Photo: Strength in Unity Calgary Symposium Calgary, 2017

Reflections on Engaging in Research with Immigrant & Refugee Men

Presented by
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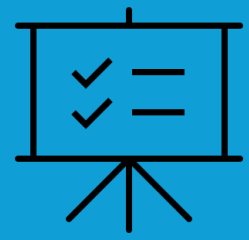
Presentation Outline

- Introduction: Who am I?
- Overview of selected research projects
- Lessons learned
- Q&A



Purpose of the Presentation

- To share my insights regarding research with immigrant and refugee men in Canada.

Overview of Select Research Projects

2020

COVID-19 and the impact on ACB communities in Canada, funded by PHAC

2019-2021

Promoting mental health equity for Canada's Black refugees: A pilot intervention with Rwandan and South Sudanese refugees in Calgary & Edmonton, funded by PHAC

2013-2018

Reducing stigma of mental illness among boys and men in Asian communities in Canada: An innovative intervention study, funded by Movember

2006-2007

Engaging people from HIV endemic countries (sub-Saharan African) in Calgary, funded by CIHR

Overview of Select Research Projects

2006-2007

Meeting multilevel challenges of Sudanese well-being and integration in Canada, funded by SSHRC

2003-2008

Sudanese and Russian refugee men in the Canadian context, funded by SSHRC-CURA

2003

Paternal engagement in immigrant and refugee families, funded by Health Canada

2002-2006

Racism, Violence, & Health Study, funded by CIHR

Source Country of Immigrant/Refugee Men In Research Studies

- Rwanda
- Philippines
- Hong Kong
- Former Yugoslavia
- South Sudan
- Russia
- Caribbean (Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad)
- Vietnam
- Punjabi
- India(other regions)
- Latin America (Columbia, Chile)
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- China
- United States (African American)
- Nigeria

Areas of Focus

- Settlement & adaptation experiences
- HIV
- Racism & discrimination
- Mental health
- Service delivery
- Child-rearing
- I&R men as fathers
- Family dynamics

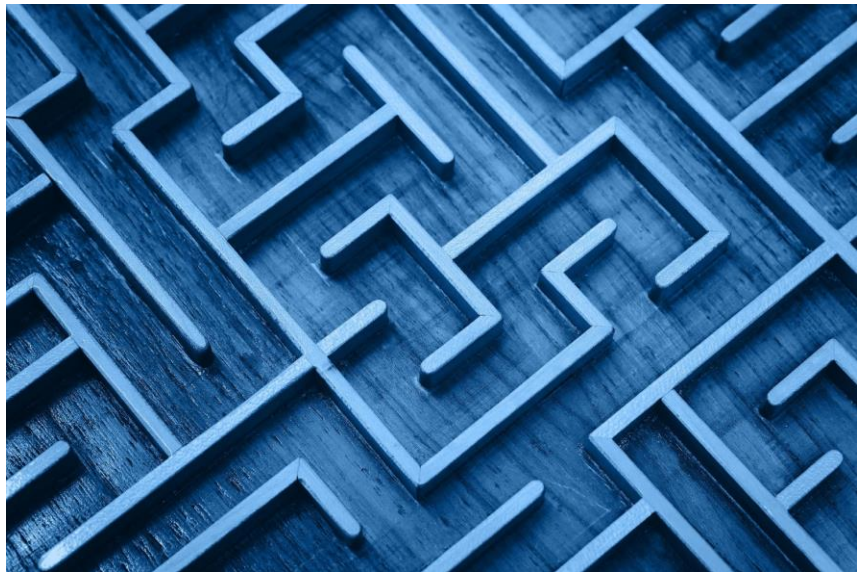
Program Development

- Drumbeat program (HIV community link)
- Program for immigrant and refugee men (ISC)
- Intergenerational youth project (ISC)
- Mosaic family centre (ISC)

So, what have I learned about engaging with immigrant and refugee men?

Ongoing Challenges Experienced by I&R Men

- The presence of racism and discrimination and its impact on the health and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee men (negative impact).
- The ongoing experiences of being underemployed and the devastating impact at both the individual/community levels.
- Closely related is the lack of financial security experienced by immigrant and refugee men and their families.
- Frustration with the lack of recognition of their international credentials.
- Adapting to new gender roles and expectations in Canadian society.



