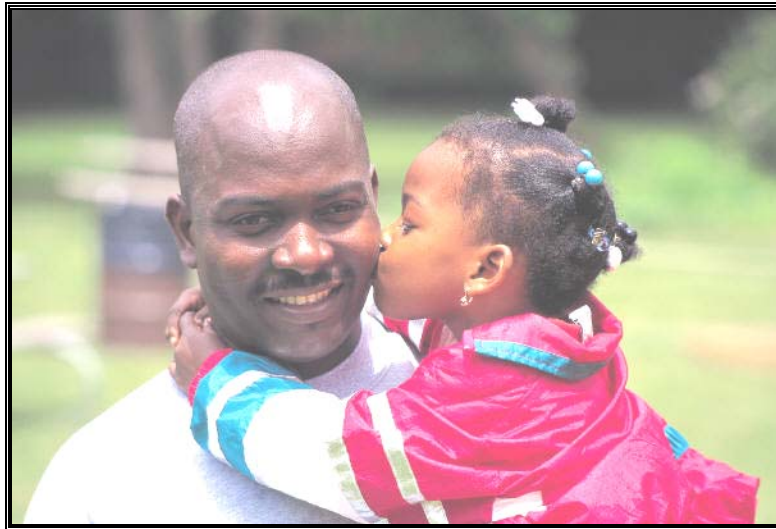


# Yorktown Child and Family Centre

## ***Supporting Young Families Program:***

Evaluation of the Pilot: ***FATHERING GROUP***

**April 2007 – April 2008**



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Considerable appreciation also goes to the young fathers for whom the group was created - their willingness to delve into topic areas, often never before talked about, speaks to their commitment to their journey to being better fathers.

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Yorktown Child and Family Centre

Yorktown Child and Family Centre (Yorktown) is a community-based, non-profit, social service agency situated in the west-end of Toronto. The population that Yorktown serves is one of the poorest in Toronto. The area remains one of the most under-served communities in the province. High levels of immigration to the area have resulted in one of the highest concentrations of new Canadians in Ontario. Yorktown is dedicated to providing effective, accessible, quality mental health treatment, prevention and out-reach services to children, youth and families in the former City of York.

### 1.2 *Supporting Young Families Program: Fathering Group*

Supporting Young Families (SYF) is a United Way “*Success By Six*” Program for pregnant and parenting teens living in the former City of York. SYF is a collaborative continuum of services for pregnant and parenting teens that Yorktown offers: *Prenatal Education Program*, a *Healthy Eating and Nutrition Program*, a *Parent Education Program*, a *Parent/Child Program* and a *Support Group*. SYF sessions are held one night a week.

The genesis for the SYF: *Fathering Group* came from Yorktown’s recognition of the paucity of services for young fathers. The *Fathering Group* was developed in 2006 as a group service for men who are either a teen parent or a young parent, where the young dad is seeking to expand and/or improve connections with his family. The first session was in Spring 2007; this evaluation spans the group’s pilot year (April 2007-April 2008).

This father’s group was strategically coordinated to occur at the same time as the mother’s group. The father’s group took place once a week, it was 45-90 minutes in length, and the men’s ages ranged from 17 to 21. Each group session provided the attending dad’s with a trained group facilitator, a meal with their families prior to group, TTC tickets to compensate for transportation costs, and a \$10 voucher. Nine men regularly attended the pilot group and all completed the evaluation component.

❖ Group Goals -individual group session goals and aggregate group sessions goals were:

1. Strengthening the inter-relationships between:
    - ✓ Father and their child
    - ✓ Father and the child’s mother
  2. Strengthening the intra-relationship:
    - ✓ Father’s relationship with himself: as a man, as a young father
- Group Objectives
- Advancing the father’s understanding of their child’s developmental process and the child’s need for care, continuity, consistency and protection
  - Improving their understanding of the effects of their anger on others and on themselves
  - Fostering better parenting skills
  - Exploring and challenging the men’s beliefs about fathering to create more realistic and strength-based views
  - Identifying how negative thoughts and behaviours have an adverse impact on partners and children.

## 2.0 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Methodology & Evaluation Tools

A mixed method approach was used to evaluate the group. Three key informant groups were evaluated and evaluation tools were created to assist in that evaluation:

- Group participants (n=9)    *Father's Self-Report Questionnaire* (see Appendix A)
- Group facilitator (n=1)    *Facilitator Report* x 9 (see Appendix B)  
   *Facilitator Group Report* (see Appendix C)  
   *Key Informant Questions-Facilitator* (see Appendix D)
- Group manager (n=1)    *Coordinator Report* (see Appendix E)

Participation in the evaluation component of the group was voluntary. Non-identifying codes were assigned and no identifying data were requested or provided.

