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ג'וינט-מכון ברוקדייל
המרכז לילדים ולנוער



Working with Fathers of Ethiopian Pre-Schoolers: An Exploration of Options

JDC-Brookdale Institute

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Introduction

In the past two decades, one of the major themes in child development research has been the "discovery" of fatherhood. During this period, policy makers as well as researchers began focusing more and more on fathers' roles in the family, on factors that influence them and on ways to promote fathers' involvement. The focus on fathers and their roles was influenced by social changes that took place in many modern countries. These changes include: the increasing labor force participation of mothers, including mothers of very young children, and the growing divorce rates and procreation of single-parent families (Demos, 1986). These changes led to a shift in the roles of fathers from secondary caretakers, who work full-time and spend time with their children on the weekends, to parents who are involved throughout their children's lives, take an active part as parents and share parenting responsibilities.

Adjusting to these changes poses challenges for fathers and societies. They present an even greater challenge for Ethiopian fathers. Traditionally, the Ethiopian father is very much the head of the family and the key authority figure; the mother is responsible for child rearing. The transition to Israel has placed enormous stress on traditional methods of child rearing that create difficulties for both fathers and mothers. The status of the Ethiopian father is much weaker than it was in Ethiopia - very few fathers are literate in their native language of Amharic and even fewer have acquired basic competence in the Hebrew language; many of the fathers are unemployed and much older than their wives and children.

Thus, the opportunity to strengthen the role of fathers of pre-school Ethiopian children needs to be explored in the context of the Ethiopian family and what it needs to function more effectively in Israel today.

This document aims to provide information to policy makers and professional that will:

- Promote professional discussion and discourse on involving fathers in general and Ethiopian fathers in particular in their young children's lives.
- Provide a better basis for planning programs to enhance the role of Ethiopian fathers in their children's development from an early age.
- Provide a better basis for developing culturally appropriate programs for Ethiopian and other fathers.

The first chapter provides a brief review of the current research on the roles of fathers and their unique contribution to the development of their children, as well as background on recent initiatives to program for fathers and promote their involvement in their children's lives. The second chapter describes the effects of the immigration on the Ethiopian community, the absorption difficulties and the distinctive characteristics of Ethiopian families and children. The third chapter reviews the current strategies and programs being used for Ethiopian pre-school aged children and their parents based on questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with program planners, implementers and participants. More in-depth discussion of an attempt to create a father's group is the focus of the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter presents a summary, conclusions and some future directions.

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The Importance of Fatherhood and the Factors that Influence it as reflected in the Literature

The increasing interest in fatherhood in the past two decades has yielded a rich body of research that greatly expands the understanding of fathers' unique contribution to their children's lives. This chapter presents a brief review of the current knowledge, bearing in mind the unique characteristics of the specific population of this paper, Ethiopian fathers. This review includes research evidence concerning the importance of fathers' presence and involvement in their children's lives, factors influencing fathering practices, national and international policies and programming aimed to promote fathers' involvement in their children's lives and suggestions for planning and implementing programs for fathers.

Research evidence for the importance of fathers

As the interest in fathers and their roles grows, more and more research indicates that fathers' presence and involvement in children's lives effect them in many ways. Research reveals their influence on children's social and emotional development as well as their performance in school and other settings.

Some studies looked at the interaction and attachment formed between fathers and children. Father-child interaction has been shown to promote a child's physical well being, perceptual abilities, and competency for relatedness with others, even at a young age. Men's psychological care and emotional generosity (expressiveness and intimacy), with their children seem to have the greatest

long-term implications for children's development (Krampe & Fairweather, 1993). A study on parent-infant attachment found that fathers who were affectionate, spent time with their children, and overall had a positive attitude were more likely to have securely attached infants. (Cox et al, 1992). Other studies examined the long-term effect of fathering. In a 26-year longitudinal study, researchers found that the single most important childhood factor in developing empathy is paternal involvement. Fathers, who spent time alone with their kids performing routine childcare at least two times a week, raised children who were the more compassionate adults (Koestner et al, 1990).

In addition, numerous studies have emphasized that availability, contact, and parental involvement with fathers reduces aggressive behaviors in boys (Broude, 1990; Mott, 1994).

Other studies compared the nature of the attention father's give their children to that provided by the mother's. Fathers care for children differently than mothers, making their contribution to the child's development important and unique: fathers play with children a greater amount of their time together, compared to mothers (Lamb, 1986). Fathers are tactile and physical with children. Variations in the play styles of fathers and mothers suggest that fathers offer unique play experiences to their children. The stimulation the child receives through play episodes with parents links to developmental outcomes in cognitive skills and sociability (Parke, 1981).

The involvement of fathers in their children's education is important for children's achievement and behavior. When fathers are involved in their children's education including attending school meetings and volunteering at school, children were more likely to get A's, enjoy school, and participate in extracurricular activities and less likely to have repeated a grade (NCES, 1997).

On the other hand, growing up without fathers has many adverse effects on children's lives. A general conclusion from many studies is that father absence

can cause adverse effects in boys, particularly if father absence occurs before age 5. Fatherless boys show poor school performance and compared with children growing up in two-parent homes, children in single-parent families are twice as likely to drop out of high school drop out of school (National Center for Fathering, Louv 1999).

Boys who grew up without a father also tend to develop poor relationships with peers, problems with impulse control, encounter difficulties in adjusting to changes and suffer from health and emotional problems. Furthermore, they are more likely to become involved in crime, and become involved in drug and alcohol abuse. At later stages they are twice as likely to have a child before the age of 20 and more than twice as likely to live in poverty compared to boys growing up in two-parent homes. (DHHS, 1997, National Center for Fathering, Louv 1999).

The effects of father absence show up later for girls. Adolescent girls growing up without a father have difficulty in establishing relationships with other men (Louv, 1999) and are more likely to become pregnant as teens (National Center for Fathering).

Factors influencing fathering practices

Research has also focused on various characteristics of fathers, families and social and economical factors that influence men's involvement in their children lives. Of the many factors influencing fatherhood, some are especially relevant to the issues discussed in this document. These include the marital relationship, father's psychological well-being, father's employment and ability to provide, and the utilization of available time for child rearing.

Marital relationship

The quality of marital relationship is significantly associated with the nature of children's relationships with each of their parents. The more positive the

relationship between the parents, the more involved the father is likely to be in childcare. The more negative the relationship, the father is likely to be less involved in childcare. (Engle & Breaux, 1994, Doherty et al., 1998)

Father's well-being

Research consistently found that there is a positive relationship between parents' psychological well being and their parenting attitudes and skills (Pleck, 1997). Fathers with higher self-esteem (Volling & Belsky, 1991), better overall adaptation and lower levels of depression (Grossman et al., 1988) and hostility (Cox et al., 1999) are more supportive and warm with their children than fathers with poorer psychological adjustment. More specifically, the fathers positive perception of his ability to adequately respond to the demands of his child has a positive effect on fathering.

Father's employment and ability to provide

Economic pressures generate tensions and conflicts in families. These are associated with decreased parental warmth, increased irritability and greater anger (Elder and Caspi, 1988). Jones (1991) found job loss and economic distress cause a decline in psychological well being that leads to poorer fathering. Others found a direct negative effect of lack of income or poor occupational opportunities on fathering (Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). Since being a provider is the most prevailing characteristic in fathers' identity, feeling like a failure in the core bread-winning role is associated with demoralization for fathers which causes a deterioration in their relationship with their children (McLoyd, 1989)

Although it is reasonable to assume that unemployed men would spend more time care-giving their children, data suggest that men, both employed and unemployed, think of child rearing as a gendered activity, i.e., as "women's

work" (Gadsden and Hall, 1995) and unemployed fathers do not necessarily spend more time with their children (Marsiglio, 1991). The amount of available time fathers have is not a reliable predictor to the amount of time they spend with their children. Additionally, broader social factors such as gender role expectations influence the out-of-work fathers' sharing of the childcare responsibilities (Radin and Harold -Goldsmith, 1989).

