not be an integral part of their children's lives.

Changes in women's ability to provide economically. Women's participation in the workplace has also changed. Rather than decreasing, as men's employment has, women's employment has increased. The data cited on page 5 regarding the percentage of household income generated by women is one indication of women's increasing ability to contribute to the family income. With this comes an increase in women's status within the family and in their power to make decisions which affect the family.

However, even with women earning more, it is still not enough. They are generally employed in low-income jobs that offer little security and few benefits. And they still earn less money per hour, so they have to work a greater number of hours to generate an equivalent level of income. Ironically, even though women are earning less than men, they contribute a higher percentage of their income to the family than do fathers. Increasing their earnings would have a significantly greater impact on children than increasing the father's earnings by an equivalent amount, since women donate a greater percentage of their income to promote children's well-being. This conclusion comes from a study by Engle (1994b) who looked at the relationship between the contributions that both men and women made to family income in Guatemala and Nicaragua, and the impact on children's nutrition.

In the Guatemalan study, Engle found that there was a relationship between fathers' contribution to family income and children's nutritional status. However, it was not the relative amount a man contributed (for example, \$10 dollars vs. \$50 dollars) that determined the quality of children's nutritional status, but rather the percentage of the father's income that was contributed to the

family. In looking at the relative contribution of the mother's and father's income, Engle calculated that "to increase the child's height for age by half a standard deviation...it would be necessary to increase the salary of the mother by \$11.40 per person per month. To achieve a similar change by manipulating the father's income, one would have to increase his salary by \$166.00," (Engle 1994b, 22) given the percentage of mother and father income allocated to children.

The increase in income for women creates changes for the family, but does not necessarily mean that women are able to provide financially all that the family needs. In many cases there is a complex inter-relationship between men's contributions, women's contributions, the survival demands placed on both parents and the family functioning that results from these interacting factors. While it is difficult to sort out the shifting economic opportunities for both men and women, it does appear that a development strategy that encourages an increase in the father's commitment to his children and the percentage of his income he contributes to the family would be fruitful.

Society's changing expectations. Another dimension of the focus on men in the lives of children is the fact that there are changing societal expectations in terms of the ways and extent to which men should be involved in the lives of their children. There are several factors shifting expectations of men. As mentioned above, the changing economic circumstances and moves to more urban settings have changed family structures, putting pressure on parents to rethink their roles and leaving men and women searching for models of how to behave in relation to children. As the South (the Majority World) has increased contact with the North, particularly through the mass media, expectations of men are often influenced by the images of fathering perpetuated by television, radio, and movies. Even in remote corners of the world, television and radio programs are providing models of men who are involved in their children's lives and upbringing.

Some family intervention programs have successfully taken advantage of this trend. For example, in a breastfeeding project in Jordan, fathers, sons and mothers-in-law were chosen as messengers.

Because breastfeeding is sometimes regarded as an "unusual" practice in Jordan, one breastfeeding intervention used a series of television spots which focused on the family and the cultural legitimacy of breastfeeding. Messages to "eat better" emphasized the role played by fathers and elder sons in encouraging the mother to take care of herself. The mother-in-law was seen advising the young mother how to increase her breastmilk and reminding her to feed the baby on demand. Finally, quotes from the Koran recommending breastfeeding were used to lend religious legitimacy. (USAID 1993)

The combination of these messengers (and the use of television in presenting newly reinforced involvement by men) provided a support for breastfeeding practices within the family structure in Jordan that was much stronger than information solely targeted to the mother.

In many parts of the world a return to fundamentalist religions is affecting how fathers view their roles. As religious leaders preach that parents are responsible for the moral health of their children, men are increasingly becoming interested in affecting their children's upbringing in

more than a custodial way. As the above example illustrates, this can be supported by programs that promote positive parenting practices among men.

Men's desire to change their role. Over the past 20 years or so, there has been a shift on the part of men in North countries toward greater recognition of their influence on the development of their children. While the women's movement has certainly given an impetus to this, an added piece is that many men have realized that they are missing out on an important experience by not being involved in the day-to-day lives of their children. They are seeking ways to balance family and work. They are also beginning to redefine fathering and look for social support in taking fathering more seriously. Fledgling support groups have sprung up, numerous T.V. shows have portrayed men who find themselves in the role of single parents or as active parents within nontraditional households, and the topic has made the rounds of talk shows, magazine articles, and nonfiction bestsellers.

In many North (and South) countries men receive mixed messages about their rights and duties as fathers. Men who care about children are portrayed as everything from heroes to emasculated pushovers. They are pressured by media messages to get involved in their children's lives, and then in some settings viewed suspiciously by other parents if they do. In most cases they have little opportunity to take parental leave from work when their children are in need, and their involvement is dependant on the cooperation of the children's mother, who may or may not be prepared to actually allow the father into the caregiving and nurturing process. As the data from the High/Scope I.E.A. study (Olmsted and Weikart 1994) demonstrate, despite the widespread rhetoric in support of fathering, the reality is that most fathers still spend less than an hour a day alone with their young children, which is a small percentage of the time their child receives care.

Changes in families and their living situations are happening rapidly. We cannot predict how these changes will affect families and the care they provide for young children. This makes it even more important for programs that strive to support young children and their families to take the time to examine the circumstances in which women and men are attempting (or failing) to parent their children. It is crucial to identify within each context: 1) the presence of fathers and other men in young children's lives; 2) men's expectations of themselves in relation to their children and the children's mothers; 3) mothers' and the community's expectations of men; 4) the ways men are responding to these expectations, both productively and destructively; and 5) the supports for and impediments to men's involvement in the lives of their children.

