

**CHILD REARING IN THE CARIBBEAN:
Emergent Issues**

**A SUMMARY REPORT
of the first
Learning Community Researchers Meeting
Roseau, Dominica, May 25-27, 2006**

**An Initiative of
The Caribbean Child Support Initiative (CCSI)**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

B. References to Studies Presented

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BACKGROUND

The Caribbean Child Support Initiative (CCSI), formerly known as the Caribbean Support Initiative (CSI), bridges the financial and technical resources of the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) in The Hague with those of the Caribbean in support of parents and parenting projects that improve children's developmental outcomes in caring environments.

Children's rights underpin all of the Foundation's work with field partners who engage in direct intervention programmes, in research to improve practice, and in policy advocacy, in three thematic areas:

1. Strengthening care environments of young children,
2. Promoting successful early years transitions (e.g. from home to preschool, preschool to formal education, and
3. Encouraging social inclusion with respect to diversity.

The Importance of Research

Although the Foundation is not a research organization, it is very committed to learning from the interaction between research and practice and it draws on the work of universities and research institutes in shaping its programmes. Research evidence is used for policy advocacy and for enlisting allies.

During 2004, CCSI engaged Caribbean project partners and research agencies in identifying the research needs *on childrearing and socialization* to inform effective interventions with parents. As part of this dialogue, research literature from within and about the region was reviewed to see if the following questions were adequately addressed:

- ?? what it is that parents in the region *actually do* to raise their children?
- ?? *how* or *what* are children *in fact* learning in their family and community environments?

Her most established work in the early childhood area is the "Profiles Project", a research project which comprehensively analysed the status of Jamaican children at six years, with follow-up to 9 years. Dr. Samms-Vaughan has authored several book chapters and papers on a range of child development and behaviour related topics. She has also completed numerous consultancies in the field of child development and behaviour for the IDB, UNICEF and PAHO.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford is Professor of Early Childhood Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. Her current research projects include: Evaluation of the Foundation Phase in Wales and she is co-director of the major DfES ten-year study on Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 (EPPE 3-11) Project (1997-2008) and of the Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years project. She is particularly interested in undertaking research which aims to combat disadvantage and to give children and families from these backgrounds a head start. She serves as editor of the International Journal on Early Years Education.

Sian Williams has worked in early childhood policy and programming in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean Region since 1993. She has a first degree in English from University College London and a Masters in Early Childhood Education from Goldsmiths' College London. Her work in the UK included responsibility for the conceptualization, management and implementation of one of the first integrated early childhood services in the country under the Children Act 1989. In the Caribbean, her work has spanned the preparation of the Caribbean Plan of Action for Early Childhood Development (adopted by CARICOM Heads of Government in 1997), research on the quality of learning environments in early childhood settings in seven countries, and the direction of projects providing technical assistance at regional and national levels funded by the World Bank, Inter-American Bank and UNICEF among other funders. From 1999-2003, she co-directed with Maureen Samms-Vaughan and Janet Brown the *Profiles Project*, a longitudinal research project of the status of children and their learning environments on entry to school, undertaken with a national sample of children in Jamaica. In April 2006, Sian joined UNICEF as Caribbean Sub-regional Adviser, Early Childhood, and is based in Jamaica.

bean and North America. Her current research examines Caribbean youths and transnational identities and she has several publications that she is presently working on in this area.

Heather Ricketts is Lecturer in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. She holds a B.Sc (Hons.) in Sociology, M.Phil. in Social Sciences, and is currently concluding her doctoral submission on the subject of clarifying the role of discrimination in gender wage differentials in the Jamaican labour market. Heather's specialist areas include research on poverty, social policy analysis and parenting. She has produced numerous reports for the Government of Jamaica, international development partners and donor agencies. In her previous role as Head of the Policy Development Unit in the Social and Manpower Planning Division of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). She was responsible for the annual production of the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) and in 2004, she designed and implemented a special module for the SLC to examine parenting in Jamaica to produce data on the ways in which Jamaican parents/caregivers defined their parenting responsibilities, particularly with regard to providing love and guidance, encouragement, supervision and discipline.

Jaipaul L Roopnarine (Ph.D. University of Wisconsin) is Professor of Child Development at Syracuse University. His research interests include father-child relationships across cultures; Caribbean immigrant families and schooling; early childhood education in international perspectives; globalization and convergences in childrearing and early socialization, and children's play across cultures. He has also served as Indo-US senior Professor of Psychology at the University of New Delhi and a Visiting scholar at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, and taught at Utah State University, The Pennsylvania State University, Cornell University, The City University of New York, and The University of Wisconsin. He is currently working on parent-infant interactions in African American, European American, and English-speaking Caribbean immigrant families in the United States, and on Caribbean immigrant mental health.

