



Windsor Essex
Child/Youth
Advocacy Centre

Cultural Competence: Manual for Servicing Diverse Populations

Building Awareness
Among Service
Providers



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Introduction: Servicing Diverse Populations

When a child reports they have been abused, whether physically or sexually, they often find themselves telling their story numerous times over. From the initial disclosure to the completion of investigations or court trials, children/youth have to tell their stories over and over. The Windsor Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre (WECYAC) represents a major turn in how society addresses these issues. Where before, children/youth would have to tell their stories numerous times over. The Advocacy Centre model fosters the practice of ensuring children/youth tell their story once. The belief of WECYAC is that after the initial disclosure, children and youth should only have to tell their story once. Once a child or youth has disclosed they have been abused, the child/youth, their family (assuming a family member is not the accused), police, and child protection workers, meet at the Centre for a joint investigation. During the interview, a detective from the police force interviews the child while another officer and a child protection worker listen and record details of the incident. Since the child/youth's statement is recorded in full, and all details are documented by the officers and child protection workers, the child/youth can then focus on getting the help they need in order to recover and heal from the abuse they have endured.

The Windsor Essex Child/Youth Advocacy Centre is looking to expand its advocacy efforts by conducting research and trainings on the importance of understanding cultural diversity. Since the Windsor-Essex region is highly diverse, especially for its population size, it is important that those working with children/youth who have been abused, or are at risk of abuse, understand the importance of being culturally competent in their work. Furthermore, in order to better serve the family system, it is of utmost importance to be aware of how culture plays a role in the disclosure of the abuse, the investigation, and the road to recovery. This manual aims to provide service providers with an understanding and awareness of culture, as well as understanding some common themes that may arise in terms of abuse and cultural diversity. Not all cultures view abuse, disclosure, and investigations the same way; therefore, service providers should strive to be aware of not only how various cultures view these processes, but also develop an awareness of the importance of understanding culture.

Now, a comprehensive review of each of the cultural communities within Windsor Essex is outside the scope of this report, and according to research, understanding the norms, values, and mores of various different cultures is near impossible (see section on What is Culture?). Particularly in the context of child/youth physical and sexual abuse. However, by studying certain concepts that pertain to understanding culture, and by conceptualizing common themes, service providers are able to develop an awareness that will not only assist them in servicing children/youth and their families, but will also assist them in their work on a daily basis, regardless if they are working with families and children/youth who have been abused.

This report aims to increase cultural competency and cultural awareness of service providers of the importance of increasing cultural competence, so investigations and disclosure



processes are completed in the most culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. This manual will unfold as follows. First, we will define culture by drawing information from research within the social sciences so we can define and understand culture in the most appropriate way. Next, we will explore important concepts that the social science research stresses service providers should understand. These discussions will help service providers better understand the values, norms, and mores of diverse cultures within the area. Thirdly, the discussion shifts towards understanding some common themes that may come up in the disclosure, investigation, and servicing processes across diverse collectivist cultures. Finally, the discussion concludes with a discussion of intergenerational and historical trauma and provides some key points and suggestions for service providers to bear in mind in order to facilitate harmony and efficiency in their work with diverse populations.

We now turn to a discussion of culture, provide a definition, and understand the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. Moreover, the discussion will bring to light how culture is not fixed, but is fluid and changes over time and space.

What is Culture? Individualist and Collectivist Cultures

What is culture? This is a very broad question that could be answered in a plethora of ways. When people use the word culture, they often use it to describe groups of people that are not of their own culture. However, everyone has culture and culture is a part of human behaviour, communities, society, and the world as a whole.

According to Abney (2002), culture is a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and standards of behaviour that pass down from one generation to another. This is a very broad definition; however, it provides a necessary description of how diverse culture is, and how it acts on behaviour and all levels of human functioning. Furthermore, culture is not static (Gosine, 2000; Yon, 2000). Meaning, culture changes over time and is in constant negotiation with itself and the world, and develops over years, decades, even centuries (Gosine, 2000; Yon, 2000). That being said, there is also wide variation within cultures, more commonly named subcultures, which suggests that culture is complex and multifaceted, and that people from the same culture often have stark differences (i.e. variation within Hispanic, Arabic, African-American, Caucasian, etc.) (Fontes, 2005).

Green (1999) states that culture is not necessarily something one possesses, such as a specific value or appearance. Instead, culture for Green (1999) is a perspective that mediates behaviour and represents established meanings people act on in any given situation or relationship. Therefore, since cultural identity is so central to group membership and personal identity, any suggestion that a cultural practice is negative or inappropriate is likely to be sensitive, especially if pressure to change comes from an external actor outside of that culture (Koramo, Lynch, & Kinnair, 2002). Consequently, culture and cultural practices can be highly



contentious. Especially in the area of child physical abuse, and in some instances, particularly with issues of disclosure, sexual abuse.