The *Father's Self Report* consisted of 24 questions that had both satisfaction and outcome questions, either in the form of a quantitative, Likert-type scale or a qualitative, narrative format. The quantitative questions included areas such as: how much the group helped in learning about child development, about preferred non-physical discipline methods, about how to use community supports and about how they managed stress. The questionnaire also asked the fathers about if, and how, the group assisted in them being a more involved parent, if they recognized and dealt with their own anger more positively, and whether they learned more effective communication skills. Additionally, there were several questions with respect to group logistics – whether it was organized, whether the materials were helpful, and whether the group venue was adequate. The qualitative questions asked what the participants perceived as “*most helpful*” and what was “*least helpful*” about the group. Finally, two pre-test/post-test questions were posed: one question asked the fathers about their “*confidence on how to be a father*” before and after the group; and the second question asked the young dads’ about their perceptions on their “*competency and capacity in their role as a parent*” before and after the group.

The *Facilitator Report* and *Coordinator Report* both had 14 questions, many mirroring questions asked of the group members. The *Facilitator Group Report* was a one-page, matrix that had the facilitator rate overall group functioning on six domains: *unity of group, group climate, group stability, basic needs met, depth of activities* and *mutual aid*.

The initial plan was to interview some of the father's post-group. Despite many efforts of the group organizers, this did not occur. Some men obtained jobs and were not available, one was deported and one was in the process of moving back to the States. A standardized *Key Informant Interview* with the group facilitator did occur July 14, 2008; the summary of that interview and associated recommendation are presented later in the report.

## 2.2 Data Analysis

All quantitative data were entered into SPSS 15.0 and analyzed using univariate (e.g. mean, frequency) and bivariate tests (e.g. cross-tabs, chi-square, correlation). All quantitative data were assigned a non-identifying code; the facilitator and participant responses were matched by the same code. The qualitative data from the questionnaires and the key informant interview were recorded verbatim into a 'word' table format and analyzed thematically and for content. With the qualitative data, any names or other personal information were removed.

*NOTE: The facilitator did assist many of the fathers with the completion of their questionnaire. This was because many, if not most of the young men, had significant literacy limitations. Reading was problematic for them. Their lack of literacy was not just a factor within the group (not being able to fully utilize the materials) but it was a key factor in hindering employment opportunities, which had an adverse effect on their ability to financially support their child.*

## 3.0 FINDINGS

### 3.1 Self-Report- Fathers

Nine fathers's completed the self-report; the percentage agreement results are noted below.

Please circle your response From taking the <b>Fathering Group</b> ...	[n=9]	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
1. I learned more about <b>how children develop</b> than I previously knew	[n=9]	22%	<b>78%</b>		
2. I learned more about <b>how to discipline my child using non-physical ways</b> than I previously knew	[n=9]	33%	44%	22%	
3. I learned more about <b>how to use community supports</b> (e.g. friends, extended family, neighbours, self help groups) than I previously knew	[n=9]	<b>56%</b>	22%	22%	
4. I learned more about <b>how to manage stress</b> than I previously knew	[n=9]	45%	33%	22%	
5. I learned more about <b>how to be an involved parent</b> than I previously knew	[n=9]	<b>56%</b>	44%		
6. I learned more about <b>recognizing when I am angry</b> than I previously knew	[n=9]	<b>78%</b>	22%		
7. I learned more about <b>how to deal with anger positively</b> than I previously knew.		22%	<b>78%</b>		
8. I learned more about <b>how to effectively communicate with my child's mother</b> than I previously knew.	[n=9]	33%	<b>56%</b>	11%	
9. This group was well organized.	[n=9]	<b>78%</b>	22%		
10. Group members were encouraged to express different opinions & share parenting experiences	[n=9]	<b>100%</b>	-----		
11. The handout materials were helpful	[n=9]	-----	22%	78%	
12. The meeting space was adequate & comfortable	[n=9]	11%	44%	11%	<b>33%</b>
13. The group facilitators were well prepared	[n=9]	<b>100%</b>	-----		
14. The group facilitators challenged me to think	[n=9]	<b>67%</b>	33%		
15. The group facilitators maintained my interest	[n=9]	<b>67%</b>	22%	11%	

	Before Group			After Group		
	'Always!'/ 'Often'	'Now & Then'	'Never'	'Always!'/ 'Often'	'Now & Then'	'Never'
16-17. Unsure how to be a father to my child	33%	<b>33%</b>	11%	33%	<b>44%</b>	22%
18-19. Overwhelmed with my role as a parent	44%	<b>33%</b>	—	37%	<b>50%</b>	12%

- 20. Rating of Fathering Group "Excellent" = 56% "Good" = 44%
- 21. Recommend Fathering Group "Yes" = 100%
- 22. Reason for recommending group – two key themes emerged:

"Learning" Theme 6/9 men *"Helped in learning about life, about parenting"; "I learned a lot"*  
 "Camaraderie" Theme 3/9 men *"Good group of guys"; "Helpful to meet other dads"*

➤ Interpretation of Self-Report Results

Caution is needed in generalizing the pilot results beyond this group, as the findings are representative of only nine young dads' views and experiences. That said, the results are illuminating regarding the perceived benefit of the group experience and the findings are hopeful with respect to the degree of positive change that can occur within each young father and within a vulnerable group. The amount of perceived growth is particularly encouraging with this group of young dads, as they face significant personal and societal challenges, and are often on the periphery of assistance and acceptance.