Beyond Being a Father

While the role that men play in relation to their own children is critical in the lives of individual children, the roles men play in the world beyond their family is likely to have an impact on a greater number of children. In today's world men are in key decision-making positions—within religious groups, within the community, within the health and social services that support family life, within educational institutions that socialize children, and within the political parties that rule our nations. Thus if we are truly serious about looking at the ways to make a difference in

children's lives we need to focus considerable attention on addressing and raising the awareness of men in their professional capacities.

Men as teachers. In many traditional cultures men played a significant role in the lives of children, particularly boys, as the children got older. The men were responsible for socialization tasks that would assure continuation of the culture. Boys served as apprentices to men in learning how to herd animals, hunt and/or follow the family craft within the village. Men were also responsible for socializing children into appropriate social roles, teaching them to respect their elders and the social mores of the culture. Thus men played a significant role in assuring that the child became a part of and was able to perpetuate the culture. These patterns continue in some cultures but in most there has been a marked change.

With the introduction of modernity, formal schools, contact with the world beyond the village, and the availability of mass media, children's ideas about what adults should do and be now come from a variety of sources. These sources provide information and knowledge that fathers do not have. Thus the father is no longer seen as the primary source for learning.

Some men carry on the historical role of teacher by becoming teachers within the structure of the formal educational system. However, while we see many men involved in teaching at the higher levels of education, few men are involved in teaching the youngest children. In fact, in the higher grades of the educational system (and at University) the teachers are mostly men. Whereas, the younger the children being taught, the more likely it is that the teachers are women. Historically in many cultures men have been primary school teachers, but in many places that is changing and teaching at this level is becoming more a woman's province. In some cultures this is appropriate. In the Northern Areas of Pakistan referred to earlier, where women are not 'visible', girls would not be allowed to go to primary school if the teachers were men. However, in most parts of the world this gender stratification of teaching roles has more to do with the status of teaching young children than with social taboos. The younger the age of the children being taught the less status (and pay) associated with the job.

An examination of some of the issues faced by men who wish to work with young children was undertaken in the UK. The study resulted in a publication, *What's He Doing at the Family Centre?: The Dilemmas of Men who Care for Children*. In essence the study indicates that there are psychological, social and economic, rather than biological, reasons for the lack of men's involvement in the lives of young children. For example, men teaching young children report that they face prejudice from other teachers and the children's parents; that the pay for their job is considerably lower than they could get in other types of work; and that they frequently feel isolated as the "token" man within a center-based program. The study discusses many of the issues raised by men and women working in childcare centers that affect men's recruitment and participation as staff members, and recommends a series of policy changes that would allow and encourage men to become more actively involved in caring for young children outside the home.

Men as healers. One of the most significant ways that men affect the well-being of young children is through the medical system. Traditionally and in modern times men have chosen to become healers. And while the healing profession is becoming more open to women, the upper

echelons of policymakers and the majority of physicians are still predominantly men. Through the years the publications of prominent male doctors have guided the upbringing of millions of children in the North, and have also influenced parenting styles in South countries as well. The influence of such physicians as Dr. Benjamin Spock and Dr. T. Barry Brazleton has been felt around the world.

In addition it has been predominantly men who have developed the policies of the major donor agencies in the field of health—WHO and UNICEF are primary among these. These leaders have developed policies and programs, published literature, made funding decisions and set priorities which have impacted children worldwide. Yet the health field still has not embraced or promoted the basic tenets of early childhood development, nor does it reflect awareness of the whole range of young children's developmental needs. Unfortunately many health-related programs for young children do not address their cognitive, social or emotional needs, and thus are of limited effectiveness. If medical decision-makers were more aware of the benefits of integrated programming that supports the young child and the family, they could use their positions of power and influence to greatly improve the well-being of young children.

Health providers are a tremendous resource. Programs which seek to support young children and their families could greatly benefit by reaching out more to the health profession and involving them in the development and provision of early childhood programs.

Men as Community leaders. Another role predominantly held by men is that of community leader—whether that be the mayor, the town council, the chief. These men dictate policy within the community and their actions directly affect the lives of children. Educating community leaders about the value and importance of the early years can yield benefits. An example of this comes from India. SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) in India is an organization that works with women in the informal work sector—women who are ragpickers, *bidi* rollers, street sweepers, vegetable sellers, etc. SEWA helps these women to organize and gain recognition for their work. One of the groups of women that SEWA has helped support are workers in the tobacco industry. These women are involved in all aspects of tobacco production—they plant the tobacco, care for it as it grows, harvest and then process the leaves. By law, the people (mostly men) who operate the tobacco factories are mandated to provide childcare for the young children of their employees. However, they have not adhered to this requirement.

SEWA, funded by the Aga Khan Foundation, decided to work with the tobacco owners to establish childcare centers. However, they found that approaching the owners directly was largely unsuccessful. As an alternative strategy, the SEWA team met with the mayor in each of the towns where there was a factory. They discussed the difficulties faced by the women and the needs of the young children. Surprisingly the mayors were sympathetic. In several of the towns there were buildings not currently occupied that were given to the childcare program. Other villages donated equipment and supplies. The contributions of the villages provided a starting point for the implementation of childcare centers. Seeing the contributions made by the local community, some of the factory owners also began to contribute to the centers, through providing the salary for the teacher and/or giving food for the children. Because they were originally shut out by the factory owners, SEWA was forced to develop a creative and effective

alternative, which was to work with the political leadership in the town. In the long-term this allowed for the development of a stronger program. Now the community at large has a greater understanding of the needs of the women and children and has made a public commitment to providing them with appropriate supports.