Now that we have a basic understanding of the term culture, we can now define two broad categories of culture within the context we have discussed above. The world is divided between two broad categories of cultures: *individualist* and *collectivist*. *Individualist* cultures place a lot of emphasis on the individual (Fontes, 2005); whereas *collectivist* cultures place a lot of emphasis on the family, community, and society as a whole (Triandis & Suh, 2002). In *Individualist* cultures, such as those in Canada, the United States, and parts of Western Europe, importance is placed on individual fulfillment and success. In *collectivist* cultures, such as Arab, Hispanic, Asian, African, and parts of Central and Eastern Europe, emphasis is placed on the family, community, and society as a whole ahead of the individual. Meaning, the family, the harmony of the community, and the success of society as a whole are more important than personal fulfillment and are always at the forefront. Furthermore, many organized religious groups could be considered collectivist, particularly those that place an emphasis on a higher power above the individual.

Often times, individualistic and collectivist cultural attitudes, norms, values, and mores have a tendency to contradict each other. Since their emphasis is placed in different domains, there are chances that misunderstanding and misinterpretations can take place. Moreover, in the context of child physical and sexual abuse, these conflicting attitudes create a possibility for contention while servicing these families (as will be discussed in the section Common Themes Across Collectivist Cultures). For the time being however, what the reader should take away from this discussion is that in the context of cultural diversity, service providers in Canada are often acting within their individualist culture while servicing those from collectivist cultures. This can create some contention in the interactions between service providers and those from collectivist cultures, and it is up to us through collaboration and empathetic understanding to break down these barriers.

Understanding Cultural Competency, Cultural Relativism, Cultural Absolutism, Intersectionality, Ethnocentrism, Acculturative Stress, and Cultural Safety

In this section, we discuss various concepts as they relate to culture, and how these concepts can be used in order for service providers to facilitate services in the most culturally appropriate manner, while at the same time adhering to Canadian child protection law, the Criminal Code, and ensuring service providers can carry out their roles in the most respectful, harmonious, and efficient way. According to Sawriker (2017), there are so many different ethnic minority groups, that it is essentially impossible for service providers to understand each and every one in great detail. Therefore, we can only strive to understand various cultures, and utilize



different concepts to facilitate understanding in the absence of knowing specific details of each and every culture. In this section, we will discuss six concepts that are important for servicing diverse populations of youth/children and their families. These are: *cultural competence*, *cultural relativism*, *cultural absolutism*, *intersectionality*, *ethnocentrism*, *acculturative stress*, and *cultural safety*.

Before discussing the common themes across collectivist cultures in the context of child physical and sexual abuse, it is important to note that no culture abuses children more than another. It is important to understand that culture interacts with other variables (as will be discussed) in complex ways, such that it is inaccurate to assume/conclude that one culture condones abuse more than another. Therefore, as we go through this process, it is important for the reader to keep an open-mind. By having these discussions, we can foster understanding and compassion and lead the way towards doing what is in the best interests of our children/youth.

Cultural Competency

There are many definitions of cultural competency that are important for our discussion. First however, it is important to note that cultural competence is not a new concept. In fact, cultural competency and its importance in many areas has been discussed since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cultural competence can be defined as a broad set of behaviours, attitudes, and policies that enable effective work in cross-cultural situations (Childhood Development Institute, 2007). Additionally, Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) describe cultural competence as a developmental process that evolves over time, is a complex framework, and that there are no textbook linear solutions to solve the complexity of cultural competence. And finally, there is no end goal of cultural competence. Or in other words, there is no endpoint of cultural competence, it is a lifelong developmental process that involves continuous learning (Este, 2007).

Why is this concept important? It is important because it argues that service providers ensure they are collaborating with the populations they serve. Moreover, it also suggests that service providers take the initiative in doing some minor research on the values, norms, and mores of different cultures in order to facilitate efficient respectful services. Cultural competence also advises that service providers ensure they take the necessary steps towards being culturally competent, in that, service providers take a full account of their clients' backgrounds (see attached Cultural Competency Framework in Appendix).

Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism aims to put all cultures on an equal playing field. Meaning no culture is above another and that no culture has the right to negatively judge another culture (Barn, 2007). Furthermore, all cultures should be viewed in their own right, and cultural standards and sanctioned behaviours cannot be judged by the standards of another culture (Korbin, 2008).



What does this all mean? Cultural relativism strives to take all cultures for face-value and that all cultures are equal. Furthermore, by saying one culture is above another, this can be interpreted as discrimination or even racism. Therefore, it is important for service providers to bear in mind that although one culture does not share the same values and norms as another, that culture is still an equal and should be considered with respect and dignity. This does not excuse abusive behaviour; however, it does provide a framework of understanding so that service providers can educate families on healthy child-rearing practices, while at the same time assisting those children/youth who have been victimized.