Ongoing Challenges Experienced by I&R Men

- Refugee men experience several losses as a result of the need to flee their countries – they may have been victims of violence or witnessed horrific forms of violence and terror, which results in mental health problems such as PTSD.
- For both immigrant and refugee men dealing with a series of losses (e.g., friends, culture, familiar geography) as a result of leaving their home country.
- When employed, immigrant and refugee men lack occupational mobility opportunities.
- Immigrant and refugee men experience negative interactions with a number of Canadian systems such as the police/criminal justice and child welfare system. In particular, Sudanese refugee men view the child welfare system as being intrusive and destructive to their communities.

Attributes of Immigrant and Refugee Men

- Adaptability – the men were quite receptive to learning about new gender roles that they had to take on while residing in Canada.
  - Greater role in domestic tasks
  - Increasing parenting role
- Virtually all the men saw themselves as being “providers for their family.”

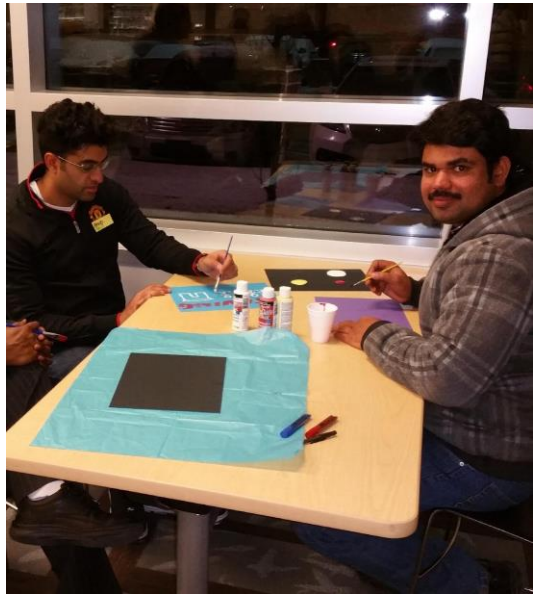


Photo: Anti-Stigma Research Intervention Training

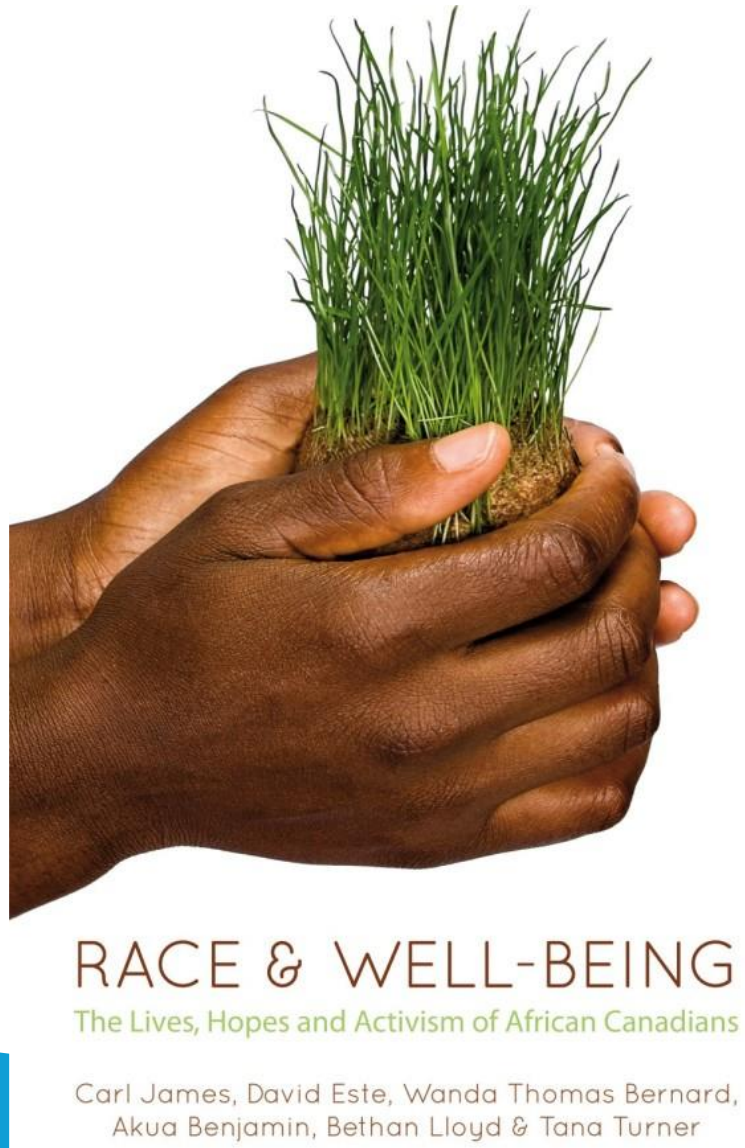
Attributes of Immigrant and Refugee Men

- All the men wanted to contribute in meaningful ways to Canadian society.
- All of the men were quite determined and tenacious in becoming successful in Canadian society.
- For refugee men, they expressed sincere appreciation of living in Canada where armed violence and conflict was not present.
- All of the men expressed deep appreciation despite the challenges they encountered for the opportunity to live in Canada.

Photo: Panel of Male Speakers Sharing Lived Experiences at SIU Symposium

Immigrant and Refugee Men as Research Participants

1. As research participants, I found the men to be very engaged.
2. Role reversal – during the research process, we regarded the men to be “the experts” while members of the research team including myself became their students. This reversal provided the opportunity for the men to share their stories openly.
3. They demonstrated a strong interest in learning about the issues under study. For example, in the RVH study, examples of issues explored included racism/discrimination, the lack of recognition of international credentials.



Immigrant and Refugee Men as Research Participants

4. For racialized immigrant and refugee men, they were extremely interested on the impact of racism on their health and well-being (e.g., SIU, RVH, and Paternal Engagement Study).