Men as religious leaders. In almost all religions the leadership is provided by men. They interpret the documents which support the religion; they provide the teachings that are meant to guide people's lives; they determine the policies that affect families, particularly women and children; they control resources that could be directed toward providing appropriate supports. Thus they are important allies in developing programs.

There have been several success stories, in which a church hierarchy, or individual religious leaders have taken a positive leadership role in (or have been educated by program providers into) providing necessary resources and support.

For example, within Latin America, the Latin American Council of Bishops (CELAM) has produced a radio theater series to assist in the parental education work being carried out by various "Child Pastorates" throughout the Latin American Region. The series is called "Lo Mejor de Nosotros" (Our best), and includes a program particularly aimed at fathers, titled "Papi, te necesito" (Papa, I need you). The program aims to develop the idea that children are not only the responsibility of women. It promotes reflection about the false images of fathering that predominate and promotes thinking about what it means to be a good father, as well as promoting better dialogue between mothers and fathers for the good of the children.⁵

A different type of clerical involvement comes from the coast of Kenya, populated predominantly by Muslims. In 1986, a preschool program integrating secular with religious training was developed as the result of discussion among religious leaders in the area. They were concerned because Muslim children were neither gaining entrance to primary schools nor doing well if they were able to find places. One of the reasons for this was that the children's religious education began at age 3 and continued until age 9. Children could then enter the secular schools. However, since they were over-age for primary grade 1, and places were scarce, few Muslim children gained entrance into primary school. The leaders sought a solution.

It was proposed that a preschool program be developed that would integrate the Islamic principles important for children in the preschool-aged group with secular experiences that provide them with the appropriate basic cognitive skills. Upon completing this preschool, children would have the basics of their Islamic education and yet still be able to apply for entrance into primary school. The project was funded by the Aga Khan Foundation, and gained the support of the Kenyan Institute of Education (KIE). It was successfully implemented, and given the high quality of their preschool experience, large numbers of children are now accepted into primary schools and have done well. Their religious education continues in the afternoon.

This project is about reconciling cultural and religious differences; it is about changing attitudes toward education among Muslims; it is about encouraging learning.

Key figures in getting this program conceptualized, implemented and accepted were the Mwalims: the Islamic teachers responsible for children's religious education and for the activities associated with the Mosque. The Mwalims had to be strong supporters of the program in order for it to succeed. Thus considerable effort was devoted by program developers to educating the Mwalims about the value of the program and the importance of their role in it. Several Mwalims were very responsive, and in some cases individual Mwalims were able to influence their more cautious colleagues in embracing the program. Watching the activities undertaken during the day, seeing the teaching style of the teachers working with the preschoolers, and being amazed by children's responsiveness, some of the Mwalims have requested training in these less punitive teaching methods.

Today the Mwalims are some of the strongest advocates of the program. They are the ones who present the program to their peers. They take great pride in the preschools that operate in their Madrassahs and in some instances the Madrassah preschools have become the centerpiece of community development efforts.

Men as policymakers. Beyond the confines of the community there are men who have key roles in the development of national policy. Men are the predominant framers of policy. While their decisions are influenced by their own experiences, the political climate, the extent to which they are beholden to their supporters, and the strategies they think will keep them in power, knowledge also helps.

The Education for All Initiative focused the world's attention on the importance of basic education. Policymakers from countries throughout the world came together to explore what support for basic education would mean in their countries. As a part of the process they had their understanding of the importance of the early years to children's later growth and development expanded. Given the availability of funds to support basic education being allocated by the major donors, countries began to examine their own education policies. UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, and The World Bank have been working in a number of countries to promote national commitment to early childhood programs. A part of the process has been the education of policymakers.

Awareness of the needs of young children can inform policy, or can be the impetus for ministry-based programming. An example of the latter comes from Colombia, where the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), a government agency, has set in motion a fathering project called "Paternal". This program aims to educate men to recognize their responsibility for the development of their children. The project uses a variety of teaching techniques: a series of pamphlets about fathering and values, short television spots, distribution of children's books

about fathering to the national childcare centers, and training of community educators about fathering. Attention is paid to fathering during pregnancy, during birth and in the rearing and education of children. The basic messages in all of the materials are that all fathers can enjoy their children by being fathers who are loving, provide help and are present. The final goal is to construct a new kind of family in which the man becomes part of the everyday life of the family, develops emotional maturity in his relations with his children and his wife, and becomes an engaged father, husband and friend.⁶

An example of how specific attention to and education about the needs of young children can inform policy comes from Malaysia, a country rich in natural, human and financial resources. Over the years divisions of the government in Malaysia have devoted considerable resources to a variety of early childhood programs, in the form of preschools and childcare programs. These have been developed and implemented by various ministries. However, because there are various stakeholders in Early Childhood Development, it has been difficult for the government to coordinate their efforts and arrive at a unified policy for young children. In discussions with the government about the future of early childhood programs in the country, UNICEF agreed to fund a study which would provide the government with recommendations regarding future policy and programming.

A process was put into place that brought together those individuals already involved in early childhood provision and other stakeholders in the government with interest in young children. Through a series of workshops and focused studies, this group of policymakers learned more about the importance of the early years. While many of the participants representing health, rural development interests, education, labor, child welfare and other ministries had experience with their particular area of expertise or concern, they had not really had the chance to sit down with others and develop a holistic integrated vision of young children's lives, and policies about how to address the whole range of a family's needs.

The experience resulted in a commitment by the group of policymakers, predominantly men, to provide government support to young children and the development of an early childhood policy by the government of Malaysia.