Cultural Absolutism

Cultural absolutism refers to the idea of being culture blind. Meaning, that service providers treat everyone with the same standard regardless of culture, religion, race, or ethnicity (Sawriker, 2017). The supposition here states that since service providers are culture-blind, there is a standardization of services that does not take into account culture, and therefore places everyone on an even playing field.

Although this may sound ideal, research indicates that this is an impossible task (Sawriker, 2017). Remember in the discussion on What is Culture?, we established that culture refers to the values, norms, and mores that guide human behaviour. If we take into account this definition, we can assume that literally everything we do, say, and act on is guided by culture. Therefore, it is impossible to achieve cultural absolutism since no matter what we do, we are engaging in culture, and culture guides everything we do, say, and act on.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a very important concept when working with diverse populations, and it might be the most important concept we discuss in this section, besides acculturative stress, because it brings awareness to the different variables that make up an individual. According to Nadan, Spilsbury, and Korbin (2015), intersectionality focuses on how different elements and characteristics make up a person's identity, and that these 'multiple identities' all shape human experience. Garcia (2009) provides a great framework for taking into account the different variables that make up a person's collective identity: (1) physical environment; (2) individual, familial, and social environment; (3) institutional and structural factors; (4) socio-political context; (5) subjective perceptions of environment.

By adopting an intersectional approach, we can gain a deeper understanding of the children/youth we serve and their families. By examining the various factors that are influential in the context of child/youth physical and sexual abuse, we gain a deeper appreciation that culture has very little to do with abuse. Furthermore, in doing so, we can assist and educate families towards recovery, while at the same time, ensuring that justice is served. Moreover, by



understanding the different components of a child's identity, as well as their family's, service providers are better equipped to support these youth by ensuring that all their needs, including cultural ones, are attended to with dignity and respect.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is a fairly simple concept. It is the flip-side of cultural relativism, and therefore argues that ethnocentrism is the act of comparing, analyzing, and making judgements about another culture based on the values and norms of our own (Fontes, 2005). Furthermore, ethnocentrism goes even further than simply judging one culture based on the values of our own. Ethnocentrism refers to the act of being unaware of our own cultural upbringing, and assuming that these values and norms are applied universally (Fontes, 2005).

Now, being ethnocentric does not imply discrimination or racism. However, if not kept in check, ethnocentrism is the start of going down the path of discrimination and racism. Therefore, service providers need to be aware of their own values and be sure not to impose these values and norms on others. Particularly those who are struggling and dealing with child sexual/physical abuse.

Acculturation/Acculturative Stress

Before discussing the topic of acculturation and acculturative stress, we need to understand that when working with diverse populations, the chances of working with immigrant groups, or descendants of recent immigrants is very high. Particularly in a country like Canada, and the Windsor-Essex region. Acculturation and acculturative stress are important considerations when working with diverse population, as in the case in Windsor-Essex.

The process of immigration is a highly confusing and stressful time for some immigrants. Many people refer to 'culture shock' with respect to being in a new country and culture; however, this term does not quite hit the head on the nail. Therefore, we need to dig deeper in order to understand the true depth of the experiences of immigrants. Especially when faced with reports of sexual/physical abuse. Immigrants may face a learning curve in their interactions with Canadian institutions such as schools, the medical system, banks, housing, and immigration authorities; and when coupled with the terrible experience of physical/sexual abuse, this time becomes even more confusing and stressful (Fontes, 2005).

Acculturative stress is moderated by numerous variables such as reason for immigration, economics, and response of the host country, which can all affect the potential for domestic violence and child abuse within the home and has a direct effect on parenting styles (Barkho, Fakhour, & Arnetz, 2010; Britto & Amer, 2007; Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003). Additionally, the



reason for immigration and the attitudes of those found in the host country also have a direct effect on acculturative stress (Abu-Ras & Abu-Badar, 2008; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).

In order to adequately service immigrant families in the context of child physical/sexual abuse, Sawriker (2017) suggests that service providers take into consideration the following migration related characteristics:

- Displaced sense of belonging and cultural identity.
- Perceived or experiences of racism and discrimination.
- Socio-economic situation.
- Loss of, lack of, or isolation from extended family, social, and community supports.
- Intergenerational conflict.
- Low English proficiency.
- Lack of awareness of available services.
- Fear of authorities.
- Unaware of institutions and laws such as child protection laws.

Acculturative stress affects literally every component of immigrants' lives for years after they arrive to their host country. For refugees, this experience has the potential to be exacerbated since refugees are exposed to circumstances that forced them to flee their homes (i.e. war, famine, political oppression, genocide, etc.). Furthermore, when taking all these variables into account, with the addition of child/youth physical or sexual abuse, the stress on the children/youth and their parents, assuming the offender is not a parent, is potentially massive, and although it is impossible to ask service providers to know all the details surrounding this experience, having just a simple awareness can make a world of difference when servicing these populations.