Research on Fathers in Israel

Fatherhood is not a main issue of research in Israel. Most research in this realm is conducted as MA theses, with relatively few papers in national and international journals. Most of the studies about families and parents don't focus on the unique characteristics of fathers or mothers and their different contribution to their children's lives. The research focus is on the differences between fathers and mothers throughout the circle of the family life, mostly conducted on small samples, with sporadic findings.

Policy and Programming to Promote Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Lives

The changing roles of fathers as well as the growing recognition of the importance of fathers in children's lives have led to policy and programming initiatives to promote involvement of fathers in children's lives in many countries and in the international arena.

In general, there are two major ways to promote and enhance fathers' involvement in children's lives.

1. Through changes in legislation and employment policies
2. Through programming aimed at working directly with fathers.

Both types of intervention are inter-related. Programs aimed at working directly with fathers and families can support such national policies, as well as support fathers and families in defining new roles for fathers in the rapidly changing family environment.

Change in employment policies

Changes in legislation, tax policies and employment policies indicate the social legitimacy for fathers to choose how much time they want to spend with their children. Beyond acknowledging the father's right and need to be with his children, these changes provide more opportunities for fathers to spend time with them. Such changes include enabling fathers to take paternal leave after having a baby as well as work-place policies allowing fathers to take time off to attend school functions or stay home with their children when they are sick. In addition, the increasing use of alternative working styles like flex-time, job sharing and telecommuting may also serve to promote father's opportunities to spend time with their children.

An interesting lesson about the implementation of policies promoting the shift in the roles in the family can be learned from the developments in the Scandinavian countries (Hojgaard, 1997). The Scandinavian welfare states have instituted policies aimed to mediate between family and work obligations as a means to enable more women to participate in the workforce. The policies included two parallel components. The first component aimed to increase opportunities for women's access into the labor market on a basis equal to men. The second component attempted to create possibilities for men to increase their participation in family care on a basis more equal to that of women.

Though these policies included additional components, institutionalizing paternal leave at childbirth was one of the major steps taken. In 1993, Norway had reserved four weeks of paternal leave, leave that cannot be transferred to the mother, and in 1995, Sweden followed. Denmark does not grant the option

of paternal leave other than the two weeks at the birth of the child (Hojgaard, 1997).

It is important to note that although changes in policies might be dramatic and innovative, fathers are not always likely to take advantage of their new rights due to cultural norms. Many societies still communicate that men, who put their children first before their role as providers, are “second class” men. Cultural changes and changes in social norms are also necessary to encourage and promote new models of fathering (Louv, 1999).

Programs directed at fathers

A different example of a national policy to promote fatherhood can be found in the U.S.. In 1995, President Clinton launched a government wide initiative to strengthen the role of fathers in families, known as the “Fatherhood Initiative”. This initiative led to countrywide activities on local, state and national levels promoting fatherhood. In contrast to the Scandinavian policy, which focused on changing legislation and working conditions, the American policy focused on raising public awareness to the importance of these issues and on programs aimed directly at fathers. The American policy also had different roots. Rather than aiming to provide inclusion of women in the workforce, U.S. policy makers were concerned with the impact of growing divorce rates, resulting in children that are not in contact with and not supported by their fathers.

The programs included in the Fatherhood Initiative initiated by 39 Governors fall into six categories : Public awareness campaigns; services for low income, non-custodial fathers; parenting skills training; state fatherhood commission; comprehensive funding streams; and premature fatherhood prevention (NGA, 1998):

- *Public awareness campaigns*: are aimed at increasing public awareness of the critical role of fathers. Such campaigns include media campaigns featuring professional athletes as role models,

public service announcements in movie theaters, TV, radio and newspaper interviews, surveys and more.

- *Services for low- income, non-custodial fathers:* provide employment-related services to enable fathers to meet their financial responsibilities, and also provide support services and parenting skill training to advance the father's involvement with his children.
- *Parenting skills training:* these programs provide training and parenting education to young fathers, non-custodial fathers, incarcerated fathers and fathers in families identified as at-risk for child abuse and neglect.
- *State fatherhood commissions:* several states established commissions focusing on responsible fatherhood. For example, a commission in Florida is addressing the need for a coordinated, statewide effort to increase awareness of the effects of absent fathers on children and promote responsible fatherhood.
- *Comprehensive funding streams:* a few states have established new funding streams to establish and support local programs promoting responsible fatherhood.
- *Premature fatherhood prevention:* quite a few states highlighted efforts to encourage boys or young men to postpone becoming fathers. These efforts include funding community-based organizations to provide services for high-risk male populations and health education curriculum among school-age children.

International Activities

There have also been international initiatives focusing on promoting fatherhood. The UNICEF initiatives in 1993 and 1994, focused on research, policy and program development relating to the evolving roles and responsibilities of fathers in relation to their children (Engle & Alatorre, 1994, Engle 1994).

At the conclusion of the international year of the Family in 1994, the often ignored role of the father, and more broadly of men in families, emerged on development agendas to facilitate achieving gender equality and led to an international consultation on the role of males and fathers in achieving gender equality. The outcomes of these consultations were to:

- Reorient programs to include the role of men in families to ensure more effective outcomes for gender equality. The role of men in families should be a part of all UNICEF situation analyses, as women and children are at present. Because the roles of men in families may vary among cultural, religious or class groups and throughout the life span, it is essential to understand the actual situation before making programming decisions.
- Men's self-image as nurturing people who can care for children (and spouses) should be enhanced in any possible way. However, changes in the man's role in the family imply changes in the woman's, and these need to be discussed at the same time.
- Sharing of new knowledge gained in this area would greatly facilitate development of implementation strategies by offices.

A newsletter published by the Bernard van Leer foundation in 1992 titled “Where Have All the Fathers Gone” also created an overwhelming wave of interest and action, leading to the establishment of international conferences on fatherhood. The third conference took place in June, 2001. The Bernard van Leer foundation also dedicated a recent edition of their bulletin “Early Childhood Matters” to the importance of fathers in their children lives, “Fathers Matter Too.”

Policy and programming for fathers in Israel

In Israel, there are indications of the increasing awareness to the changes in the roles of fathers and of the importance of involving them in their children's lives. However, these are still in initial stages.

The Israeli law addresses some of parent's needs. Israeli labor law, along with a comprehensive system of cash entitlements and other benefits, provides support for mothers and families during pregnancy, at birth, and during post-natal care. There are laws and regulations for employing women during pregnancy. In addition, a pregnant woman who has been working for the same employer or at the same workplace for at least six months may not be dismissed by her employer without special permission from the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs.

Mothers are entitled to a three-month maternity leave paid by the National Insurance Institute. If the mother agrees, the father may take half of the maternity leave; in such a case, he will receive the maternity benefit. At the end of the paid maternity leave, the mother is legally entitled to take an additional, unpaid leave of absence for up to nine months (dependent on how long she was employed prior to giving birth), with full security against termination of employment. Fathers whose wives worked for at least six months prior to giving birth may take the unpaid leave of absence instead of their spouse.