➤ Outcomes

Overall, the results suggest that the group was very important to the young fathers and their successes were significant to them as a group. Three areas appeared to yield the most positive results and greatest learning for the respondents, as determined by over fifty percent of the men rating it *"strongly agree"*. In rank order, they are:

- 1. Learned about recognizing when I am angry 78% Strongly Agree
- 2. Learned how to be an involved parent 56% Strongly Agree
- 3. Learned how to use community supports 56% Strongly Agree

Applying the same criteria to *"agree"*, a further three key areas of learning emerged:

- 1. Learned more about how children develop 78% Agree
- 2. Learned how to deal with anger positively 78% Agree
- 3. Learned how to effectively communicate with child's mother 56% Agree

The pilot results for the two pre-test/post-test questions (Q16-17 and Q18-19), suggest some important gains occurred for the men regarding improvements in their perceptions of their parenting role. [Note, the preferred change at the post-test point is an increase in the *"Now & Then"* and *"Never"* categories]. When queried in Q16 - *"You are unsure how to be a father to your child"*, only 11% at pre-test said *'[I'm] "never" unsure how to be a father'*. There was a positive increase to 22% at the Q17 post-test. The Q18 pre-test results found only 33% of the men noted *"Now and then" [I'm] overwhelmed in my role as a parent*, and no father said *"Never"* (only one-third of the group in the 'preferred' categories). The Q19 post-test score found half (50%) now selected the *"Now and Then"* category and 12% said *"Never"*. Together the data suggest a positive shift (i.e. at group start only one-third were not overwhelmed with their role as a father - by group end, perceived coping with their role as a father rose to nearly two-thirds (62%) of the young dads not being overwhelmed). While these questions are important as they go to the essence of the group's purpose – these were difficult, emotional, and somewhat socially loaded questions for the young dads. As one father aptly noted beside his score... *"I did not know how much I did not know"*. Future groups will need to explore how best to ask and answer these questions.

➤ Organization of Group

Group logistics were generally well rated. The fathers indicated the group was “*well organized*” (100% agree/strongly agree); “*different opinions and experiences were encouraged*” (100% strongly agree); “*the facilitator challenged them to think*” (100% agree/ strongly agree); and “*the group facilitator maintained my interest*” (89% agree/strongly agree). There was a high positive correlation between their rating the group “*well organized*” and “*facilitator maintaining my interest*” ( $r = .804, p = .009$ ) and seeing it “*well organized*” and “*facilitator challenging me to think*” ( $r = .756, p = .018$ ).

Two areas were not highly rated. First, the materials did not appear to have been experienced as being helpful or useful to the participants, as 78% rated the materials helpfulness as “*neutral*”. Since most of these young fathers had literacy issues this may be a factor as to why the materials were not perceived as helpful. Use and effectiveness of materials will need to be explored and better understood in subsequent groups. Second, for one-third of the father’s, the venue of the group or meeting space was not seen as conducive for a group environment (i.e. the room was small and cramped). In fact, “*space*” was the only category that received a “*disagree/strongly disagree*” rating.

➤ Participant Comments

The participant comments indicated the group was a positive experience for each young dad; all the men indicated they would recommend the group to another parent.

F7 “*I feel like I am doing something for my kid.*”

F5 “*I have come a long way to becoming a better person.*”

F1 “*I was not liking being a young dad because I was alone – now I have friends.*”

F8 “*A great place to meet others like me.*”

“*Most Helpful*” & “*Least Helpful*”

The fathers and the facilitator provided a great deal of information regarding what aspects of the group were experienced by the dads as “*most helpful*” and “*least helpful*”. When the qualitative data were analyzed for content and themes, two major themes arose: “*Connections*” and “*Group Logistics*” and each had subsections:

“*Connections*”

- ❖ Camaraderie
- ❖ Having a voice
- ❖ Relationships
- ❖ WANTED: Peer Group for Young Dads

“*Group Logistics*”

- ❖ Food vouchers,
- ❖ Meeting date and time
- ❖ Group length



## Key Theme: “Connections”

### Sub-theme - Camaraderie

The camaraderie between and amongst group members was overwhelmingly positive. This was the most dominant theme and clearly a beneficial feature of the *Fathering Group*. Many of the fathers reported feeling alone and isolated until they began attending the group; the men found the support they received from other group members and the facilitator was invaluable.