Cultural Safety

Cultural Safety refers to the concept of people from various cultural groups should feel safe in practicing their culture without any outside interference (Zon et al., 2004). Moreover, cultural safety encompasses the idea of power differentials (Zon et al., 2004). Meaning, especially in the context of child abuse where intervention by the state takes place, service providers must be aware of the power they hold in relation to the families they are servicing. Additionally, service providers must be aware of the societal position a family's culture holds. In doing so, we gain a deeper understanding of the discrimination, racism, and exclusion that many ethno-cultural groups face; therefore, in order to foster cultural safety, we need to move towards a more collaborative, inclusive, and safe paradigm in order to service these populations efficiently.



Furthermore, in order to practice cultural safety, service providers need to be aware that the power they hold to intervene in family matters does not threaten the cultural norms and values of that particular family. On the contrary, families should feel safe to practice their cultural identity. However, if the event arises where culture is used as a means of justifying abuse, this is simply invalid, and the research is quite clear and strict on the notion that child abuse should never be justified in the name of culture or religion.

The next section focuses on common themes that arise in terms of child sexual/physical assault. It provides explanations for some of the experiences families face as well as service providers, with the goal of heightening the awareness of those working with these populations.

Common Themes Across Most Collectivist Cultures within the Context of Child Physical/Sexual Abuse

This section focuses on the common themes in the social science research regarding collectivist cultures and child physical/sexual abuse. Also, the information collected here has been compiled through consultations with various experts. However, an important note needs to be provided first. No culture condones the malicious abuse or sexual abuse of children and youth. Moreover, many stereotypes of various ethnocultural groups are more-or-less a byproduct of snap-judgments and prejudices that have been overexaggerated in mainstream society through media or institutionalized prejudices. Also, although some cultures may be overrepresented in the child protection system, research has indicated that when you control for variables such as socio-economic status, there appears to be little difference in prevalence rates among ethnocultural groups involved in the child protection system or court systems (Hussey, Chang, & Kotch, 2006). Nonetheless, it is important to discuss these common themes in order for service providers to provide the best services for children/youth and their families.

The common themes across collectivist cultures are as follows and will be discussed accordingly: (1) honour, shame, and the role of religion; (2) *issues with disclosure*; (3) *stigma of mental health*; (4) *stigma associated with state intervention*; (5) *use of punitive discipline as a means of character building and protection*; and (5) *intergenerational/historical trauma*.

Honour, Shame, and the Role of Religion

Shame, honour, and religion play a huge role in the disclosures, responses, and interventions that are used in child/youth sexual abuse. Religion typically engrains a collectivist moral guise within families (Haboush & Alyan, 2013). Therefore, shame and honour often play a role in inhibiting, recanting, or changing disclosure of sexual abuse within collectivist cultures because of the shame that disclosure can bring to the family (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). For our purposes, shame after sexual abuse can be conceptualized in three ways:



- *Failure to Protect* – in highly patriarchal religious cultures, there is an element of shame that comes from the males in the family failing to protect the women. (De Young & Ziglar, 1994).
- *Fate* – fate or external locus of control (forces beyond our control), dictate that the abuse was meant to be due to God's will or Karma (De La Cruz-Quiroz, 2000; Fontes, 2005; Hodge, 2005; Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003; Tishelman & Fontes, 2017; Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001).
- *Damaged Goods* – many different religious and ethno-racial groups place a high importance on virginity; therefore, children and youth may be apprehensive to disclose sexual abuse due to this cultural expectation (Fontes, 2005; Haboush & Alyan, 2013).

Issues with Disclosure

Disclosure of abuse, especially sexual abuse, is very difficult for any victim regardless of culture. However, due to some cultural values, norms, and mores, especially surrounding sexuality, disclosure is discouraged or inhibited. Furthermore, given the highly integrative nature of collectivist cultures and communities, victims also find that the potential of communal rejection or socioeconomic repercussions can be extremely high. There are a multitude of factors that influence disclosure. They are: (1) support from caregivers; (2) neurocognitive development at the time of abuse; (3) feelings of shame; (4) sexual abuse, or sexuality in general, seen as a taboo subject; (5) differential power dynamics in the family or community; and (6) availability of services (Collin-Vézina, De La Sablonnière-Griffin, Palmer, & Milne, 2015; Hébert, Tourigny, Cyr, McDuff, Joly, 2009; Paine & Hansen, 2002; Sinanan, 2011).

This manual will outline four different areas that affect disclosure. The reader should bear in mind that the information given in this section comes straight from social science research and consultation with various groups who represent the diversity of the Windsor-Essex region, as well as the input of experts whom have been working with abused children for long tenures. This manual has provided four key components that prevent disclosure. This of course is not an exhaustive list of the issues with disclosure. However, they are common across most collectivist cultures and can be applied to a wide range of population groups.