The decision-makers in young children's lives, whether they be men or women, need an awareness of how to best support young children's development. They need to be integrated into any ongoing programming efforts if these programs are to take root and succeed. While the day-to-day interactions of mothers with their children are of crucial importance in supporting young children's growth, the interactions with fathers—potentially a positive and rich source of parenting—are also important. And since the mothers and children and fathers do not live in a vacuum, the other family members, community decision-makers, health and other service providers and policymakers all need to come to see the ways that their decisions, and their ignorance, affect the well-being of young children and their families.

Thus, as we seek to continue to raise awareness about the importance of the early years and as we seek additional resources that can be devoted to providing appropriate support to families,

strategies need to be developed that focus on including more men in the process, at all levels. Some possible strategies are identified below.

Strategies

Men are not likely to deepen their understanding and involvement with their children or in the field of Early Childhood Care and Development on their own. In fact, in many parts of the world, awareness is needed at a basic level: men (indeed all adults) need to see that what they do and what they provide greatly affects their children. Those of us already working with children need to develop deliberate strategies to get men more involved. Strategies can be identified at several levels.

■ WORK WITH MEN IN DIFFERENT POSITIONS OF POWER TO EXPAND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF THE EARLY YEARS

It is important not only to provide them with appropriate information, but also to help them identify ways that they personally, in their professional capacity, can have a positive impact on the lives of children.

■ WORK WITH MEN DIRECTLY IN RELATION TO PARENTING

This strategy is directed more to men as fathers. Many men would get more involved in the lives of their children if they felt more comfortable doing so. Three of the dimensions of comfort are having appropriate knowledge, understanding how that knowledge applies to them personally, and having a supportive context in which to try on new behaviors.

■ PROVIDE MEN WITH CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND PARENTING INFORMATION

Currently many of the parenting programs work only with mothers. There are good reasons for this: women are easier to reach; they are the primary caregivers; they are more motivated to learn; they receive social support for their role as caregivers. They do not risk being teased by their peers for their interest in becoming involved with their children. Nonetheless, if fathers are to become a greater part of children's lives then program planners need to work harder to get them involved. One project that is attempting to be more inclusive of fathers is sponsored by the Middle East and North African (MENA) office of UNICEF. There they are developing a series of videotapes that focus on children's development during the first three years of life. The abilities of infants and young children are presented through cartoons. Also included in the scripts are the ways in which adults—men and women—can interact with young children to support their growth and development. The videos demystify the child development process, so that women and men can become more comfortable parenting young children.⁷

■ PROVIDE APPROPRIATE ROLE MODELS

Besides lacking knowledge, men tend to lack experience with young children. In some cultures they have little or no contact with the child during the early months. In the Lao experience described on page 7, men would begin to provide some help by carrying the child, but that did not happen until the third or fourth month of the child's life. Before that time only women

interacted with the child. If men do not see other men interacting with children and they had no experiences with young children during their youth and adolescence, then the idea of handling an infant or providing care to a toddler may never have crossed their minds. However, if they see other men interacting with young children they may begin to feel it is alright for them to do so as well. One of the accomplishments of the UNICEF videos is to provide models of appropriate ways men can interact with their young child.

■ PROVIDE SUPPORT TO MEN IN THEIR FATHERING ROLE

Even if men have more information about children's growth and development, and even if they see other men interacting with children, they may not feel comfortable doing it themselves—it is not manly or macho. As roles are changing everyone (men and women) is left with uncertainties about what is appropriate behavior in relation to children. It can be very threatening to address some of these fears in cross-sex groups. One way for men to explore their feelings, fears and concerns about parenting is to create men-only discussion groups. These groups provide men with the psychological and physical space they need to talk about their role as fathers. An example of such a group comes from the Jamaica experience, described in the CN 16 article, *Gender Relations and Fathering*.

A good starting place in supporting men is to build on parenting behaviors that are already acceptable for men in a particular culture. For example, in most cultures fathers may play with small children in a "roughhouse" way. Other types of play could be added to their repertoire. In cultures where men are storytellers for children this behavior can be built upon at earlier ages than it is usually introduced.

■ PROVIDE MEN WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO CARE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Armed with knowledge, appropriate role models, and the psychological support they need to take risks, men need opportunities to care for and interact with children. Here women and the society as a whole have a role to play. First, women (mothers and mothers-in-law) need to see a value in allowing men into their domain. In many instances women have no choice; they need help. In other cases women need to be supported in redefining their power and influence if they are to consciously create room for the father to take care of the child on his own.

Men also need opportunities to interact with children in a variety of contexts—in childcare centers, in pre-and primary schools. While men are willing to work in primary schools, (though generally not with the lower grades), it is extremely rare to find them working with children under the age of 6. As noted in the study undertaken by the National Children's Home in the UK, the conditions of work in childcare centers offer people working in them neither status nor appropriate pay. These poor conditions are a reflection of the society's lack of understanding of the importance of the early years. If we really valued children and really believed that the early experiences are critical in terms of establishing the basis for adult development, then we would invest highly in finding the very best people possible (women and men) to work with young children. Those working with infants and young children would have the status, training, and salaries that we now allocate to those teaching at the university level. Men cannot be blamed for not wanting to work with children. It is seen as "women's work": work that any woman can do;

work that requires no training; work that is not valued highly enough to receive even minimal pay.

In the Majority world fathers are sometimes involved in the creation of community-based preschools. However, the role that fathers generally play in these preschools is to help construct the building or make equipment and toys. They are seldom directly involved with children. Few men become preschool teachers, and fewer still choose preschool teaching as a career choice.