Dr. Maureen Samms-Vaughan received her training in medicine and paediatrics at the University of the West Indies (UWI) and completed a PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Bristol. Her current positions include, inter alia, Executive Chairman of the Early Childhood Commission; Senior Lecturer in Child Health, Child Development and Behaviour at University of the West Indies; and Consultant Developmental and Behavioural Paediatrician at the University Hospital of the West Indies. Her research has focused on the establishment of the status of Jamaican children's development and behaviour at critical points in their lives.

?? *how* can work "on the ground" be guided by the *strengths* children and parents have, and the strategies (they use to cope within their varied circumstances).

Consulting the Experts

A preliminary literature review was discussed at a meeting of Caribbean researchers in Jamaica in December 2005. There was agreement that:

- ?? research on childrearing and socialisation in the Caribbean is thin;
- ?? the bulk of the research found has been done in Jamaica;
- ?? research that has demonstrated what parents *actually do* in their childrearing practices and what *actual beliefs* inform these practices does not appear to exist.

A number of researchers working elsewhere in the world were contacted to identify research which had tackled these questions effectively in other settings and whether there were approaches and methodologies that could inform studies of a similar nature in the Caribbean. The published Literature Review may be obtained from the CCSI (see their website: www.ccsi-info.org for more information).

The 2006 Dominica Meeting

A meeting in Dominica provided the forum for these researchers to share and discuss details of their Caribbean and international research experiences for the purposes of identifying research gaps and to chart future research priorities and approaches for studies in the Caribbean.

The meeting was characterized by frank and open discussions, reflective questioning, and collaboration in seeking the most effective and relevant ways for research to serve young children and their families. It also laid the foundation for the informal network created among participants to collectively advance the welfare of the region's children.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers are challenged to examine every factor impacting on a parent's capacity to rear a child, and not to arrive at hasty conclusions that serve to diminish the significance of poverty and environment relative to the importance of such other factors as religious belief, cultural norms, history and gender. Parent strengths need to be unearthed and recognized, as too often research efforts address deficit models of parenting and focus on 'what parents are not doing right'.

The Dominica research meeting sought clarity on:

- ?? what do we know already?
- ?? what do we still need to know?
- ?? how can we best complement what may not have been rigorous enough to enhance the validity of work already done?
- ?? how should research inform policies and practice?

In their focus on child-rearing practices and beliefs in the Caribbean, the participant researchers recognized both the region's internal diversities and the potential commonalities across territories.

What follows is an overview of the most noteworthy points on the four themes that guided the meeting presentations and rich discussions:

1. **Childrearing and culture(s)**
2. **Parenting: mothering and fathering**
3. **Parenting and home learning**
4. **Parenting and social-emotional development**

The final section summarizes the emergent issues from the priority-setting discussions to guide **the way forward**. References to the major studies presented herein can be found in Appendix A. The full literature review prepared for this meeting can be obtained from CCSI. Check CCSI website at www.ccsi-info.org for more information.

developing infant-toddler observation measures to be used in childcare settings. Prior to her High/Scope experience, she worked in leadership capacities across the US in such federally funded projects as studying the effect of prenatal cocaine exposure on infants and young children, developmental assessment of infants and preschoolers, consultation to an adolescent parenting program, and evaluation and therapeutic programming for abused and neglected preschoolers. In her early professional years, she served as a public health nurse working in health education and health supervision for low income families in a community setting.

Margaret O'Brien is Professor of Child and Family Research and Co-Director of the Centre for Research on the Child and the Family at the University of East Anglia, U.K.. She is an experienced educator, author and researcher. Margaret has two main research fields: the role of fathers in families, workplaces and family policies; and children's services and children's neighbourhoods. She has been a leading investigator in British research related to fatherhood: in examining fathers within the National Evaluation of Sure Start, working fathers, resettlement of imprisoned fathers into families; she's also led national evaluations of School Breakfast Clubs and Children's Trusts. Margaret is also one of the two UK representatives on the *International Network on Parental Leave Policy and Research*.

Christine Powell is a Senior Lecturer in the Epidemiology Research Unit at the Tropical Medicine Research Institute (TMRI), UWI, Mona. She holds a PhD in Nutrition from the UWI. Her interests are in the field of international nutrition with an emphasis on policies and programmes that help to alleviate nutrition problems experienced by poor populations. Over the last twenty-five years her research has focused on the effects of nutrition, health and the environment on the growth and development of young children. In particular she has designed and evaluated low cost, sustainable and culturally appropriate interventions to improve children's development. Christine is also the coordinator for the graduate nutrition training programmes in the TMRI and is involved in nutrition teaching in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and in the wider community.