Placing Responsibility on Victim

First, it is important to note that placing responsibility on the victim is pronounced in all forms of sexual violence, from harassment to assault. The idea that the child/youth is responsible for the abuse (sexual abuse) is often a defense mechanism used by adults for their feelings of not being able to protect the child (Fontes, 2005). This misconception is common among many traditionally religious cultures. Although shame has already been discussed in this manual, this is a common theme that will occur many times over throughout this entire discussion. In addition to



adult feelings of guilt of not being able to protect their child/youth, many traditional religious groups place the responsibility of the victim to initiate restorative peace within the community or top clergy members (Harder & Haynie, 2012). Moreover, in many ethno-racial cultures that are highly religious, there is the belief that sexual abuse does not happen unless it was invited (Fontes, 2002). Now this statement is not exclusive to the various religious denominations alone, but is a common victim-blaming statement that is pervasive in society in general, regardless if the culture is collectivist or individualist.

Fear of Communal Rejection

Communal rejection is a major cause of concern in collectivist cultures. In some cultures, particularly highly devout religious communities, if sexual abuse is disclosed to the community, families and/or victims could be rejected by their community (Harder & Haynie, 2012). In some cases, depending on the severity of the abuse, the perpetrator could be exiled from the community (Harder & Haynie, 2012). For some groups, family members and/or victims may be reluctant to disclose based on fears of discrimination and stereotyping of the ethno-racial culture they represent (Jiwani, 2006). For example, this was the case with Arab cultures due to the stigma and fear of discrimination after the events of 9/11 (Jiwani, 2006). Additionally, in many collectivist cultures, there is an expectation of conformity, and if sexual abuse is reported to government authorities, and/or someone is labelled as having a mental illness, this could result in being exiled from the community due to deviating from the norm in a substantial way (Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001; Rao, Diclemente, Ponton, 1992; Wong, 1987; Wong & Stone, 1987).

Loss of Economic Support

This section is derived from consultations with experts working directly with children/youth who have been sexually or physically abused. In many collectivist cultures that are highly religious and operate on traditional gender norms, if the abuser is the breadwinner of the family (i.e. father or uncle) there is a potential to lose that source of income. Consequently, if the abuser is sentenced, the family can fall into poverty and experience an extreme change in the family system. This is not only applicable to traditional religious groups, but any group where the sole income earner is the abuser and is ultimately handed down a sentence. Although social service supports do exist for the families in this case, families are unaware of the availability of these services; thus, are hesitant to formally report abuse to the authorities.

Honour and Shame

As stated in the section Honour, Shame, and the Role of Religion, honour and shame are essentially at the centre of barriers to disclosure and reporting of sexual abuse. Shame and honour both have a huge role in inhibiting disclosure and reporting among collectivist cultures



(Fontes & Plummer, 2010). Furthermore, within various cultures and sub-cultures, including traditional collectivist cultures, discussing sex and sexuality is extremely taboo (Fontes and Plummer, 2010). Therefore, if sex and sexuality are taboo topics of discussion, children/youth find it extremely difficult to disclose this information based on the cultural norm of not discussing sex or sexuality at all. It is also important to note that in many of these groups, sexual health and education is simply not on the table at all for children and youth to discuss. This added pressure makes it enormously difficult for children and youth to disclose sexual abuse.

Stigma of Mental Health

In Western societies, mental health services and mental health awareness has increased in recent years. When Westerners struggle with mental illness, society encourages them to seek help, and the advocacy efforts of many mental health organizations are very strong. In some cultures however, mental health carries a large stigma. Moreover, in some cultures, there is no such thing as mental health. Therefore, it is important for service providers to appreciate this and approach the topic of mental illness with great sensitivity and consideration. It is also very important for service providers working with children/youth who have been abused to appreciate this idea so they can have a better understanding of the struggles not only the child/youth are facing, but the family unit as well.

Chan & Leong (1994) argue that the basic principles of psychotherapy (individualism, self-determination, and self-fulfillment) are in direct conflict with many collectivist groups. To be labelled with a mental illness in many traditional collectivist cultures carries a large stigma that is not only placed on the individual, but the entire family unit (Root, 1985; Sue & Sue, 1987; Yap, 1986; Weaver & Wodarski, 1996; Ciftci, Jones, Corrigan, 2013).

Since mental illness is a very sensitive topic for many collectivist groups, service providers should be aware that by simply bringing up the topic of mental illness can trigger an adverse reaction. So, if service providers must discuss the topic of mental illness, it should be done so with great sensitivity, compassion, and understanding. Moreover, service providers should also take into consideration the possibility of incorporating traditional cultural healing mechanisms in their interventions, as well as including highly respected individuals within those communities (clergymen, Imams, traditional healers, etc.).

Stigma Associated with State Intervention

In the Western world there is state intervention in many areas of social well-being. From social services, health care, police, and other forms of government involvement, including child protection. Many groups from around the world do not have this same type of government involvement. The experience of government involvement in their lives, especially in terms of parental practices, may have adverse responses due to fear or stress. Furthermore, it is important



to acknowledge the differences in police services in various countries. Meaning, representatives of the state are often seen as oppressive, exploitative, and have a tendency to cause more harm than good. This is particularly true of areas of the world that are plagued with political strife, oppression, civil war, and ethnic identity conflicts.