An instructive counter-example of men getting directly involved in a preschool comes from Peru. There in the Altiplano, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, is a preschool project where men have chosen to become preschool teachers. As a part of a larger community development effort, preschools were created to serve as an entry point into the community leadership. The community believed so strongly in the value of the preschool that they vested the teacher role with status. Not surprisingly, men from the village elected to be trained to take on this important role. While it is admirable that the community was willing to vest status in preschool teaching, this example brings up many of the prickly issues in striving to reach out and "recruit" men to work with young children. All preschool teachers—women and men—should receive higher status. Unfortunately in many communities, once a job has been elevated in pay or status, it is taken on and sometimes taken over by men. Thus it is important in providing men with access to children, that it not be done in a way that disempowers or categorically displaces women who have been caring for and educating young children for years.

■ CHANGE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

If it were possible to provide men with a better understanding of child development, to provide them with experiences with young children so that they could gain confidence in their skills and abilities to meet the needs of children, and if work conditions were improved for those caring for children, an even greater barrier to making men a more integral part of children's lives would still exist. That has to do with the economic environment. As long as men cannot find jobs that make them feel worthy and as long as men have to migrate thousands of miles away from home, it will be difficult for them to be an integral part of their children's lives. The economic environment affects all people who care for young children: mothers, teachers, fathers, childminders. Thus at a basic level, support for young children must come from the community, in terms of financial opportunities for both men and women, supports for all parents on the part of employers, and an infrastructure that allows families to adequately provide for their young children's healthy development.

Where Do We Begin?

To increase and improve the involvement of men in the lives of children does not require the influx of enormous financial resources; it requires a rethinking of current policy development and programming efforts. It requires being more conscious of how to include men in early childhood programs—men as policymakers, community and religious leaders, and men as fathers. It also requires a recognition that men and women generally have different sets of experiences, needs, histories, pressures and attitudes.

Engle (1994a) reports that at the June 1994 Workshop hosted by UNICEF and the Population Council (cited on page 2), the participants developed a set of questions that could be included in the current Situation Analysis process that UNICEF undertakes before beginning programs for young children and their families. The questions are designed to help program developers gain an understanding of men's current role in relation to children. A paraphrasing of the recommendations made at the workshop (Engle 1994a, 28-29) follows:

- What is the family structure? What are the living arrangements and what are the relationships between males and females in the household?
- Often assumptions about male and female roles are incorrect. This question can help define the local reality and give program planners a place to begin.
- What are the patterns of resource allocation within the family (e.g., what is allocated to adults versus children, males versus females) and who controls the allocation? Who earns the income? Who distributes it?
- As noted, there is some evidence to suggest that women are more likely to use resources for children than men, and in some areas, boys receive different treatment from girls. Answers to questions of resource allocation can provide information on where to target an intervention.
- What are typical tasks performed by males and females within the various age groups? Is there equity in these assignments? How much time is spent in each kind of task?
- This information can be used to help understand the constraints to male or female involvement in community activities or use of services.
- What is the constitutional and legal framework supporting gender equity? This question includes credit, inheritance, ownership, maintenance, child affiliation, marriage and divorce laws, custody laws, domestic violence, and the right for citizenship to be transferred by the mother as well as the father.
- The legal structure cannot create change, but an inadequate legal structure can impede change. An understanding of the legal framework would help identify areas that need to be changed to provide better support to families.
- How have the concepts of masculinity and femininity been defined? Are they limited or flexible? What are the male/female roles regarding sexuality and its control? What are the patterns of socialization which lead to these concepts?
- Concepts of masculinity and femininity may limit acceptable behavior, particularly concerning fathering roles that involve nurturing, and male responsibility regarding sexuality. By understanding current behaviors it is possible to build on and expand them to increase parental involvement in supporting the child's development.
- What is the role of the father? Is there a father substitute at any period?
- The role of the father may be different than it appears to be from the outside, and there may be several people involved in 'fathering'. Again, interventions should build on existing strengths.

- Identify particular problems associated with the father role such as violence within the family or lack of contribution, and look for positive characteristics of the traditional male role. Also, identify examples of 'positive deviance', or men who have been successful at the fathering role.
- We should be aware of potential problems, and at the same time, we must find the value of existing patterns. By identifying what contributes to positive deviance it is possible to support and introduce elements into the culture that will shift this 'deviance' to become the norm.
- What are the barriers to change toward a more gender-balanced family structure, toward a "new" father? Would this change be beneficial, or are the barriers to change protecting important social values and valences?
- Although we seem to be assuming that we all should be moving toward the model of the 'new father' and more equal gender roles, this move may not be appropriate in all cases, and may have disadvantages for some children. Therefore the barriers should be examined carefully, particularly from the perspective of the potential beneficiaries.

In sum, men represent approximately half of the population of the world. At the present time men in both their professional and personal capacities are seldom aware of the importance of the early years in terms of children's later development. Neither are they aware of their impact on the lives of children, nor of the joy they can receive from being a significant part of a child's life. All of us working with and caring for children need to be open to and promote greater participation by men in early childhood activities. Improved involvement of men in children's lives will bring much needed resources—emotional and financial—to the support of children's growth and development.

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Endnotes

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² Hosted by the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna and the European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women.

³ Many of these studies are presented and reviewed in the works of Engle and Breaux, 1994, and Engle, 1994a. These are good resources for gaining an overview of the research on men as fathers carried out to date. Another important reference is Lamb, 1987.