NOTE: Father’s are designated as “F” and the facilitator or group leader is “L”.

#### Father (F)

- F5 *“In my past I operated alone, was frustrated alone, provided alone... was always alone.”*
- F6 *“I get to talk with other young dads. I get to see other people’s situations.”*
- F7 *“We share experiences, realize we are not alone.”*
- F8 *“Great place to meet others like me.”*
- F9 *“I have or we have strength in numbers, and can help each other out.”*

- L “Having a constant place to come – consistent group”
- L “This man was doing his best and needed more group support.”
- L “The camaraderie of the group –the way we talked together.”

### Sub-theme - Having a Voice

The facilitator (L) noted there was great importance and value in the men being permitted to tell their story, to the group, and to themselves within the safety of the group. This process of “telling” was very significant for these fathers who perceived themselves to be marginalized and generally silenced by their gender, by their culture, by their age and by their status (i.e. parent).

- F2 *“Place where I had a voice, could hear peoples stories.”*
- F2 *“Participants always felt silenced by the mother, [the dads] needed to be heard.”*
- F3 *“I was able to be proud among my peers”*

- L “Very quiet father, [he] needed his voice with other men, so the interaction was most important.”
- L “He is living the life of a marginalized immigrant male - having a voice is important.”
- L “The participant was the only non-biological father; he showed the voice of someone else raising your child.”
- L “As a young person he had a voice.”
- L “[He] has a history of violence that he wanted to voice with other fathers – a place to hear other views.”

### Sub-theme - Relationships

The father's theme of improved relationships with their children, with the mother of their child, with their current partner, and with themselves, arose when the men considered the beneficial aspects of the group. Understanding effective communication and being able to discuss their relationships in a confidential setting and establishing positive, peer relationships outside of the group setting was very important to these dads.

- F5 *"I have a better relationship with the mother."*
- F7 *"Feel like I am doing something for my kid...[to] help the mother of my child out."*
- F2 *"Learn how to ensure [I] would always be involved in my child's life."*
- F5 *"I have come a long way to becoming a better person."*
  
- L "Learning how to interact with the mother."
- L "Discuss relationships between he and mother, and he and child."
- L "He needed to work on how to interact with a challenging mother."
- L "The relationship with the mother changes when the man has independence"

### Sub-theme – WANTED: Peer Group for Young Dads

The men made it clear they benefited from having a strong support person, specifically the facilitator; they benefited from having a consistent and supportive place to come to meet and talk; and they benefited from having a support group of their peers. Many of the participants indicated they no longer felt isolated and considered the group members their friends, important friends that provided them with support and information.

- F3 *"[Best thing] being involved with men who are fathers"*
- F5 *"I now have friends I can call and get help and advice when I need it."*
- F4 *"Ask questions, get answers."*
- F8 *"I needed this [information] during my first child."*
- F1 *"I was not liking being a young dad because I was alone- now I have friends."*
- F6 *"I get to talk with other young dads."*
  
- L "[He] had a place to go and learn about being a dad."
- L "He was with other men, older and younger."
- L "Building a network of friends."
- L "He needed support to lift his spirits. [He] is all alone in Canada – does not know how to thrive."
- L "This person lived and operated in total isolation."

*Summary:* Through the group processes and with the skills and guidance of the facilitator, these young fathers were able to work on issues paramount to improved relationships with themselves, with their partners, with their children - even their employment. Issues such as anger awareness, anger management, stress management, how to develop better communication skills, and of critical importance and germane to the group's purpose – how to be a better father.

## Key Theme: “Group Logistics”

### Sub- theme: Food Vouchers

The provision of the \$10 food voucher provided to each father at each group session was identified as an important theme. The general opinion: the vouchers were beneficial and appreciated; however, a larger amount, even \$10 more, was seen as much more useful; and a voucher just for the father’s needs – even better. Many of the fathers were un/under/illegally employed, making the food voucher important in many ways.

- F3 *“Vouchers. [I] would enjoy a second card, \$10 is not enough.”*
- F2 *“Food vouchers-very helpful;2 cards would be very helpful (food, baby food, diapers).”*
- F5 *“\$20 would go very far –bus tickets to and from store would be good so I can get groceries for free.”*
- F1 *“Voucher was for baby and mother and not for me.”*
- L *“Voucher should be larger, more bus tickets.”*
- L *“Vouchers could have been more money.”*

### Sub- theme: Meeting Date and Time

Some of the fathers became employed over the course of the year. The 5:00pm group start time was not conducive to them attending the group since it was before the end of a regular workday. The meeting date and time created a significant conflict for the men: – wanting/needing to attend the group vs. needing to maintain employment.