Migrants who come from collectivist cultures are accustomed to literally no government involvement in child-rearing practices and struggle to adapt to raising their children in a Western country with individualistic values and a commitment from government to protect children from corporal punishment and sexual abuse (Azar & Cote, 2002; Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Lewig, Arney, Salveron, 2010; Thomas, 1995; Renzaho, McCabe, Sainsbury, 2011). In highly traditional religious groups, there is a tendency to keep matters of child abuse inclusive within the community, and measures are taken (i.e. restorative justice) to ensure that there is no intervention on behalf of the state (Harder & Haynie, 2012). Many of these groups prefer to utilize a more restorative justice method, where preference for reconciliation within the community and no involvement from external actors is very important.

Those of us born in the West, or have been here for a long time, are highly accustomed to state intervention in child protection. Furthermore, Westerners are more-or-less complacent with government taking on this role, with the exception of those who may be involved in the system. Therefore, it is important for service providers to understand that for many of these migrant groups, state intervention is extremely strange, and in most cases terrifying. This may prompt some adverse reactions such as anger and frustration; however, these reactions to state intervention are mostly derived from fear.

Use of Punitive Discipline as a means of Character Building and Protection

Up until this point, this discussion has primarily focused on sexual abuse. This section will change gears and focus on the use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline, character building, and in some cases, as a means of protection depending on where these families come from. Although the use of malicious corporal punishment that causes injury is not condoned by any culture, corporal punishment is still used within various cultures, and it is important that service providers are cognizant that these parents are often highly affectionate and want the best for their children. However, punishment that causes injury, marks, and psychosocial maladaptive behaviours are obviously not acceptable and should never be justified in the name of culture or religion. This section will explore this idea and will conceptualize the use of corporal punishment, so that service providers can better understand this highly controversial issue.

As previously stated, no culture or religion condones the malicious abuse of children in the name of discipline, culture, or religion; however, corporal punishment is still used. In many cultures, physical discipline is viewed as an acceptable means of disciplining children (Buriel, Mercado, Chavez, 1991; Fontes, 2002). However, their reasons for doing so need to be described



in order for service providers to have a deeper understanding of the issues, and so they can also educate parents, family members, and the community on more appropriate ways of disciplining children and youth.

As the previous section on Stigma of State Intervention described, since many migrant groups come from countries with no child protection systems, many immigrant families are completely unaware of the child protection system and child protection law; thus, increasing the likelihood of state intervention in their new country (Dettlaff, 2008). In many collectivist cultures, punitive discipline is seen as a form of character building and discipline, and these parents, more often than not, do so because they want the best for their children. Furthermore, in some cultures, parents may use punitive discipline with a symbolic effect (i.e. steal something results in a slap on the wrist; swearing results in slap on the mouth), with the intention of correcting behaviour that is not acceptable (Zayas & Solari, 1994; Diaz, 1999). Although these can be malicious in nature, service providers are tasked with the job of educating parents on more appropriate means of discipline in order to reduce the risk of harm in the long-term (Sawriker, 2017).

Regarding religion, there is a tendency for Westerners to stereotype immigrants by stating that their religion or culture condones punitive discipline. However, this is often not the case, and those who do justify corporal punishment often do so by manipulating religious verses to rationalize this disciplinary method (Riley, 2011). That being said, there are some religious groups that condone the use of physical discipline; however, especially in cases where there is no injury or physical indications of abuse, often times children understand why they were disciplined and do not display any harmful effects after the fact (statement taken from confidential respondent). However, as the research indicates throughout this manual, service providers are tasked with the position of being an educator to transition families from these outdated practices.

This last piece regarding physical discipline is tied to the next section, Intergenerational and Historical Trauma. Many cultures from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia experienced European colonization. Although Canada was also a former colony, many of these areas were under European rule for centuries that ended only in the early to mid-1900s. Therefore, the remnants of colonial rule are still highly ingrained in the older generations of these groups. For our purposes in discussing punitive discipline, since many immigrant groups come from countries who were under colonial rule, punitive discipline was used to ensure the safety of children and to make sure they obey their colonial masters in order to avoid serious repercussions that today would be considered crimes against humanity (Fontes, 2005).

Although these sentiments are outdated, the legacy of colonialism is still affecting families throughout the world. The next section will discuss this in more detail. Furthermore, this discussion so far has not addressed African-American and Indigenous groups. The reason for this is because due to the extensive literature on both groups, it is impossible to discuss these groups



in any social science context without discussing the effects of slavery, oppression, and colonial rule, alongside the intergenerational and historical trauma that are still affecting these groups to this day.