Other laws enable parents to devote themselves to caring for their children without suffering undue economic loss. For example, the *Severance Pay Law 1963* entitles a woman employee who quits her job to care for a child to receive severance pay during the first nine months following childbirth or the adoption of a child under the age of 13. A male employee who quits his job for the same reason is entitled to the same conditions. Also entitled for these conditions are fathers who have sole custody of the children because of the mother's disability or illness.

Under the *Equal Employment Opportunities Law 1988*, male employees who have sole custody are entitled to day care services, shortened work days, maternity absences due to a child's illness, child care expenditures covered by employers, and any other benefit offered to female employees. The *Sick Day Payment (Absence from Work due to Child's Illness) Law 1993* grants parents six paid absences a year for a child's illness, or 30 days a year in case of a child's terminal illness. Many work places grant additional privileges, such as shorter workdays for mothers or employers' participation in day care expenses.

In the realm of programming, Israel does not have a comprehensive policy of programming aimed at fathers. A small number of programs, however, do exist.

During the 1980's a small number of local attempts to create fathers or father and children groups were initiated by departments for social services in Rishon Lezion, Or Yehuda, East Jerusalem, Ramat Hasharon , Tel Aviv and Yavneh. These programs included "fathers and sons" 6-meeting workshop, a dynamic father's group aimed at spouses of women who underwent significant empowering in parallel programs, and meetings concentrating on increasing father's involvement in their children's day care or school work. These local attempts were not implemented on a broader scale or continued beyond the initial time framework. There is no available information concerning the long-term outcomes of these programs nor of the reasons for not continuing these activities.

The Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community based Education is a voluntary organization that has been working among Arab Israeli communities for the past 16 years. The Trust's work in the field of early childhood includes early childhood education working with both children and preschool teachers, stressing the parents' role as partners; and community development which includes empowerment of women, enabling them to take

an active role in community activities such as committees, operating preschools and educational libraries. As one of the main components of the programs was working with the family, it soon became clear that while the mothers and older sisters were quite easy to involve, the fathers remained outside the process. The need to concentrate on bringing fathers into early childhood work was addressed by two approaches: home visits to fathers and father's clubs.

- Home visits were the first stage in involving fathers in the activities of the fathers' club and in mother-child programs. Project workers maintained home visits to understand and overcome barriers that prevented fathers from participating in programs and taking an active role in their children's lives.
- Fathers' clubs were based on themes requested by the fathers. Specific topics included communication within the family, parenting and role modeling, raising children with special needs, roles and labor distribution in the family and the important role of fathers in the lives of their young children.

Conclusion: lessons learned from planning and implementing programs for fathers

Based on an extensive review of existing programs in the U.S., Doherty et al (1998) reached several conclusions about components that contribute to the success of father programs. Further recommendations about working methods with fathers are provided by The Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community based Education, based on their 17 year field experience (Abu-Gosh, 2001).

Generally, fathering programs should take into account the emotional and social place from which the fathers start, and involve a wide range of interventions, which reflect the many domains of responsible fathering,

including the personal, relational and ecological factors. It is important to note that some of these programmatic recommendations for fathering programs do not apply to all programs and every population.

Specific program recommendations are:

1. Fathering programs should develop a system of respectful listening and start from where the family is, and develop a significant partnership with the parents.
2. Fathering programs should target all the domains of responsible fathering that need reformation or enhancement: paternity, presence, economic support, and involvement. Declaring legal paternity and paying regular child support are preconditions for a father's ongoing presence and active involvement in his child's life.
3. Fathering programs should include a component of enhancing father's self esteem, since acknowledging their success and recognizing their abilities increases their involvement and interest.
4. Fathering programs should involve mothers when possible. In most families today, mothers are the "senior partner" in parenting. The support and partnership of the mother are important enhancements to the father's learning fathering skills and his ongoing connection with his children. For parents who live together, involving mothers may reduce the threat to her centrality as a parent that she might feel from the fathers increasing strength. For parents who don't live together, the cooperation between the parents might be the only way for the father to be in touch with his children.
5. Fathering programs should promote the well being of mothers and of the mother-father partnership. The relationship between father's and children is

always related to the father-mother relationship. Therefore programs should also help parents be partners in parenting.

6. Fathering programs should take into account the influence of families of origin. Both the mother's and the father's families have a strong influence on fathering. The support of family and relatives is important during the father's efforts to develop his identity as a father and his fathering skills.

7. Fathering programs should emphasize critical transition points for fathers such as becoming a father, marital separation, and transitions in the lives of the children like entry to preschool, elementary schools, etc. These transitions provide an opportunity to help fathers understand the change in their role along with the developmental needs of their children.

8. Fathering programs should involve an employment dimension. Unemployed fathers are at a great risk for becoming uninvolved fathers. Maintaining a stable job increases the father's well-being and potential involvement with his children.

9. Fathering programs should deal with father's relationship with community systems. Since fathers, especially non-resident ones, must deal with many systems such as hospitals, clinics, social services agencies and schools in order to be responsibly involved with their children, programs should teach fathers how to successfully deal with these systems or actively broker and advocate for them.

10. Fathering programs should train the staff working with children and families to promote responsible fathering. Until recently "involved parenting" meant "involved mothering", causing staff to either ignore fathers or to have low expectations as to their participation and ability to contribute. Staff must be trained to work with fathers, to understand their specific needs and abilities.

11. Programmers and implementers should be ready for a long process, and understand that these programs deal with social changes, which have to go hand in hand with local social values. Furthermore, it is important to accept that fathering programs contain a process of empowerment that may challenge the staff's expertise.

12. Fathering programs should involve fathers working with fathers. Many programs seem to show that fathers' support groups are important aspects of the program. This support may be social support or provide a basis for father role identification.

Changes Affecting Parenting in Ethiopian Families

Planning and developing programs to enhance the absorption of new immigrants must take into account their unique characteristics and needs. Planning programs for Ethiopians in general and specifically for Ethiopian fathers must address the process of change the Ethiopian immigrants endured on their journey to Israel and upon their arrival in Israel and the unique characteristics of this particular population. This chapter will describe the effects of the immigration on the Ethiopian community, the absorption difficulties and the distinctive characteristics of Ethiopian families and children.

In order to understand the challenges of absorbing the Ethiopian community within the Israeli society, it is important to understand the vast changes the Ethiopian community underwent upon their immigration to Israel – from a traditional, religious, patriarchal, agricultural village society to the western, urban, high-tech secular and democratic society of Israel. The move to Israel

lead to many changes in the traditional ways of the Ethiopian community. Traditions that were practiced for many generations were abruptly disrupted on the journey to Israel and became completely irrelevant upon their arrival to Israel.

The difficult journey to Israel that part of the immigrants underwent was the beginning of the initial crumbling of the traditional practices: weakening of the leadership, discontinuity of the strict purity rituals and early marriage patterns, and the beginning of the change in balance within the family. Upon their arrival in Israel, further difficulties were encountered resulting from the absorption processes and the absorption environment.

There are four major factors that need to be taken into account in understanding the challenges faced by the Ethiopian families and fathers in particular and in programming for them:

1. The socio-demographic characteristics and social capital of the Ethiopian families;
2. The cultural transition and changes in traditional family patterns and structures;
3. The unique absorption patterns of this community;
4. The impact of the transition on the children.

The Socio-demographic characteristics and social capital of the Ethiopian families

Demographic structure

Tables 1 and 2 present the latest available national estimates of the structure of the Ethiopian population by age and years in Israel.