- F6 *“I can’t attend every session, [I] do not get to contribute as much as I would like.”*
- F5 *“[Group] conflicting time with work.”*
- F6 *“[Group] time slot does not work well when I am working.”*
- F8 *“Difficult time and date to attend.”*
- L *“Time slot – 5pm on a work night is not ideal for attendance.”*
- L *“Client had a job and could not attend as often as he would like.”*

### Sub- theme: Group Length

The men and the facilitator felt meetings should be longer than 90 minutes. The information provided, the relationships made, the learning that occurred was so beneficial, they thought they would learn even more by increasing their time together.

- F7 *“Too short meetings, not long enough together as dads.”*
- F5 *“Not long enough group meetings.”*
- L *“Meetings were too short.”*
- L *“More meetings than once a week – client benefits from a lot of support.”*

### 3.2 Facilitator Report and Coordinator Report

FACILITATOR REPORT ON MEMBERS' PROGRESS Please circle your response... from taking the <b>Fathering Group</b> ...	n=9	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	TOTAL # Fathers
1. The fathers felt supported by the group		8		1	9
2. The fathers felt listened to by the group		8	1		9
3. The fathers were respectful of others in the group		8	1		9
4. The fathers were able to talk about their issues		7	2		9
5. The fathers issues were addressed by the group		4	2	2	9
6. The fathers learned how to manage stress more effectively than when they started		3	4	2	9
7. The fathers developed a more positive relationship with their child's mother		3	1	5	9
8. The fathers developed a more positive relationship with their children		5	3	1	9
9. The fathers benefited from being in the group		5	3		9
10. The group topics maintained the fathers interest		6	3		9
11. The group had consistent attendance		7	2		9
12. The group had in-depth discussions		9			9

COORDINATOR REPORT ON OVERALL GROUP Please circle your response ...from taking the <b>Fathering Group</b> ...	n=1	Strongly Agree	Agree
1. The group has provided fathers with a safe outlet to learn about parenting		✓	
2. The group has provided fathers with a safe learning environment		✓	
3. The group topics have maintained the fathers interest		✓	
4. The group has offered the fathers skills to better manage their issues		✓	
5. The group have discussed relevant topics		✓	
6. The group has shown fathers the importance of being a participant in the life of their child			✓
7. The fathers participating in the group have exhibited more healthy communication with others		✓	
8. The fathers issues were addressed by the group			✓
9. The facilitator has worked with the fathers to develop weekly topics			✓
10. The facilitator has been able to adapt in order to meet the needs of the fathers		✓	
11. The facilitator has challenged the fathers to talk about their issues		✓	
12. The facilitator has been well prepared		✓	

**Summary:** The combined assessments of the service provider (group facilitator) and the program manager (coordinator) indicate that they too observed the numerous benefits of the group process on the members. From the organizers' perspective, many goals and objectives were met (e.g. engage the fathers in in-depth discussions, creation of a safe learning environment). Some goals had measured success (e.g. managing stress, developing a more positive relationship with their child) and some goals will take much longer to achieve (i.e. developing a more positive relationship with the child's mother). The magnitude and breadth of issues that these fathers are grappling with at a personal, professional, educational and even societal level mean the solutions are not "quick fixes" but require sustained, committed engagement with intervention strategies that build upon their strengths and meet their needs. The facilitator is seen as key to the successful and sustained engagement of these men and to the level of gains made.

## Facilitator Group Report

The *Facilitator Group Report* is a one-page, matrix that has the facilitator rate group functioning on six domains: *unity of group*, *group climate*, *group stability*, *basic needs met*, *depth of activities* and *mutual aid* (see Appendix C). The domains were each then rated from: “little”, “some”, “good”, “excellent” and “unable to assess”.

Ratings of “excellent” were noted in two areas:

- ❖ Group Climate
- ❖ Basic Needs Met

Ratings of “good” were found on three domains:

- Unity of Group
- Group Stability
- Depth of Activities

A rating of “some” was given to:

- Mutual Aid

*Summary:* Both the group members and the facilitator noted the group “worked very well”, particularly in two areas, a *positive group climate* that fostered discussion and free expression, and in the area of the group being able to *meet the basic needs* of the members, in particular, a sense of safety, security and approval. As noted previously, attendance was at times an issue for the men, often due to other competing interests such as employment. As soon as *group stability* is an issue, *group unity* and *depth of activities* is adversely impacted. Mutual aid is often a skill that evolves over time within a group with consistent members once individual needs have been met. This function may very well evolve with a group such as this.

### 3.4 Key Informant Interview – Facilitator

Three months post-group evaluation (April 2008) the facilitator for the young fathers group completed a one-hour, semi-standardized interview over the phone with the Child Welfare Institute’s evaluation personnel (see Appendix D). One evaluator conducted the interview and the other documented the responses. The comments were thematically analyzed, but in the end, similar to the young fathers needing to hear their own voices, the data were most compelling left as is – as the facilitator’s story with the evaluator’s interpretation of his story, his data, interspersed throughout.