Historical Trauma and Intergenerational Trauma Transmission

This section primarily discusses the historical oppression and trauma that has been passed down from generation to generation within Indigenous and African American communities. The reason for focusing on these specific groups is due to the fact that Indigenous groups and African-Americans are highly, and disproportionately, represented in the child protection system. It should also be noted, this discussion can be generalized to other groups who have been victims of historic oppression as well. Furthermore, this section will also highlight how child/youth physical and sexual abuse has intergenerational effects, ultimately reinforcing the cycle of abuse within families from one generation to another. In order to present this point, this section will first define historical trauma and explain how this is passed down through the generations. Secondly, this section will discuss how the legacy of slavery affects African Americans even to this day, and how colonialism has affected Indigenous groups within Canada. Finally, this section concludes by explaining how physical and sexual abuse of children and youth can often be passed down from one generation to the next.

Historical trauma is rooted in two preexisting concepts: historical oppression and psychological trauma (Kirmayer, Gone, Moses, 2014). Meaning, that when a group has been faced with historical oppression over decades and centuries, combined with the psychological trauma of oppression, slavery, genocide, etc., and if these psychological effects are not addressed through effective interventions, there is a strong possibility that these effects will be passed down to the next generation. For African Americans, after over three hundred years of slavery, poverty, segregation, and oppression, the effects of these experiences have the potential to be passed down and will continue to be passed down unless effective culturally appropriate interventions are put in place (Gump, 2000). Furthermore, after centuries of a master-slave relationship, this became a social template for all relationships and interactions between African Americans and non-African Americans, and even became a template for parenting (Gump, 2010).

In order to better understand this point, it is essential for the reader to understand how slavery affected the African American population. For centuries, African Americans were taken from their home, land, culture, and overall way of life and were forced to engage in grueling labour (Graff, 2014; Gump, 2010). Furthermore, not only were African Americans forced into horrible conditions of labour and living, but they often were beaten, belittled, and for the women, often raped by their masters. Due to centuries of enduring these horrible conditions, researchers for the last fifty years have coined the term 'Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome' (Billingsley, 1968; DeGruy Leary, 2005; Pouissant & Alexander, 2000; Moss, 2003). Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome explains the multigenerational transmission of the effects of slavery that directly



influence lower levels of self-esteem, heightened anger, and feelings of inferiority (Billingsley, 1968; DeGruy Leary, 2005; Pouissant & Alexander, 2000; Moss, 2003). To a non-African American, this may seem a little over-the-top; however, bear in mind that when a group of people have endured centuries of this kind of oppression and abuse, the effects do not simply disappear because of the abolishment of slavery. Also, remember, before Canada became an independent nation in 1867, slaves were used by European settlers. Furthermore, after slavery was abolished, African-Americans were constantly segregated, raped, castrated, and lynched (Washington & Washington, 2007) all the way up until the civil rights movement. Therefore, in order for service providers to better understand this population, and in order to serve them better, service providers need to have a better appreciation and empathetic understanding of the historical trauma that African-Americans have been exposed to.

Regarding Indigenous groups in Canada, in order to better understand these populations, service providers must understand how the experiences of colonialism have shaped these populations' current situations. The effects of trauma from colonialism have been passed down from one generation to the next, and we are now starting to understand that the legacy of colonialism is a major cause of social problems among Indigenous groups in Canada today (Clarke, 2007). The idea of historical trauma among Indigenous populations in North America has only been discussed since the mid-1990s (Gone, 2014; Maxwell, 2014); however, this idea is starting to be used by service providers in a variety of areas (i.e. education, health care, mental health, etc.). Hartmann & Gone (2014) outline the four C's of Indigenous historical trauma: colonial injury, collective experience, cumulative effects, and cross-generational effects. In order for service providers to better service these populations, it is important for them to have an awareness that although colonialism ended over a century and a half ago, Indigenous groups continued to face immense oppression and discrimination (i.e. residential schools system, 60s scoop), and these effects are being passed down through the generations.

When a group of people have experienced decades, even centuries of colonial rule, slavery, and oppression, they are at risk of being in families that transfer trauma through the generations (Wilkins, Whiting, Watson, & Russon, Moncrief, 2013; Frazier, West-Olantuji, St. Juste, & Goodman, 2008; Graff, 2014). Furthermore, due to these experiences of colonialism, slavery, and oppression, there is a chance that cultures who were once victimized by these systems pass the effect of trauma through their parenting (Hart-Wasekeesikaw & Gregory, 2009). Additionally, parents have inherited cultural traditions that have been passed down through the generations that were based on the master-slave colonizer-colonized relationship (Fontes, 2005). Therefore, because of these experience, certain parenting practices have been passed down, which although without a doubt are considered abusive, they are the direct result of a history of slavery and oppression.