⁴ This study is referred to as the I.E.A. study, and is sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. The I.E.A. is a nonprofit group involving more than 60 countries, which has been doing cross-national education studies for 30 years. In this study, the researchers surveyed families of 4-year-olds in Belgium, China, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, Thailand, and the United States.

⁵ Information about the radio theater series can be obtained from: Leonidas Ortiz Lozada, CELAM, Departamento de Pastoral Social, Carrera 5, #118-31, B Bogota, D.E. Colombia, or from Camila Encinales, UNICEF, Carrera 13, #75-74, Bogota, D.E., Colombia.

⁶ Information about the Paternar Program can be obtained from: Eduardo Contreras, Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, Subdireccion de Atencion Integral a la Familia, Avenida 68, No 64-01, Bogota, D.E., Colombia

⁷ Information about this set of videotapes can be obtained from Cassie Landers, UNICEF (DH-40), Three United Nations Plaza, New York, New York, 10017. Tel: (212)702-7233. Fax: (212)702-7149.

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GENDER RELATIONS AND CONFLICTS IN FATHERING

Coordinators' Notebook No. 16, 1995

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Pregnancy, birth and mothering are turning points in women's lives; for many young women with little education and few opportunities, they are the only path to adulthood. Lone mothers have to grow up fast, and women after a divorce often discover in themselves unexpected strengths. But where are the points of growth for the equivalent young men? If they have no real, continuing connection with the babies they have fathered, if they cannot make the transition from teenager to worker, let alone to provider, where is the growth into adulthood and maturity to come from?

Patricia Hewitt, "In Search of the Modern Father." *The Independent* (London) May 10, 1993

In a regional survey in 1987, it was determined that despite burgeoning recognition an support for organized child care programmes around the Caribbean, the vast majority (on average 85%) of children below the age of four remained at home, in the care of parents or other family caregivers (CCDC, 1988).¹ The questions was: How do we best support healthy child development among home-based caregivers? From the survey it appeared that parenting education efforts in the region seemed primarily directed toward women and teenage girls.

Further, a search of materials on the Caribbean family produced a wealth of literature on the Caribbean women and mother, but Caribbean studies on men and the family proved almost non-existent. Instead, stereotypes about men's attitudes and behaviors in relation to their families, mostly negative, have substituted for informed data.

CCDC was not comfortable addressing regional parenting education needs with only stereotypes of about 50% of Caribbean parents. Thus we established a research project to study Caribbean men in relation to their mating and family life patterns. Specifically the research was designed:

- to provide a socio-historical perspective of the roles men in the Caribbean have played within and on behalf of the family;
- to survey and describe the current attitudes and behaviors of a cross section of men in Jamaica;
- to use a participatory research design to generate data and also use local analysis and problem-solving related to the topics of study;
- to make research finding available in formats that would serve not only professional research/teaching interests but also the concerns of public educators, family life workers, gender studies groups, etc.;
- to design formats and materials to be used in conducting similar investigations in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries that could provide data to complement the Jamaican study.

Methods

There were two distinct paths used to gather data:

1. A survey questionnaire was administered to a total of 700 men from four different communities (two urban and two rural). All respondents were low-income, working class Jamaican men. A total of 110 questions probed a range of issues related to men's attitudes and behaviors about family life and childrearing.

2. The same issues—sometimes expanded—were also explored in a series of discussion groups with men and women in the same or adjoining communities as those surveyed. A male-female facilitation team guided these groups through participatory activities designed to evoke the same themes covered in the survey. The resulting discussions were recorded and findings compared to the harder data obtained in the survey.

In general, the methods were complementary and mutually reinforcing. This brief report will draw on findings from both approaches and will look particularly at some of the aspects of the man/woman relations which affect the lives of fathers and their children.

Man and his Families

It was soon apparent that as investigators we needed to be concerned with “Man and his Families” if we were to fully describe the man's contributions to the family. This meant we had to begin with a man's family of origin, in which obligations and expectations of a son are formed and often remain strong throughout the male's lifetime. We then had to examine how the common multiple-union pattern of men tends to add on more complex obligations and expectations as the man gets older.

In other words, a man's family is defined differently at different points in his life. There are familia responsibilities to parents (especially the mother), to his siblings and their children, to his baby mother(s) (women who bear his children), to his outside children (children he is not living with from earlier unions), and to children with whom he may now reside with a common-law or married wife.

Traditionally, Jamaican culture has been clear that a man's primary obligation to his family(ies), his role as a family man and father, is that of providing for the family. The study confirmed that in all the communities sampled the primary expectation, by both men and women, was that a good father should maintain the family financially (average 57% of all respondents). While in two of the communities more than a quarter of the respondents also thought that it was important for a father to “create a good family life” and “set an example”, in the other communities and on all other dimensions no more than 10% of the sample thought that fathers should “guide and educate”, “spend time and effort”, provide “respect and positive interaction” or “provide discipline.” Thus there are very low expectations in terms of father playing an active role in raising the children.

In terms of the good mother, in the two rural communities her primary responsibility was seen as “care of children and home” (60% of the respondents), with “setting an example” coming second. (16%). In terms of other characteristics—“showing love”, “showing respect” “guide and counsel”, “economic support”, “educate children”, “communicate with/ marry father” and “discipline children”—less than 10% of the sample saw these as characteristics of good mothers. In the two urban communities, however, the pattern was quite different. Here “setting an example” was the most important (27%), with “economic support”(22%), “care of children and home”(19%), and “showing love”(19%) having nearly equal weight.