Table 1: Ethiopian Population by Age - End of 1998

Age	Thousands	%
Total	72.4	100.0
0-4	10.0	13.8
5-14	20.5	28.3
15-19	8.9	12.3
20-29	12.4	17.1
30-44	9.9	13.7
45-54	4.2	5.8
55-64	2.6	3.6
65+	3.9	5.4

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population File, Special Analysis, unpublished

* Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Table 2: Ethiopian Population by Year of Immigration - End of 1998

Immigration	Thousands	%
Total	72.4	100.0
Israeli Born	19.3	26.7
Immigrated before 1990	16.6	22.9
Immigrated from 1990 on	36.6	50.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population File, Special Analysis, unpublished

*Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding

As is indicated in the tables, there are some 72,400 Ethiopians in Israel. Half of this population is age 19 or under, reflecting the large number of children per family. The majority of the immigrants came in the 90s. A significant number were born in Israel, either to families who arrived recently or those from the 80s. The large number of children, indicating a large dependency rate, has impact on the Ethiopian ability to successfully integrate into Israeli society.

Education and proficiency in Hebrew

Education and proficiency in the local language are important factors in achieving successful integration as immigrants into any society. Ethiopian immigrants had to face challenges in this respect as well. Many adults had no education prior to their arrival and were illiterate in their native language. This also inhibited their ability to learn and master Hebrew as a second language, since “ulpan” Hebrew classes are structured for literate populations. As a

result, many Ethiopian immigrants did not fully master the language. A survey among parents of youth indicated that approximately 50% of the parents cannot hold a simple conversation in Hebrew and about 75% cannot read or write a simple letter in Hebrew. This holds true even for a large proportion who have been in Israel for a relatively long period of time (Lifshitz etd, 1998). Similar findings are emerging from a survey of parents of younger children (Lifshitz etd, forthcoming). The serious difficulties in Hebrew, combined with their limited education, translates into difficulties in finding employment. In addition, parents encounter difficulties in helping their children in studies and in communicating with their teachers.

Employment and income

The Ethiopian immigrants made considerable efforts to integrate into employment and a significant percentage of immigrants of all ages did obtain employment. However, there are large gaps between the rate of employment of the Ethiopian immigrants and other Israelis. The gap in employment for women is particularly large.

Most Ethiopian immigrants, who were subsistence farmers with little or no formal education in Ethiopia, find work in Israel as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers at minimum wage levels. Most men over 40 and most married women are not employed - 50% of the adult population. Thus, most Ethiopian immigrant families depend on one wage earner at best and on National Insurance child benefits or supplementary income payments. Ninety percent (90%) of Ethiopian families live at or below the poverty line, making them the poorest sector of the Israeli population.

In addition, both their low income and the fact that they are new immigrants who have not had time to accumulate goods in Israel means that the furnishing and maintaining their homes is a major challenge. For example, many households lack basic equipment that is in good repair. About 10% lack a

working refrigerator or water heater, and about 40% have no means of heating their apartment.

The cultural transition and changes in traditional family patterns and structures

Changes in the power balance within the family

Initially, Ethiopian women brought to Israel were relieved of some of their domestic responsibilities. Their initial placement in hotels relieved them from the preparation of food. Also when they moved to temporary or permanent housing, many of their former chores such as making dishes and pots, fetching water, and weaving baskets, became redundant.

Both ideological and practical pressures led the Ethiopian women to explore the options for work outside the house, creating another strain on the already weakened family structure. It is difficult to ascertain what happened first: domestic tension leading women to seek opportunities outside, or the fact that women wished to work outside led to domestic tension. The tensions between women's traditional roles and the opportunities offered in Israel are most clearly seen when the wife goes out to work while the husband remains unemployed.

Among the Ethiopian community it was a common tradition of men to marry women several years younger. In some circumstances, such as second marriages, the husband is 10-25 years older than his wife. Such age differences have several effects the family's life, such as the different time and nature of the wife's absorption as opposed to her husband, and on child rearing perceptions and practice, as described below.

The prospects of young women to be accepted to training programs and to adapt more quickly are higher in comparison to older men. Once the wife is

working, her income makes her more independent, and her exposure to the world around her greatly accelerates her adaptation. While she confronts the daily challenges of working life--Hebrew conversation, bus routes and schedules, work relations, pay slips, etc.--the husband remains behind.

Disintegration of leadership

The move to Israel has disrupted traditional patterns of leadership. Both the religious leaders and the community leaders lost their authority, since many of the traditions were no longer practiced, and because the official authorities did not recognize these leaders.

In contrast, children and youth grasp Hebrew and the Israeli mentality faster, much ahead of their parents, and are less willing to ask or abide by their parents' advice. In contrast to the child- and youth-centered norms of Israeli society, the Ethiopian community placed a great emphasis on respect and honor towards the elderly and aged. Although the status of parents and elders in Ethiopia had begun to decline even before the immigration, they were able to retain a certain degree of authority so long as they remained in Ethiopia. Once they reached Israel, their years of accumulated wisdom became irrelevant.

The gap that has been widening between parents and children since their arrival to Israel, are manifested in the level of the parents' education and Hebrew proficiency.

The unique absorption patterns of this community

- The Ethiopians are highly concentrated in peripheral areas and in poorer neighborhoods. This has implications for the opportunity structures that they face in terms of education, employment and access to quality services.
- They are highly concentrated in a small number of schools, primarily in the State religious schools and boarding schools.

- Because of the high concentrations, there is a complex dynamic with other residents in their communities, which can lead to outward migration of the stronger families.

The impact of the transition on the children

The Status of Children

A key indicator of the challenges facing the Ethiopian community is the family background of the children. A number of key indicators of family background are examined in Table 3 in terms of the percentage of children whose parents or families are characterized by them. We focus on education, one-parent families, the availability of a wage earner, and the age of the father.

Table 3. Ethiopian and Total Jewish Children by Key Characteristics of Children and Head of Household: Percentage of All Children

	Ethiopian Children	Total Jewish Children
Father's education		
- No education	61.0	3.3
- Education 1-8 years	20.0	14.7
- Education 13 + years	5.6	35.0
% one-parent families	18	10
% no earner	41	9
% father over age 65	11	0.5
% father over age 45	49	24

Source: Brookdale Institute, Special Analysis of 1995 National Census of the Central Bureau of Statistics

The data in the table illustrate the very large gap in the family background of Ethiopian and other Jewish children. For example, 61% of Ethiopian children are living in a family in which the head of the household has had no education, compared to only 3.3% of the Jewish children. A less well known factor is that Ethiopian family heads tend to be much older and, indeed, 11% of children have a father over age 65, as compared to 0.5% of children in the non-Ethiopian population.

Compared to the veteran Israeli population, the Ethiopian family is characterized by several unique features in terms of size and structure:

- Some 60% of families with children have 5 or more children (aged 0-18) compared to 22% in the general Israeli population.
- 20 % of families with children are one-parent compared to 9.4% in the general Israeli population.
- A large percentage of one-parent families have 3 or more children.
- A large percentage of the children have a father over age 65, because of the large age gap between husbands and wives.

Additionally, the low income of Ethiopian families has implications for the parents' ability to take care of their children's basic needs. For example, many (45%) cannot afford basic expenses such as school supplies. In many families with young children, there are no toys or books. Many of the children do not have their own bed (JDC Brookdale, 2000).

In 1997, an attempt was made to arrive at a comprehensive national perspective of children at risk, of all population groups, including Ethiopians. The survey conducted through public health nurses in the Family Health Centers, revealed that the percentage of children at risk among Ethiopians is four times higher than among other children, and stands at 8%. Further, among this group, behavioral and developmental problems were found at a higher rate (3% versus 1% in the general population) (Dolev, Yoel & Baram, 1999).