*Summary:*

It is important to note that the group facilitator self-identified with the group members as a man, in particular a man of colour, more specifically, a man connected to the African Canadian/American culture. While the gender of the facilitator for the fathers group appears to be an important factor, it is not clear whether the cultural affiliation is or is not

crucial. The facilitator's ability to identify with the group as a man is perceived to be an important piece by the facilitator in his successful joining of the group, in his engaging in group process, and in the group forming "a group". The gender (perhaps the culture) is seen as key to the facilitator's success as group leader – his ability to understand the young fathers, to challenge them, to engage them, to support them, and to lead them.

The facilitator spoke eloquently about the significant challenges and common features of the young fathers' backgrounds; he talked about the considerable learning that occurred for him regarding these men: *all had been abused, all had been abandoned by their own father, none of the men had a strong, positive father figure, all the men were beaten as children and expected to do the same with their children*. The facilitator talked about the group's important work in uncovering concerning beliefs so the fathers could discuss imploding myths. For example, the young dads shared a common belief on the topic of child discipline: *'with boys you use your hand, with girls you use your belt'*. In starting with discussions on internalized individual and cultural beliefs the group was able to reverse course on how a belief impacts behaviour, as well, the ramifications of such a belief (e.g. child abuse, perpetuation of physical discipline through generations).

The group facilitator spoke about the cumulative effects of the weight of racism on and in these young fathers' lives (i.e. the Willy Lynch letters, ABC production "Being Black in America"); he noted how racism and marginalization seems entangled in most of the men's issues; he talked about how through the process of the group – the issue of racism was both raised and discussed; how some of the men's journey to healing and being a better person, a better father, began in their ability to recognize their often unconscious mirroring of stereotypes of what a young father identifying with the African/Canadian/American culture is expected to be; the facilitator talked about the group members shifting their thinking from their early scepticism of *"I don't need help, I'm not a father"* to a realization that they needed to make conscious decisions about almost every facet of their lives. Decisions like: *"To work or not to work?"* Decisions like: *"How far will you go to care for your child?"* Decisions like: *"What are you doing to provide for your child in the future?"* One of the positive outcomes at the end of the group in April 2008, was that all the men were working and all had opened a bank account for their child. In distilling and analyzing the facilitator's comments about the group's work – it seems the young father's work in being a better father began with addressing both the stereotype and the expectation – of themselves, of their child, of their partner, of the mother of their child, and of their culture.

From the facilitators view, some of the most helpful factors in fostering positive group dynamics were clear, simple rules. Examples include:

Rule 1 - "say whatever you think – just no hitting"

Rule 2 - "take part –participate!"

Rule 3 – "permission for guests to attend.

From the perspective of non-helpful dynamics, the facilitator identified systemic barriers. *“We aren’t doing enough to engage these men. We need to get flyers in churches, to the cultural leaders. Agencies have no idea that these men even need a program and agencies need to identify that these men, these young dads, need a group.”*

In reviewing both the facilitator’s interview data and the fathers’ narrative self-report data, there is the distinct impression that this facilitator’s level of commitment to the group, to the men, was extraordinary. For example, the group facilitator ensured group stability and consistency by making special arrangements to return from his vacation in time to run the group. The facilitator’s role seems to be an amalgam of benefits and risks – in that it is demanding and rewarding, in that it is intense and draining, in that it requires the most skilled of skilled group leaders.

In future groups, the facilitator, the group coordinator, Yorktown and even the funder will need to acknowledge the inherent tension and delicate balance needed in actualizing and supporting the facilitator’s role with this population. It seems that the success of the group is a large part dependent on the abilities and consistency of the facilitator. Since this is a high-risk, difficult to engage, under-serviced and very vulnerable population, it requires a facilitator that is able to understand the young fathers’ dependence, their isolation, their needs, their limitations and their aspirations. A group leader able to work with the young fathers to help them find and build their own solutions.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations include both clinical and operational suggestions. The recommendations are based on analysis of the fathers’ Self-Report data, the Facilitator Report data and the key informant interview data with the group leader.

### Tangible Provisions

1. The *Fathering Group* requires food at each session; this may be the only hot meal for the family all week long.
2. Constant and regular review of the voucher value and bus tickets. An increase in the voucher is suggested as it is valuable for the fathers, draws many men in and is a factor in encouraging consistent group attendance.

### Group Logistics

3. Start time for the group needs to be more accessible (e.g. evening or on weekends).
4. Time allotment needs to be flexible; group began at 45 minutes in length but developed into a 90 minute group due to group need.