Finally, we arrive at a point where we have to ask the question of whether those who have been abused, sexually and/or physically, are likely to become abusers as adults. Although



the research is split on this subject, when factoring in other variables such as poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse, there is without a doubt the potential to be abusive (Egeland, 1993; Egeland, Jacobowitz, Stroufe, 1988; Hemenway, Solnick, & Carter, 1994; Hunter & Kilstrom, 1979; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991; Zaidi, Knutson, & Mehm, 1989; Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Miller, Smyth, & Mudar, 1999; Pears & Capaldi, 2001). Consequently, when taking this whole discussion into account, it is clear that intergenerational effects are at play in terms of abuse. Moreover, without the proper interventions and educative experience in order to change behaviour, it is likely that these cycles will continue. In conclusion, although it is impossible to solve all these issues over-night or in a matter of months or even years, service providers can make great leaps in assisting these populations by simply being aware, and understand the historical and cultural context of diverse populations.

Key Points and Considerations to Keep in Mind

This manual is intended to bring an awareness to service providers of how important it is to take cultural and historical factors into consideration when servicing diverse populations in the context of child/youth sexual and physical abuse. As stated earlier in this manual, to gain a full understanding of every single culture service providers engage with is a lofty goal and is likely to be impossible. However, by gaining some knowledge of the values and norms of diverse populations, and by understanding their historical context as a family and as a group, service providers will be able to provide services more efficiently and with greater chances of success. For many years, culture was never considered in any context (i.e. social services, health care, policing, education, etc.); however, for the last thirty years or so, we are making great strides in understanding the importance of factoring in cultural and historical experiences (both on the individual and group level) that will lay a path for great progress in the future.

Sawriker (2017) offers great points and considerations to keep in mind when servicing diverse populations, and this manual has summarized these points below. If service providers do their best to utilize some of these ideas, society as a whole will be able to address the issues of child physical and sexual abuse more efficiently, which could ultimately lead to its reduction and hopefully eradication.

Sawriker (2017) Key Points and Considerations:

- Any practice that is harmful to children/youth should never be justified in the name of culture and/or religion.
- Service providers act as educators for parents who engage in certain child-rearing practices, and do so in a respectful way so as to not further disempower these groups.
- Subjectivity in assessments should be practiced and valued in order to better service diverse families.



- Service providers should not be fearful of discussions on culture and racism; but by acknowledging these they can actually facilitate a more efficient and harmonious outcome by working **WITH** the families.
- Many groups come from collectivist cultures, that value strong family and community cohesion and the inclusion of the community and extended family in child-rearing. These should be considered strengths that service providers emphasize when working with these groups.
- Use cultural information to understand the client group, and not to negatively stereotype them.
- Involve all members of family (even extended if necessary).
- Emphasize that all matters are confidential and precautions will be taken to ensure the matter in question will remain private.
- It is important to understand how acculturation affects migrant groups coupled with culture.
- Service providers should attempt to distribute information in the first language of the populations they serve.
- Must determine 'how much' culture should be considered in addressing child abuse issues.
- The five most common risk factors for child abuse are: domestic violence, alcohol and substance use, mental health issues in caregiver, housing issues, and financial issues.
THESE AFFECT ALL CULTURES!
- Cultural competency is an on-going skill that is a lifelong journey and requires:
 - Non-racist attitudes.
 - Willingness for self-reflection.
 - Having culture awareness/knowledge.
 - Having a sense of efficacy to work in culturally diverse communities.
 - Empathy and understanding of others.
 - Respectful engagement, expressed interest, efficient/responsive practice, regular contact, and the provision of support and information.
 - Having face-to-face time to engage with families.



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Appendix

Cultural Competency Framework

Domain	Issue
History and experience of immigration	Country of origin Length of time in Canada Motivation for immigration Hopes and expectations related to immigration Difficulties encountered during migration Process and stages of migration Significant family members remaining in country of origin Initial challenges encountered upon arrival to Canada Current feelings regarding the immigration experience Feelings regarding expectations for immigration as compared to reality
Experience of acculturation	Experience adjusting to new culture Feelings and attitudes regarding acculturation Familiarity and comfort with Canadian culture Challenges experienced adjusting to Canadian culture Family problems resulting from acculturation Difficulties resulting from a language barrier Current English fluency communication needs Perception of the receptiveness of host country Experience of “being an ethnic minority” in Canada Experience of discrimination and oppression Community and friendship patterns Availability of social support in current environment
Family and cultural values	Family roles and structure Intergenerational family structure Emotional attachment to family members Cultural values and norms Cultural traditions and celebrations practiced in the home Religious affiliation and current involvement Beliefs concerning health and mental health services Attitudes toward social services/police
Cultural values and beliefs regarding child maltreatment	Child-rearing practices and traditions Cultural beliefs regarding discipline and corporal punishment Cultural values concerning appropriate physical care and parental supervision Extent to which the maltreatment identified is considered either normal or dysfunctional within the family’s culture Understanding of how similar issues are handled in the family’s culture

Adapted from: Dettlaff, A. J. (2008). Immigrant Latino Children and Families in Child Welfare: A framework for conducting a cultural assessment. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 2(4), 451-470.



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