The status of Ethiopian fathers

Finally, we would like to present the current status of the Ethiopian father in Israel, based on the data described in this chapter.

Following the cultural changes, the father is no longer the ultimate authority in the family. The weakened position has many effects on the fathers:

- As already mentioned, 49% of the fathers are over the age of 45, and another 11% are over the age of 65, i.e. 60% of the fathers are not

young, posing a big challenge on learning and adapting to a new language, new social norms and new ways of involvement in their children's upbringing.

- High rates of unemployment, which increase with age, have an adverse effect of fathering, as described in the literature review. Fathers may have time to be with their children, but the impact of unemployment and perceptions of child-rearing roles in the family decrease the chances of fathers to take an active role in their children's lives.
- Large percentages of the fathers are not proficient in Hebrew, making it difficult for them to communicate with their children. The children's main language is Hebrew, while the fathers find it difficult to hold a simple conversation in that language. Poor knowledge of Hebrew also hampers the parents' ability to communicate with the staff in the educational frameworks attended by their children.
- Traditional views on the children's place in Ethiopian society and on disciplinary measures are not always compatible with the views prevalent in Israeli society, creating confusion among the fathers. Traditionally, fathers had little involvement in the upbringing of young children, therefore they don't know how to spend time together and they are frustrated by the fact that they can't afford to buy their children things that they require for their development.
- It is possible that the fact that parents were not themselves exposed to early childhood education, and sometimes never had any schooling at all, creates a feeling of helplessness regarding their ability to assist their children in integrating into these frameworks.
- It seems that the fathers have little knowledge or image of the role of the father in the modern society, and the expectations from this figure. They are not aware of the emotional and social needs of the children and don't know how to be supportive of their children.

Altogether, there is a decline in the father's self confidence and self esteem, due to several factors: the increasing power of the children, who quickly learned and assimilated the language and norms of the new country; the changing roles of their wives as they have more connection with the outside world, as well as new financial independence through National Insurance budgets or salaries; and the high rates of unemployment that have an adverse effect on the father's well being and on their parenting abilities.

Strategies and Programs being Used for Ethiopian Pre-school Aged Children and their Parents

As stated above, Israel is taking initial steps in programming for fathers. However, in order to get some insight in the way programs for the Ethiopian community view the involvement of parents and children, we have examined the current status of parents' involvement in the programs provided to Ethiopian pre-schoolers and their families, programs which have been adapted to address the special needs and culture of this community. The next chapter will discuss a specific program for Ethiopian fathers.

The information presented in this chapter was gathered from about 28 programs that are currently being implemented by 13 of the major organizations involved in providing services to young children and parents and are involved in working with the Ethiopian community in Israel. The information concerning the programs was collected through a structured questionnaire including the following information: the characteristics of program; the target age group; the group composition (integrative/segregative); the scope of the program; program goals and activities; method of action (group/individual work); frequency; the connection with the family;

cultural adaptation; the parties involved in operating the program; and manpower operating the program.

In addition, qualitative information was collected through focus groups with program facilitators and participants, in order to gain more insight as to the parents' involvement in the programs, specifically the fathers. In-depth interviews were conducted with key professionals from four organizations in order to learn about the organizations educational philosophy that influences their activities within the special needs of the Ethiopian community, and of various aspects of the involvement of parents in the programs. Four main organizations were chosen: a national organization dealing with informal educational and leisure culture, a voluntary organization that operates unique programs for the Ethiopian community, a voluntary organization that operates programs for children and parents at risk and an academic institution developing and implementing programs for young children.

The programs

The 28 programs reviewed included a wide variety in terms of goals, setting, intensity and operating principles. In order to gain more in-depth understanding of these programs, they were classified into 5 broad categories which are described in this chapter: Home-based programs (5 of the programs reviewed); daycare programs (2); after-school frameworks (2); school readiness programs (3); and general enrichment programs (16).

Home-based programs

Five of the 28 programs reviewed were home-based intervention programs. These programs are focused on the parents and are constructed to guide parents and strengthen their knowledge concerning various developmental aspects: physical, emotional, social and cognitive. As indicated by their name, these programs are delivered at the family home. All the programs include weekly meetings in which there are components of parent teaching and supervised

child-parent activity, and less frequent group meetings or workshops. **“The Stork’s Journey”** is an early childhood development program constructed according to each participant’s needs; **“The Wonders of Development”** is a similar program based on a constructed program. **“HaEtgar”** (The challenge) and **“Hataf”** (The small children) include educational aspects as well as developmental issues and aim also at strengthening the parent’s abilities as educators. **“Shacham”** is targeted at large, poverty stricken families and aims to support them in confronting the challenges that are related to helping their children adjust and benefit from the educational system. Within the framework of the program, these families receive daily assistance from a National Service volunteer that work intensively with the parents to encourage the parents’ involvement in the children’s activities, to enhance academic achievements, and to raise the families status in the school.

Day care programs

Two of the programs reviewed were daycare programs that were planned and implemented specifically to meet the unique needs of the Ethiopian early childhood population in Israel. **“Parent Cooperative Preschool”** is a 6 days a week daycare program aimed for Ethiopian children. Parents are obligated to volunteer one day a month to take part in the daily routine and help prepare the meal. **“Gan Kat”** (Little Kindergarten) is a 5 days a week, integrative program that is aimed at preparing the children for public kindergartens, while focusing on strengthening the parent’s abilities as educators. Several measures are employed to involve parents in the activities of the “Gan Kat”: parents are interviewed in order to understand their needs and expectation and parents interested in joining the program are requested to sign a contract committing them to the frameworks requirements. Parent activities included weekly parent-child activity, parent’s instruction by outside lecturers and monthly meetings with the program staff.

After-school frameworks

Two of the programs reviewed are after-school frameworks, which provide after-school enrichment and activities as well as a warm meal in the hours after school or preschool end everyday. The programs reviewed are those in which special programming for the Ethiopian population was introduced. However, Ethiopian young children as well as children in the early years of elementary schools also attend other after-school programs, which have not undergone special adaptation and serve the general population including children from Ethiopian families. The programs operate from 3 to 5 times a week, conducted by the morning caregivers or a separate afternoon staff. One of the programs also includes a weekly activity with the mothers.

School readiness programs

Although the overall goal of nearly all the programs is to give the children a head start for their school education, some programs were constructed specifically to prepare the children for school: to acquire the necessary sensory-motor capabilities such as cutting with scissors, language and numerical literacy and understanding the school system and its requirements. These programs include **“From Home to School”**, a home visiting program for parents and children. In this program, children and parents participate in activities aiming to strengthen learning abilities in the cognitive, emotional and social areas and enrich their language. The activities include family counseling, group counseling and family workshops provided by experienced counselors. This program can also be categorized as a home-based program. However, the program was included under the “school readiness” category since the emphasis in this program is on school readiness as opposed to the developmental emphasis of the other home-based programs, and it is not characterized by unique activities that must be conducted at home, in the child’s home environment.

The Community Center Association operates two programs aimed at enhancing school readiness: The more extensive program includes 3 group meetings a week for 4 months, and a less extensive program albeit more intensive program in which there are daily meeting for 2 ½ weeks. Both programs aim to enrich the children’s knowledge in various areas and strengthen their self-image. The Ministry of Education runs a similar 2 ½ week program.

General enrichment programs

As is indicated, most programs reviewed (16) can be categorized under the broad category of general enrichment programs. These programs are usually one-hour weekly group programs in which the children (and sometimes the parents) are exposed to enrichment in general areas such as music, arts, science, literature, computer literacy etc. While some of these programs are implemented within the pre-schools and kindergartens as part of the school curriculum, others are implemented in various community settings or within the framework of after-school programs. There are many general enrichment programs that are implemented in Israel and the programs reviewed are the ones that were adapted for Ethiopian children and parents.