Defining Family Roles

The study showed that there are widespread common beliefs about the components of a father's role and a mother's role, and about the elements of responsibility required to be a good mother and a good father. But the study also documented the widespread confusion and contradictions men and women experience as they try to live out these expectations in a socio-economic climate which makes fulfilling them very nearly impossible. High unemployment and under-employment, migration to earn, women's increasing entrance into the formal labor market (away from home),

the erosion of the extended-family's resources to assist with child care, all present barriers for men and women as they attempt to fill their understood roles.

The findings from the study underscored the link between economic stability and family stability. For example, in the most stable community sampled where there was the highest levels of post-primary education and more white-collar employment, men were more likely to be in a marriage or common-law union after age 30 and they had somewhat fewer children outside the present family than their peers in the other communities.

A man is considered the "head" of the family when he provides economic support and does not "give up his responsibility" in terms of the family. The following fairly typical discussion took place during one of the groups.

A chorus of Women: Man is not necessarily the head of the house.

Woman: If a man is living in the house he must be head.

Woman: The man cannot be seen as head of the house all the time. In ancient time, men used to be the sole breadwinners, but not again [now]. Men nowadays have a different view of things; they either leave the house when responsibility is too great, or even when they stay they just refuse to perform the breadwinning role. So the woman has to do it for the sake of the children.

Man: Not all men are like that.

Man: That is not a man, only a gender man, a male. "Man" is different from male. Five and ten-year-olds are males. But then he turns man, he is supposed to act as man. When things get rough he does not give up his responsibility.

Woman: Jamaica then is lacking in "men!" (supported by other women present.)

So what does a man do when he cannot provide sufficiently and regularly to satisfy the family's basic needs?

A Jamaican Man's Choices

So what are the working class Jamaican man's choices if he is to be a man?

1. He can define himself as progenitor. He can have many children to define his manhood. The study indicated that "getting", "having" and "fathering" children have powerful meaning for men. There was extensive discussion of rituals to prove paternity and the powerful two-edged sword of the "jacket."²

2. His manhood can be defined by the number of women he has acquired. Because progeny usually result from and accompany these acquisitions, this strategy can become self-defeating, as the inability to support these new family additions often erodes the satisfactions of attainment. The discussion groups especially brought out the pain, distrust and anger between women and men in relation to disappointments, infidelity, jealousies, outside relationships, the distractions of peers, and the resulting vulnerability of the family unit.
3. Manhood can mean *donship*—a man can use images of power and influence, often through criminality, violence toward women and to other men, misuses of position and patronage, etc., to model male strength. Although men in the study did not generally condone hitting women, 1/3 to 2/3 of the sample admitted having done so. Many men, and some women, noted that "women often deserved it".
4. A man can migrate in search of means for responsible fathering, which may result in barrels³ and money orders sent back to support the family. There are high costs to the spouse and children in other than material terms. Many participants spoke of the pain of childhood separation from a parent for long periods and its perceived negative impact on their own development.
5. He can define his manhood to include nurturing and other domestic tasks, sharing caring and provision tasks with his partner and participating more actively in the day-to-day life of his child(ren). He can include self-enhancing community roles in his definition of manhood; the street drawings and community gardens created by otherwise idle youth come to mind, as well as the creation of support groups such as Fathers, Incorporated (see inset). Thus he can choose to create new roles to define manliness.

Fathers Inc.

Fathers, Incorporated began in 1991 in Jamaica. It was the outgrowth of the Caribbean Child Development Centre's (CCDC) first parenting symposium, held in that same year. One workshop was held for fathers only and 17 men attended. Their common denominator was a sense that women stereotype them unfairly as irresponsible fathers. Under the leadership of facilitator Dr. Barry Chevannes, the group evolved, and a core group of approximately ten men began meeting weekly, calling themselves *Fathers Only*.

A year later when CCDC held a second parenting symposium, this time for men only, the *Fathers Only* group assisted during the day of workshops. As the culminating activity of that day, they officially launched their group and began a recruitment drive. On this occasion they officially changed the group's name to *Fathers, Incorporated*.

The group has become involved in a range of activities—from providing volunteer work in children's residences to sponsoring a workshop on *Violence, Self and the Young Male* held in Jamaica in August, 1993. Another activity has been to form teams to spread messages about

responsible fathering more widely throughout Kingston communities. At present, most of the members (numbering about 70) are from Kingston.

While there was considerable public attention focused on the group when it first began, the men involved resisted being caught up in the publicity. The group worked over time to define itself and develop a sense of direction.

UNICEF was a major funder for the first two years of the group's operation. At this point the group lacks a full-time organizer, and suffers from a lack of funding. All the work is being done on a volunteer basis, and for most members earning a living has to take priority over *Fathers, Inc.* programs. Thus *Fathers, Inc.* has begun to lose some of its initial momentum. In response the group has decided to seek funding to pay a professional staff member. They believe this will help solidify the group and provide it with some stability, Says Chevannes, "We're still fledgling, but we have the potential to mushroom into something big."

For more information on *Fathers, Inc.* contact: Dr. Barry Chevannes, Fathers Inc., Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica.

The men who have opted for the first four choices have generally informed the popular stereotypes of the irresponsible Caribbean father, seen as having opted out of real concern for his children. But what of the fifth option? For how many men in Jamaica is this a viable way of defining manhood? Are Jamaican men re-defining manhood, by choice or under duress, in other than traditional or stereotypical ways?