5. Immigrant and refugee men viewed research as a meaningful way to contribute to Canadian society.
6. In the studies where we provided educational/behavioural sessions, the men exhibited a keen desire to learn new knowledge in gaining new skills (e.g., SIU).

Photo: SIU Knowledge Translation Planning Committee

Benefits of Engaging in Research with I&R Men

- We learned about the experiences of immigrant/refugee men from their perspectives, which includes both negative and positive experiences. This fills an important gap in the research literature focused on the settlement of newcomers.
- Hearing the words from immigrant and refugee men helped in the development of programs designed specifically for these men and their families.
- By participating in research studies, it provides confidence to I&R men to take on or enhance leadership roles within their communities.
- We can celebrate the contributions these men make to Canadian society.

Photo: Presentation of Certificates

Strategies Utilized to Ensure the Success of Research With I&R Men

1. Reducing the power dynamics between the immigrant/refugee men and the researchers.
2. Building nurturing and sustaining relationships with I&R men (the importance of trust and being authentic).

Photo: Community Engagement Genesis Centre Calgary

Strategies Utilized to Ensure the Success of Research With I&R Men

3. Being very clear about the nature of the research project or study.
4. Making sure that the men are very clear about their role and expectations of them as participants in the research process.
5. Continually informing I&R men about the timelines associated with the research study.

Strategies Utilized to Ensure the Success of Research With I&R Men

6. Wherever possible, informing the men's partners about the nature of the research project.
7. Informing the men of the potential benefits of their participation in the project or study.
8. Sharing the results of the study with I&R men and their communities.

Additional Readings

- Tachble, A. (2010). *Fathering perceptions and experiences of Ethiopian immigrant/refugee men in a Canadian urban centre*. [PhD thesis, University of Calgary].
- Lorenzetti, L., Mancey, A., Walsh, C., & Lantion, V. (2023). Immigrant men and racism in Canada: Impacts of wellbeing and family violence. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 55, 1*(1–23).
- Al Mhanied, A., Bogossian, A., Hanley, J. (2023). Fathering here, fathering there: A phenomenological study of the impact of forced migration and resettlement of Syrian refugee fathers in Canada. *Journal of Men's Studies, 31*(3), 396–418.

Q&A

THANK YOU!!

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