### Group Needs

5. Group guests are beneficial. For example, during a particular group one of the mothers began attending; she was treated fairly by the men and was able to challenge them and answer their questions. The introduction of a guest into the group must be at a point when men are comfortable with one another and the inclusion of the guest will foster positive group dynamics; in other words, having a guest attend the group will be dependant on a particular group’s needs.

6. General group rules need to be in place and adhered to.
7. Open-ended, drop-in modality should continue. Fathers tend to come and go to the group depending on their employment status and relationship with their family.

#### Facilitator Requirements

8. Facilitator must help the fathers rethink their experiences, learning and beliefs.
9. Facilitator requires debriefing; the position is intense and draining.
10. Facilitator has to be able to identify with the fathers to some degree.
11. Facilitator must be consistent and structured. Fathers must know that facilitator will be present at each session.

#### System Requirements

12. All programs/ agencies involved with the young dads must work together.
13. Combination of group and outreach worker working together with service users may be beneficial
14. Skilled facilitator the fathers trust is critical to group success and attendance.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The Fathering Group was a successful pilot. It determined the following:

- ✓ Engagement of this difficult to engage population of young fathers is feasible
- ✓ Group work intervention is a successful intervention modality to engage young fathers
- ✓ Longer-term group services are preferred (12 months) with flexible operations (open-ended) and provision of tangible services (e.g. hot meal, bus tickets, food voucher).
- ✓ The young father's were able to make significant gains in key areas: *learning about child development, use of community supports, greater understanding of their anger and relationship improvement with child*. Continued group service may be required to make more substantive gains in areas such as: *improved relationships with child's mother*. The Fathering Group demonstrated that these men can learn about child development, can provide support to each other, can make shifts in dysfunctional beliefs and behaviour, and can embrace their role as a parent.

There is a clear need for a group specifically aimed at young fathers from marginalized communities or cultures. They are an under-serviced population. In acknowledging the benefit of group service to this population there is also the recognition that the level of need of this population is high. Planning forward, attention will be needed on the continued provision of tangible services (e.g. food, bus tickets, voucher), recognition that group logistics (date/time of meeting) may need to be flexible due to the possible changing status of the men (e.g. employed vs. unemployed), and the service elements related to this group (e.g. consistency of group, intense group sessions) may translate into a high emotional and time demand on the facilitator. The Fathering Group pilot demonstrated not only that there is a need for such a group and that such a group is feasible – it demonstrated how important such an intervention can be in the lives of the young fathers, their children, the children's mothers, and the community.



# Fathering Program Self - Report

## APPENDIX A

Participant Code # \_\_\_\_\_

***Your evaluation of this group is very important as it allows us to evaluate the group's effectiveness and improve its quality. Your responses are confidential and anonymous. Participation is voluntary. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Thank you!***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
From taking the <b>Fathering Group...</b>						
1. I learned more about <b>how children develop</b> than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. I learned more about <b>how to discipline my child using non-physical ways</b> than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. I learned more about <b>how to use community supports</b> (e.g. friends, extended family, neighbours, self help groups) than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. I learned more about <b>how to manage stress</b> than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. I learned more about <b>how to be an involved parent</b> than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. I learned more about <b>recognizing when I am angry</b> than I previously knew	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. I learned more about <b>how to deal with anger positively</b> than I previously knew.	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. I learned more about <b>how to effectively communicate with my child's mother</b> than I previously knew.	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. This group was well organized.	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Group members were encouraged to express different opinions & share parenting experiences	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. The handout materials were helpful	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. The meeting space was adequate & comfortable	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. The group facilitators were well prepared	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. The group facilitators challenged me to think	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. The group facilitators maintained my interest	5	4	3	2	1	0

16. **Before I attended this group**, I was unsure of how to be a father to my child

- all the time     
  quite often     
  now and then     
  hardly ever     
  never

17. **Since I've attended this group**, I am unsure of how to be a father to my child

- all the time     
  quite often     
  now and then     
  hardly ever     
  never

18. **Before I attended this group** I was overwhelmed with my role as a parent

- all the time     
  quite often     
  now and then     
  hardly ever     
  never

# Fathering Program Self - Report

19. Since I've attended this group I am overwhelmed with my role as a parent

- all the time       quite often       now and then       hardly ever       never

20. Overall, I rate the **Fathering Group**:

- Excellent       Good       Average       Fair       Poor

21. a) Would you recommend the **Fathering Group** to another parent?

- Yes       No       Undecided

22. b) Why?

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23. a) What about the group was most helpful to you? List three things, with 1 being the most important to you:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it most helpful to you?

--

24. What about the group was the least helpful to you? List three things, with 1 being the least helpful to you:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it least helpful to you?