As indicated, most of the enrichment programs take place in the kindergartens, during the mornings, usually in small groups. The parents are invited to join once a month or on special occasions. Each program is based on a weekly hour, dealing with specific areas. Literacy programs include “**Listening Literacy,**” “**Numerical Literacy,**” and “**Language Literacy.**” “**Tech Kindergarten**” introduces children to science and technology concepts; “**Kindergarten Concert**” introduces children to music instruments, composers, famous music and concepts, “**Fun with Movement**” encourages movement and dance. “**The Heart**” program is implemented among young children, aiming to develop the children through individual attention provided by day-care caregivers. The Community Center Association also operates enrichment centers that host

kindergarten classes for days of various activities including music, theater, computers, dance and science.

Several programs are targeted at children and parents, and are implemented in the afternoon. **“First Steps”** and **“Community Centers”** are comprehensive programs designed especially for the Ethiopian Community. In these settings a variety of activities for parents and children including parent guidance, parent-child activities, handicrafts, and story hour are provided in the afternoons and the community members are encouraged to come to the centers and attend.

All of the afternoon programs include joint activities for parents and children; several also include activities for parents such as lectures and workshops.

Afternoon programs include **“Good Word”** literacy program which includes concepts such as the calendar, orientation in the supermarket and in the post office; **“Computer Challenge”** and **“Soft Speech”** computer literacy programs; **“Parents Discover the World”** aiming to develop learning abilities through science and art. **“Together with the Children”** aims to create a meaningful, positive experience between the parents and their children. The **“Health Center”** program held in the Centers for family health prepares women during their pregnancy, guides mothers of young children about developmental issues, safety at home, hygiene, etc., and runs playgroups aiming to teach the parents how to stimulate and play with their children.

Parents’ participation and involvement in the different programs

The programs differ in their target groups. While all of the programs relate to optimal child development, there are different levels of parental involvement in the programs. Programs can be entirely based on child-parent activity, include a child-parent component as well as separate child or parent activities, or children’s programs may have a component of parents’ participation in special

activities. Though the programs have a varying extent of activities that involve parents, all but five of the programs reviewed included the parents as a target population and indicated that the “relationship with the parents” is one of their goals. The five programs that did not relate to activities aimed at the parents as part of the program are enrichment programs that take place within preschools or other group settings in which the parents do not participate. The fact that most programs have related to the parents in the definition of their target population and goals indicates the trend in programming for young children in Israel and for Ethiopian children in particular, which recognizes the importance of involving the parents in these programs.

The rationale guiding the approach focusing on the parents is the assumption that each intervention aimed to improve the child’s development must take into account the child’s environment. Also, changes in the parents and in the home surroundings are essential in order to obtain deep, stable and long lasting changes during the child’s development. Protagonists of this approach who operate enrichment programs for Ethiopians also stress the need to take into account the impact of the cultural and social transition on the children and the parents and on their relationship. As a result of immigration, there is a need to address the needs of the parents to adjust to child rearing in a new culture as well as to the children’s needs that stem out of their experiencing different cultures at home and in the school or other social settings. In addition, barriers such as language and familiarity of the parents and children with activities at school need to be overcome and addressed. (See chapter 2).

The programs employ a variety of measures and activities to involve and include the parents, ranging from several meetings with the parents to regular weekly activities. Home-based programs are all targeted directly at the parents and include a component of parent guidance, providing theoretical knowledge about child development, teaching how to play with the children and how to teach and learn with them. Some also include supervised parent-child activity

based on the counselors' guidance, using aids such as books, booklets, audiotapes and toys provided by the program counselors. The home-based programs also include monthly meetings or workshops for parent groups.

In general, these programs are at home and relate to both child and parent. However they are not intensive and are based on activities that will be done by the parent with the child between visits. They have all been adapted to the Ethiopian community and its unique needs. Two of the programs were designed especially for Ethiopians. They vary in the extent to which they address a range of needs but they mainly focus on cognitive developmental issues and on the parents' roles in providing enrichment. They work mainly with mothers in "traditional mother roles."

The two day-care programs designed for the Ethiopian community described above base their activities on parent involvement and volunteering. Parents must work in the program once a month, and take an active role in planning and implementing holiday events and parties in the day-care setting. The aim of the parental involvement is to teach the parents how to play with the children, what to play with them and also how to cook with Israeli food products.

Both are intensive programs that operate for several hours almost every day. Both programs encourage parents to participate and see their role in engaging and preparing the parents as well as the children for preschool. Both programs were designed especially for the Ethiopian community. However, the programs do not make a special effort to reach out to fathers. It is also important to note that these programs are limited in their extent of coverage and most Ethiopian preschoolers attend the regular public preschools or day care facilities.

Although afternoon program developers also reported involving the parents in their activities, these programs tend to put an emphasis on providing additional hours of care, adequate nutrition and educational and developmental

enrichment. Activities with the parents include the mothers and are not a major focus of these programs.

Several of the general enrichment, afternoon programs are based on joint parent-child activities, such as “**Computer Challenge**” and “**Soft Speech**” computer literacy programs. Other afterschool programs have weekly parent-child activities, which aim to improve the communication between the parents and their children through joint activities and teach parenting skills such as how to give positive reinforcements to their children and how to learn about the child through observation.

Enrichment programs that take place in the pre-school setting have very few encounters with the parents. The interaction with the parents is usually during special events such as concerts or plays, which the parents are invited to join.

The in-depth interviews with the four organizations corroborate these findings. In these interviews, all the organizations declared that parent involvement and relationship with the parents is an important facet of their programs. However, the interviews also reveal that the definition of “parent involvement” may differ greatly among organizations and programs: three organizations focus their intervention in the family framework and one focuses on the children through cooperation and connection with the parents.

Representatives of three organizations that focus their intervention on the family framework see the parents as a major part of the programs’ target population and direct the intervention at them as well. The representative of a voluntary organization operating a range of programs for children and parents at risk said: “we strive to strengthen the status of the parents as significant figures to the children, especially since their status has been hurt in Israel”. The representative of a voluntary organization who specializes in the Ethiopian Community expressed a similar perception: “We want to raise the self-image of

the parents that weakens as the children grow older. We find it important to start at an early age. This is why we encourage the parents to take an active part in conveying the contents of the programs to the children, and not a passive part.” The method applied in order to encourage the parents to take an active role in educating their children is to guide them and encourage them to play and learn with their children by themselves. Thus, says the representative, “The figure that brings the knowledge and toys to the child is the parent, not an outside instructor.”

The representative of the academic institution developing and implementing programs for young children also mentioned that their programs focus on parents’ empowerment. In other words, all three organizations attribute a significant place for parents in their children’s educational process. The most outstanding expression for this approach was expressed by the representative of a voluntary organization that operates a range of programs for children and parents at risk who said, “Working with the parents is the essence of the program.”

In contrast, the representative of a national organization dealing with informal educational and leisure regards parents only as means to increase the children’s participation in the program, not as an integral part of the children’s normal development. He said: “We include the parents as part of the program so instead of having them against us, we have their cooperation. It promotes the children’s participation.”

Contributions to the participants

Further information about parent involvement and participation was obtained from focus groups with program facilitators and participants.

□ The social aspect of the programs is very important to the participants.

The participants said that the programs encourage them to get out of the

house, get together with other parents and create support groups, as said by one of the mothers, “You get out of the house to learn, you get to know people you would not have met otherwise.”

