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CULTURALLY LEARNED PARENT ROLES
FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Objective: To help immigrant and refugee families identify a variety of parenting roles and compare parenting priorities between the home and host cultures.

TIME REQUIRED About a half day

RISK LEVEL High

**PARTICIPANTS
NEEDED** Any number of participants, plus a facilitator

PROCEDURE Please take the following steps:

1. Have each participant read the parent role descriptions in Exhibit 4.15 and identify the five most important roles according to their own personal priorities for being a parent, keeping this information private from the group. Feel free to add roles to the 14 that are listed and eliminate or modify roles so the list applies more accurately to the group.
2. Next, have the group members identify those roles that are easier in the host culture than they would be in the members' home culture, discussing this with the group.
3. Next, ask group members to identify those roles that are harder in the host culture than they would be in the home culture, discussing this with the group.
4. Show the group at least 20 pictures of parents you previously cut out from magazine illustrations and advertising; each picture should be numbered.
5. Instruct the group to work together to identify up to three roles they think the parents in the picture are assuming.
6. Select four of the pictures that have been classified in 10 or more of the personally most important roles individual group members identified in step 1.
7. Ask participants to become the person in the picture and answer the questions of the other members of the group, using their imaginations to provide answers that fit the appropriate role. Participants can choose whether to answer the questions as a parent from the home culture or the host culture.

1. *Provider*: Parents contribute to the welfare of the family in a variety of ways. A provider is a parent who contributes to the economic welfare and well-being of the family.
 2. *Celebrant*: The parent as a celebrant adds a dimension of life and enthusiasm, joy, and self-presence quite different from celebrations where the parent is not present. Behind nearly all celebrations is the implicit recognition of the parental role in bringing out the harmony and purpose of the event.
 3. *Nurturer*: Parents are important in nurturing ideas and providing the quality of care and comfort that society values for the family.
 4. *Technician*: In an increasingly technical world, most parents are technicians. Parents use equipment and facilities to produce a variety of products, and they cope with breakdowns in technology from a broken appliance to a stalled car.
 5. *Companion*: The companion role of the parent involves leisure time activity to reinforce family relations. Being a companion means more than doing things together; it means being a part of the family adventure and experience.
 6. *Socializer*: A socializer transmits values, ideas, and content of culture from one generation to another. Socializing can include giving the family members advice and teaching what is important.
 7. *Symbol*: Much has been written about parents as symbols. Parents represent dominant ideas in the culture. There are both positive and negative aspects in parents as symbols for the family and society.
 8. *Manager*: Parents plan, organize, and carry out ideas and evaluate the results. Parents provide both formal management of a group and the less formal management of decisions in the family.
 9. *Comforter*: To be a comforter means to know when another person needs aid and comfort, to be able to determine the nature of the other person's problem, and to take appropriate steps to help the other person.
 10. *Budgeter*: Parents have various resources at their disposal, such as time, money, endorsement, and organization. Being a budgeter means making careful use of the resources beyond just managing them.
 11. *Promoter*: The promotional role of parents is part of the communications system in the community. As promoters, parents translate ideas and values to the community and promote and sell a particular point of view to the community.
 12. *Counselor*: The counselor's experience and understanding allow him or her to see problems from different ways. Parents see problems as counselors do and help the family deal with them.
 13. *Communicator*: The communicator gives others instructions, information, and reasons. Parents communicate the goals, ideals, and activities of the family to society and of society to the family.
 14. *Problem solver*: Crises, emergencies, and situations arise in the family, and the parent takes the role of problem solver. Problem solving involves identifying the appropriate solution to the situations, whether simple and routine or complicated.
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8. Have participants try and guess, asking yes or no questions, (a) the personally most important role being played by the group member and (b) whether the parent being role-played is in the host culture or the home culture.

DEBRIEFING:

This experience was developed from stories of refugees from different countries in the United States who had to learn new "parent roles" in the U.S. culture. Discuss how the role of parent is viewed differently by the group members and their host culture and home culture. Discuss how the parent role of the father is different from the parent role of the mother. Some discussion questions are as follows:

1. How are parent roles similar across cultures?
2. How are parent roles different across cultures?
3. Which pattern of parenting is most familiar to you, and which is least familiar?

CULTURE NOTE

An East Indian international student used to stop me as I walked across campus and we would spend half an hour or more doing “counseling.” I asked her to please come to my office and talk where we could discuss her situation more comfortably. She exclaimed that she could never do that because if word reached her family that she had sought out “counseling” her bride price would be significantly reduced and her family would not forgive her.