--

*Thank you for participating in this survey!*

# Fathering Program Facilitator's Report

## APPENDIX B

Participant Code # \_\_\_\_\_

***Your evaluation of this group is very important as it allows us to evaluate the group's effectiveness and improve its quality. Your responses are confidential and anonymous. Participation is voluntary. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Thank you!***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
From taking the <b>Fathering Group</b> ...						
1. The fathers felt supported by the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. The fathers felt listened to by the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. The fathers were respectful of others in the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. The fathers were able to talk about their issues	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. The fathers issues were addressed by the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. The fathers learned how to manage stress more effectively than when they started.	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. The fathers developed a more positive relationship with their child's mother	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. The fathers developed a more positive relationship with their children	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. The fathers benefited from being in the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. The group topics maintained the fathers interest	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. The group had consistent attendance	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. The group had in-depth discussions	5	4	3	2	1	0

13. a) In your view what about the group was most helpful to the fathers? List three things, with 1 being the most beneficial:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it most helpful to the fathers?

# Fathering Program Facilitator's Report

## APPENDIX B

14. In your view what about the group was the least helpful to the fathers? List three things, with 1 being the least helpful:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it least helpful to the fathers?

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*Thank you for participating in this survey!*

### FACILITATOR'S GROUP REPORT

***The evaluation of your group is very important as it allows us to better understand the group's overall functioning in relation to the outcomes. We ask you to assess the group by the dimensions listed below. No individual data are requested. Participation is voluntary. Please take a few minutes to complete this report. Thank you!***

<b>Group Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Unable to Assess</b>	<b>Research Use</b>
<b>Unity of Group</b>	Degree of group unity/cohesion – ranges from ongoing collection of individuals to strong, common purpose & “we-ness”						
<b>Group Climate</b>	Level of group openness & expression – ranges from none, closed or free expression at detriment of group development to open or free expression but observes total group welfare						
<b>Group Stability</b>	Level of group stability – ranges from high absenteeism which adversely impacts the group to low absenteeism, stable group						
<b>Basic Needs Met</b>	Extent to which group gives members a sense of security, achievement, approval, recognition and belonging – ranges from group adds little to most members' needs to group contributes substantively to basic needs of all members						
<b>Depth of Activities</b>	Level of members use of activities/interactions – ranges from little depth in activities/discussions to great depth, challenge and learning						
<b>Mutual Aid</b>	Degree members develop mutual aid skills - ranges from little evidence to strong, consistent demonstration of mutual aid by group members						
<b>Optional Comments</b> [please print clearly]							
<b>Research Use</b>							

**Yorktown Family Services**  
***Fathering Group***

**Key Informant Interview Questions: FACILITATOR**

1. What are some beneficial aspects of the group for the fathers?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' attitudes?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' behaviour and language?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' emotions?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' status?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' parenting style?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' relationship with their child?
  - Were there any changes in the fathers' relationship with the mother of their child?
2. What was a beneficial aspect of the group that you did anticipate?
3. What was a beneficial aspect of the group that you did not anticipate?
4. What are some changes you would make to a future fathers' group?
  - What changes would you like to see with respect to group logistics?
  - What changes would you like to see with respect to group curriculum?
  - What changes would you like to see with respect to group dynamics?
5. Tell us about the dynamics of the group
  - What was most helpful for learning with respect to the way the group functioned?
  - What was least helpful for learning with respect to the way the group functioned?
6. Tell us about some important features for the facilitator to exhibit to help ensure a successful group
  - Is there something the facilitator may do to hinder group development?
  - Is there something the facilitator may do to hinder individual development?
  - Is there something the facilitator may do to help group development?
  - Is there something the facilitator may do to help individual development?

Any additional comments

# Fathering Program Coordinator Report

## APPENDIX E

Participant Code # \_\_\_\_\_

***Your evaluation of this group is very important as it allows us to evaluate the group's effectiveness and improve its quality. Your responses are confidential and anonymous. Participation is voluntary. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Thank you!***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
From taking the <b>Fathering Group</b> ...						
1. The group has provided fathers with a safe outlet to learn about parenting	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. The group has provided fathers with a safe learning environment	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. The group topics have maintained the fathers interest	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. The group has offered the fathers skills to better manage their issues	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. The group have discussed relevant topics	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. The group has shown fathers the importance of being a participant in the life of their child	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. The fathers participating in the group have exhibited more healthy communication with others	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. The fathers issues were addressed by the group	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. The facilitator has worked with the fathers to develop weekly topics	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. The facilitator has been able to adapt in order to meet the needs of the fathers	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. The facilitator has challenged the fathers to talk about their issues	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. The facilitator has been well prepared	5	4	3	2	1	0

13. a) In your view what about the group was most helpful to the fathers? List three things, with 1 being the most beneficial:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it most helpful to the fathers?

# Fathering Program Coordinator Report

14. In your view what about the group was the least helpful to the fathers? List three things, with 1 being the least helpful:

1.	
2.	
3.	

b) How/why was it least helpful to the fathers?

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*Thank you for participating in this survey!*