- The participants say that learning strengthens their ability to help their children and change the power balance in the family, “Right now children are helping their mothers... It’s good that the children see their parents learning.”
- The programs empower the mothers to be less dependent on their children. Mothers use to rely on their children to help them read and write, “I feel better, I used to have to ask the children to read for me. Now I can recognize the names by myself, I sort the mail.”
- Mothers appreciate learning how to converse, write and read in Hebrew, “I’m very happy to learn to speak, to read, I never knew how to write my name. Now I do.”
- The program enables the mothers to acquire skills that help them in everyday life at home, shopping and reading the mail, “I go to the market and I know how to read, and know what to buy, how much to pay – I learned all kinds of useful things.”
- Program facilitators reported that while certain activities come naturally to the children, the significant change was in the parents, “the parents started to take an active role in the activities, they are stronger.”
- The programs encourage the parents to express their feelings, opinions and experience and convey this knowledge to their children. As they overcome their initial shyness and reserve, they begin to talk about themselves, and take pride in the Ethiopian heritage.
- The group meetings are very meaningful to the mothers. More fluent-speaking mothers support mothers whom have difficulty in Hebrew, they explain things to each other in Amharic, thus relieving the non-fluent mothers.

Challenges in operating programs for parents

Analyses of the interviews and questionnaires raised two themes of challenges in operating parent programs: recruiting parents and reaching regular participation and communicating with the parents. A third issue is including components specifically aimed at fathers in the programs.

Parent recruitment and participation

- It is very difficult to recruit parents to attend programs, and it is even more difficult to get parents to attend program on a regular basis. Parents find it difficult to commit themselves to program for many reasons, such as little children at home or different priorities. Often potential participants say they'll attend the program but eventually don't show up.
- The parents are not aware of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality that enable the programs to run their course. Irregular attendance is a common phenomenon, as well as frequent lateness.

Communication difficulties

- Most of the programs are conducted in Hebrew, causing communication problems. The participants find it hard to follow the facilitators language and are not fluent enough to express themselves in Hebrew.
- Ethiopian parents are not accustomed to exposing the feelings and talking freely about their personal behavior, attitudes or problems. The parents are very sensitive and gaining their trust is an arduous process. Issues such as child rearing are considered personal and even inquiring into the parent's level of Hebrew must be done with extreme sensitivity.
- Conducting activities in heterogeneous groups is not simple: differences in the attitudes of newcomers compared to more veteran immigrants, and differences between young parents to old parents impede the group process.

Addressing fathers

Program planners have yet to address the special need of the fathers within the Ethiopian families. None of the programs indicate fathers as a specific target population or relate to fathers in particular in any way. Although program planners target the programs at “parents,” they feel that they have reached their goals if they manage to create a group of mothers that attend the activities on a regular basis. When the difficult process of forming a group is finally finished, it appears that the vast majority of the group is mothers, if not mothers only.

Fathers rarely attend meetings or workshops even when programs are targeted at both parents out of their own initiative, and programmers don’t outreach to families to ensure fathers participation. Therefore, it is rare to find more than a few percent of fathers attending program activities.

Furthermore, in the infrequent occasions when do fathers attend, programmers do not seem to acknowledge the different expectations, needs and unique characteristics of fathers opposed to mothers. Fathers are not identified and addressed as a separate group with different needs.

The next chapter provides an in-depth look into a unique program targeted at Ethiopian fathers, and describes possible strategies for future action.

Father’s Group for Ethiopian Fathers – A Case Study

One attempt to address the specific needs of Ethiopian fathers was made by the Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Child and Family in Israel (ALMYA), targeted at Ethiopian fathers with young children, age 0-6.

In order to understand the process this program underwent, the facilitator was interviewed and a focus group with some of the participants was conducted.

Additional information about fathers' participation in home-based programs was learned from a focus group with mothers that was conducted by the Almaya Association.

The main goal of the program was to empower fathers and increase their awareness to the importance of their involvement in their children's education. The program was developed to help address some of the great needs and difficulties the Ethiopian fathers have encountered since their move to Israel, as described in Chapter 3. The program planners believe that by exposing the fathers to the new reality and by giving legitimization to their authority in the past, they will be able to play their role as the primary educators of their children with enhanced confidence. The program thus emphasized: cultivating the role of the father within the family, based on his traditional and familiar role in the past; encouraging the fathers to preserve their values and culture as means to strengthen the communication between parents and children; and on enriching the fathers' Hebrew as means of communication with the wider surroundings.

According to the program facilitators, the philosophy of the program was not to coerce the necessity for changes in attitudes and in life style as a given part of the program, but rather to help the participants reach these conclusions by themselves according to their own pace and understanding.

The program was based on biweekly meetings lead by an Ethiopian social worker dealing with issues raised either by the facilitator or by the participants. The initial plan was to establish two groups of 20 fathers each, but the facilitator came across many difficulties in recruiting fathers and obtaining regular attendance. Eventually the facilitator managed to establish one group of 8 fathers.

Program contributions

According to the facilitators, the program managed to achieve some of its goals. Regarding the contributions to the fathers well being and self esteem, program facilitators stated that:

- The program exposed the fathers to their surroundings: they became more open and started viewing things in a more positive light. Thanks to the frank discussions, the fathers started to see things in a more correct perspective and stopped making generalizations such as “Nobody wants us at work places.” The fathers came to realize that when they don’t get the position, it is not always due to their origins.
- Following the sessions, the fathers came to realize that internalizing their feelings and refraining from discussing things, as they were accustomed to do in Ethiopia, is not positive. In order to improve the situation, problems must be discussed and revealed.
- The program provided knowledge that is important for adjusting to day-to-day life in Israel.

The program also had positive effects on father’s parenting views and behaviors:

- The fathers were exposed to ideas about how to be supportive of the children and how to increase their involvement. As the program facilitator said: “They started to understand the children’s needs, that the children deserve a good word and a positive attitude from their father. They learned what the children want their father to be like.”
- The fathers were motivated to be involved in the children’s education. Each father was given an assignment to ask the teacher or caregiver what the child learned during one day, “How was my child?” and not to wait for the teacher to come. The fathers were encouraged to

volunteer in their children's school, and they reported that doing so changed the teachers and children's attitudes towards them.

The participants discussed further contributions of the program:

- The program helped strengthen the relationship between fathers and their children, and between the families and their heritage, "I must convey to them what happened to us in Ethiopia... I want to get close to my children."
- The program strengthened their connection to the children's educational setting, "When there were problems in school, we didn't know how to speak, the teachers paid no attention to us... the facilitator taught us who to speak to, how to approach the school, it helped us a lot."
- The program became a beginning of a solution to many of the parents problems, "Now we have a connection, we have someone to turn to if there is a problem, someone to teach us how to solve the problem in various areas."

Although the main goals of the program were related to family relationships and understanding and connecting to the educational systems, the greatest impact of the program was strengthening the father's knowledge and self-confidence. The program even positively impacted how the father dealt with apartment-building issues such as dealing with neighbors and house-committees. The fathers felt their rights were violated and that they were humiliating by neighbors who were immigrants from other countries and veteran Israelis. Several methods of coping were discussed and implemented.

Program challenges

- The facilitator found it very difficult to operate the program, despite his Ethiopian origin and extensive understanding and empathy towards the target population. Initially he was very motivated, and put many efforts in preparing each session, “I came prepared, I wanted to conduct the activity, I did everything I could to enable them to come, but they didn’t. I was very upset I couldn’t give everything I wanted to give. It was a great disappointment...”