The study would suggest that the answer to this is "Yes", albeit with some qualifiers. For example, the study indicated that:

■ MEN CONTRIBUTE MORE TO FAMILY LIFE THAN IS CREDITED

The research did not negate the voluminous documentation on the Caribbean woman's role as primary caregiver, nor the fact that many carry this role with the father absent from the home. However, the study did provide evidence that men are far more involved in positively contributing to family life than popular stereotypes suggest. Jamaican men have clear ideas about what a good father should be, and feel responsible with the mother for inculcating moral values and social skills in their children. Although many admit they cannot or do not always fulfill their responsibilities to the extent they feel they should, they define their responsibilities to include not only the undisputed role of financial provider but also counselling and communicating with their children and generally being a role model.

■ MEN ARE ACTIVE WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND IN DOMESTIC CHORES, BUT DO NOT FEEL ENHANCED BY THESE TASKS

The majority of men in both the survey and in the discussion groups described their active, often daily, participation in tidying, playing, and reasoning with their children, and in helping regularly

with homework. Forty to fifty percent of the urban sample cooks, tidy the house and go to the shop at least twice a week, although the men living with partners report somewhat less involvement in these activities than when living separately. This active level of parenting, beyond mere minding, is new.

At the same time, men generally admit that these contributions in the domestic sphere are not yet areas for boasting among peers. These tasks are perceived by most men and some women as primarily women's work. Therefore men do not yet see them as self-enhancing, particularly if their economic circumstances do not permit contributions in keeping with the culturally-prescribed role of breadwinner and thus family head, roles which imply authority and decision-making status.

■ BEING A FATHER HAS STRONG PERSONAL MEANING FOR MEN

Fathering is both part of a man's self-definition and his route to maturity. While fathering was not seen as limited to children under a common roof, this was nonetheless considered the ideal, and the arrangement that allowed a man to contribute most to his children's development. For those fathers who lived with children, there was a common acceptance of economic responsibility, but wide variations in their understanding of the social and psychological components of fathering.

■ "OUTSIDE" CHILDREN APPEAR MORE PSYCHOLOGICALLY VULNERABLE THAN "INSIDE" CHILDREN

Those children born early in a man's life, who provided him self-enhancing status when he was young, are of particular concern to us for future study. As these children grow older they get in the way of new man-woman relationships. They are often shunted aside as one or both partners abandon them emotionally and financially in order to consolidate the new romance and/or economic union.

Many children grow up in family arrangements that deprive them of contact with their biological father. If a mother enters a new relationship there is an implicit understanding and respect for the idea that the new man has rights over the woman (and her children). This might well mean the severing of the father-child bond. In this situation the attitude of many of the sample fathers seemed to be win some, lose some.

■ CONDITIONS OF POVERTY NEGATIVELY AFFECT CHILDRearing PRACTICES

The extent to which economic deprivation and poverty serve to retard the development of more progressive mating and childrearing behavior must be underscored. It is clear that attitudinal change and structural changes are closely inter-related. To make a difference in attitude, there have to be economic changes.

Future Considerations

What happens to the children as a result of multiple union? While some of the men said "you win some, you lose some", it was clear that many felt they lost out on being able to father their

children in all the ways they would like. Sometimes they accept blame for this. Sometimes they blame their dissatisfaction on mothers who no longer want them to relate to their children. We have to ask, though, if children aren't the real losers in the man-woman contests that leave so many children without a relationship with one, or sometimes both parents.

What happens to outside children? 34%—40% of the fathers in the sample had two to three baby mothers; 4%—14% had four or more. While 48%—63% of the fathers in the sample were living at the time with at least one children under 19 years, 56%—71% of these had at least one child “outside”. Urban men under 30, predictably, were more likely to be in this group. Since large numbers of children do not live with their fathers, future research needs to examine the extent to which these outside children are responsibly step-fathered in subsequent family configurations, or are left feeling essentially fatherless.

Are there ways to support a re-definition of manhood that includes active fathering? Given the Jamaican realities of high urban unemployment and generally high under-employment, must we not encourage the trends, however tentative, in the direction of defining manhood and fatherhood (and motherhood) in broader terms that include nurturing, the sharing of domestic tasks and providing financially for the family?

Is the new fatherhood the result of what one may term a relaxation in the rabid macho orientation of our society, or of the new-found economic clout of an ever-increasing number of women, or simply a much more enlightened, humanistic approach to life and family, born out of a reality which has constantly sought to find value in existence.

I rather suspect that irrespective of the real reason, the outcome in terms of benefits can only be positive, and will in actual fact lead to the creation of an environment in which the participants—male, female and offspring—are more at home (no pun intended) and relaxed—providing a fluid and accommodating reality which would allow for healthy development, and for an increasing number of men to be real fathers.

Harclyde Walcott, "The New Fatherhood", in KRIS Magazine, 1990, Issue 2

Article Taken From:

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Endnotes

¹ The Caribbean Child Development Centre of the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies was established in 1975 to promote healthy child development in the region

through training programmes, research, the development of curricula and other materials, and policy development.

² a *jacket* is a child, attributed to you by your girlfriend/spouse, who is in fact not your child (or not likely to be yours). Sometimes men accept a jacket knowingly if they really love the woman, and/or if they think it will add to their numbers of children or women when bragging about their prowess. This is a double-edged sword, because if the other persons find out about it, it becomes a source of teasing and even derision. It also means that if you accept paternity for a jacket, you also accept financial responsibility for the child.

³ Jamaicans living abroad traditionally purchase goods, clothing, etc., for their relatives back home and send them in packing barrels. So receiving a barrel *from foreign* always creates great excitement.

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SITE VISIT: Jamaica—Fathers Incorporated

By Janet Brown. Excerpted from the Coordinators' Notebook No. 16, "Gender Relations and Conflicts in Fathering," November 1995.

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For more information on *Fathers, Inc.* contact: Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica.

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