- Recruiting fathers to attend the program on regular basis was very difficult, and involved political issues within the Ethiopian community. Despite repeated promises to come to the meetings, fathers did not arrive. A serious inquiry into the situation indicated that the potential participants were in the midst of an internal political dispute based on misconceptions towards the various associations and organization that work among the Ethiopian community. According to the program planners, potential participants were confused and intimidated by others to believe that attending programs initiated by certain organizations is a betrayal to other organizations and to the Ethiopian community in general.

- Gaining the fathers’ trust posed another challenge; “In the beginning they don’t appreciate you. You need patience and understanding. You even have to give up your plans, just to gain their trust... everything offered to them is accepted with a great sense of suspicion, and makes it very hard to enroll them in the program.” (Program facilitator)

- Despite continuous efforts, the program was implemented only in 20% of the original planned capacity, for approximately 10 months. The

program was not continued, partially because the facilitator was very discouraged and left at the end of the year.

Summary and Discussion

In recent years there has been growing awareness of the importance of fathers in the lives of children. This awareness is the result of societal changes in fathers roles, on the one hand, and on research findings indicating the positive affects of fathers on their children's development and well being as well as the negative impact of growing up without fathers.

The increasing interest in fatherhood in the past two decades has yielded a rich quantity of research that greatly expands the understanding of fathers' unique contribution to their children's lives. The literature review presented evidence for the importance of fathers' presence and involvement in their children's lives. It indicated the positive influence of fathers' involvement on the children's social and emotional status as well as on their educational achievements and their integration into society as adults.

In addition, the literature refers to several factors that influence the extent to which fathers are involved in their children's lives as well as their fathering practices. These include a positive relationship with the mother or partner, the father's well-being, father's employment and ability to provide and gender role perceptions and expectations.

The changes in family structure as well as the findings related to the importance of fathers in children's lives have led many countries to develop policies and programs to enhance fathers roles and support them in increasing their involvement. Some countries have introduced changes in legislation aimed to provide more opportunities for fathers to spend more time with their

children. Some examples are “paternal leave” for fathers that were legislated in Scandinavian countries as well as in Israel and work place legislation enabling more flexibility for men to care for children and join them in their activities.

In other countries, policies focused more on programs aimed directly at raising the awareness of fathers to their importance in their children’s lives and on working with them directly to help them maximize their contribution.

The efforts to involve fathers, both those focused on legislation and those focused on direct work with fathers, indicated that increasing fathers’ involvement requires a change in the ways in which fathers, as well as mothers and other members of society, think about and understand their role. Moreover, they indicated that attempts to change fathers parenting practices demands attention not only to the fathers themselves and to their relationship to their children but also to their relationship to the wives and mothers, to the cultural and social context in which they live and to their functioning and well- being as human beings.

The immigration of Ethiopians to Israel posed several challenges for both Israeli society and the immigrants themselves in achieving successful social integration. The lengthy immigration process, the relative lack of education, the difficulty to find employment and the need to adjust to an extremely different culture have all impacted the Ethiopian family in general and the role of fathers in particular. The changes that have affected the Ethiopian community have changed the nature of relationships between fathers and children and fathers and wives. Many fathers have found themselves unemployed, thus unable to maintain their role as providers. In addition, the difficulties in Hebrew and their lack of experience with Western services, institutions and the education system has made it difficult for them to stay involved in their children’s lives and support them within the education system. As indicated in the literature review, all these conditions may have negative effects on the extent of fathers’

involvement in their children's lives and on their parenting patterns. These in turn, may negatively effect the children's well being and development.

Thus, programs and policies to support Ethiopian fathers in their new roles should be viewed as an important component of the policies aimed at supporting Ethiopian community and enhancing its absorption into Israeli society. However, programming for fathers in Israel is only beginning to evolve. Our review revealed that there are only few scattered initiatives to develop and implement programs directed specifically at fathers. A limited number of programs are operated through local welfare offices often targeted at the clients of these services: i.e. families with children "at risk." More extensive efforts are undertaken by a leading organization, which is active among the Arab population and operates programs for young Arab children and their families.

A review of the programs that were developed and adapted especially for Ethiopian families with young children reveals that most of the programs have adopted a family centered approach and consider parents as a major target group for their efforts. Most of the major organizations that develop and operate these programs make special efforts to reach out to parents and plan activities that will promote their participation and involvement. Moreover, many of the programs are aimed directly at parents and include, in addition to activities focused on parenting, activities aimed at the "parents as people" such as Hebrew lessons and discussion groups. However, the programs that were reviewed do not include components that focus on fathers, and are generally satisfied if they are able to recruit and maintain regular participation of the mothers.

The review also included an in-depth analysis of a program for fathers which was operated by one of the major organizations that works with the Ethiopian population. The data concerning this program revealed the challenges facing

those interested in implementing such programs on a broader basis. Though the fathers that participated in the program have expressed satisfaction with its contribution to their ability to interact with their neighbors, local services and children's schools, the program encountered many difficulties in recruiting fathers, maintaining regular attendance and in finding the issues and content which aroused interest among them. However, the experience with this program also underlined the importance of addressing these challenges and programming for fathers. Beyond the contribution cited by the fathers, mothers that participated in focus groups indicated the importance of their spouses also attending activities. The mothers indicated that it is important that fathers participate in parent groups so that they too will understand some of the issues related to child rearing and development.

Future Directions

The review points to several directions that need to be considered in further developing programs for Ethiopian fathers and for fathers in general in Israel:

1. There is a need to raise the awareness of both policy makers and program providers to the importance of planning and targeting programs specifically at fathers. The adoption of a family centered approach and a commitment to working with families does not suffice to reach out to fathers and include them in the activities.
2. The limited participation of fathers in programs for parents and the limited efforts to reach out to them may further change the balance between fathers and mothers in Ethiopian families. Thus, strengthening the fathers' roles through programming should be a major element of any family centered approach.
3. Programs for fathers should include components relating to the range of changes and transitions that fathers have undergone in the process of immigrating from Ethiopia to Israel and not only to changes related to their role as parents. The literature indicates that the way in which fathers perceive themselves in their roles as husbands, providers and

community members greatly affects their relationship with their children and their parenting practices.

4. In programming for fathers, program developers can rely on the experience gained by programs in other parts of the world and for other populations. This experience indicates that:
 - a. Investment should be made in recruiting fathers. Initial recruitment should be conducted on a personal basis or even through house calls.
 - b. As research suggests, the quality of the father's relationship with his child is dependent to a large extent on his relationship with the child's mother. Therefore, it is important to include a component concerning the parents' relationships in programs for fathers.
 - c. Although each program has its specific goals, it must not ignore the starting point of the fathers to create the right process to lead them, at their pace, to the program goals.
 - d. It is important to include in the programs components related to issues other than parenting that may be important to the fathers. Issues such as dealing with authorities, learning Hebrew and occupational training may be important for recruiting fathers but also for strengthening their identity as contributing to the family.
 - e. It is important to carefully select and train the staff persons who will operate the programs. In programming for the Ethiopian population, it is important to include Ethiopian staff and to provide extensive training in Ethiopian culture.

In summary, the review contains ample evidence that indicates the importance of including programs for fathers as part of Israel's efforts to enhance the integration of Ethiopian immigrants. However, thus far, only limited action has been taken in this direction. Thus, creating a knowledge base as well as experimenting with different models and methods of implementing programs

for fathers can be viewed as the next step in developing this aspect of intervention and policy. Efforts in this direction will not only contribute to the policies and programs for the Ethiopian community but may also set an example for intensifying and systematizing the work with fathers for additional populations in Israel.

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