Tracey Reynolds Ph.D is a Senior Research Fellow in the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group, London South Bank University, UK. Her research interests include Caribbean families and kinship networks; parenting and childrearing; and women in the labour market. She has published in all these areas. Tracey has conducted extensive empirical research in the UK across a range of social issues including black and minority families living in disadvantaged communities. She is extending her research interests to include developments in the Carib-

CHILDREARING AND CULTURE(S)

Lennox Honychurch D.Phil., M.Phil. is a Dominican deeply committed to his birthplace. Author, journalist, historian, radio and television broadcaster, conservationist and artist, he served as a member of the Dominica House of Assembly from 1975-79 and was involved in negotiations for the island's independence in 1978. He was educated in Dominica, Barbados and at Oxford University where he was awarded a British Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarship for his post-graduate studies in Ethnology and Museum Ethnography.

Tessa Livingstone is a BBC Executive Producer with a special interest in Child Psychology. After a first degree in Psychology and a Ph.D. in Neurophysiology she moved into television production to make documentaries for the BBC. In 1999 she devised and directed the BBC's only longitudinal study of childhood, *Child of Our Time*. This project follows twenty five children born at the start of the new millennium from all over the UK and all walks of life, from birth to adulthood. The series explores the forces, both environmental and genetic, that make us who we are. Now in its seventh year, the project has attracted a great deal of attention both in the UK and internationally. The series is available on-line on the BBC website, together with information and advice on parenting (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting>).

Carol Logie joined the staff of the UWI, St. Augustine Campus in 1986 as a lecturer/researcher in Early Childhood Care and Development. Her work in the field of early childhood has focused on educational administration, curriculum development and research projects in the Caribbean, Spain, Italy and Canada. She joined the Trinidad and Tobago Minister of Education's advisory team in 2003 and has collaborated in the development, preparation and implementation of national policies associated with Early Childhood Care and Education in Trinidad and Tobago. Carol provides technical assistance at the regional and national levels. Carol is the Chair of the National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education in Trinidad and Tobago and Director of Caribbean Research and Development Ltd. a newly established consulting firm with one primary objective--the development of quality learning environments for children under five.

Jeanne Montie, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Associate at the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. She is presently project coordinator for the IEA Preprimary Project, cross-national, longitudinal research that examines the relationship between characteristics of preprimary settings and cognitive and language development at age 7. Jeanne served as project coordinator and writer for the age-40 follow-up of participants in High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, and as project director for the follow-up study investigating long-term outcomes of a multi-site parent-infant intervention program. She also contributed to

The Dominica Meeting marked one of the first attempts to singularly focus on the cultural underpinnings of childhood socialization and development in the poly-ethnic communities of the Caribbean. The presentation by Professor Jaipaul Roopnarine laid the foundation for the discussions in all sessions to draw upon. His child development work, and his continuing examination of fatherhood in many settings, led to examining the cultural contexts for child-rearing.

WHAT WE KNOW

A majority of the studies conducted on childrearing in the Caribbean has focused on people of African descent. Little is known about child-rearing in other ethnic groups, such as East Indians, Black Caribs, Chinese, Amerindians, or the growing numbers of individuals from mixed ethnic backgrounds. East Indians constitute 51% of the population of Guyana and a majority in Trinidad and Tobago (40% African-Trinidadian, 40% Indo-Trinidadian), and there are increasing numbers of individuals from mixed ethnic backgrounds throughout the Caribbean. To address this knowledge gap, Roopnarine's presentation gave considerable attention to childrearing beliefs and practices of Indo Caribbean families. A major goal was to identify similar and differing cultural processes in the socialization of young children (0-8 years) in African Caribbean and Indo Caribbean families residing in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The presentation centered on images of children and conceptions of childhood; parental beliefs, styles, and practices; academic socialization within families; and childhood mental health. This was presented within a broader context of studies of families in other regions. The term "*cultural communities*" was used to focus on individuals and processes and to avoid making population-level inferences.

We know very little about the various cultural constructs within the Caribbean and how sub-cultures shape child-rearing practices alongside other demographic/socio-economic factors. Participants agreed that we do not need a separate psychology of Caribbean children. However, we need to reduce our borrowing from North American/European theories of child development, and to develop our own understanding of what is special and unique about the diverse populations that make up the Caribbean, and how children are raised within these contexts.

The child development and early childhood education fields in the Caribbean would profit tremendously from investigations in the following areas:

?? parental ideas about development, culture and thinking,

Illinois (1972) and Ph.D, Education from UWI Mona (2004). She is Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Education, UWI (Mona) and Chief External Examiner for Early Childhood Education for the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE). Dr. Davies oversees the development of the Early Childhood Diploma Programme offered in teachers colleges and the B.Ed in Early Childhood Education as a collaborative programme between Shortwood Teachers College and UWI. Rose helped develop and taught in the UWI's Master of Education in Early Childhood Leadership Programme, assisted in the development of the Learning Goals and Outcomes framework for the Caribbean, and taught courses for the University of South Florida/Shortwood College (in Jamaica). Her research interests include teacher preparation, development and performance, especially at the early childhood level. She was co-researcher for Jamaica on an international study (2005) involving six countries led by Professor Emeritus Lilian Katz.

Marion Flett came into the early childhood field through the 'adult education' door and stayed! Her first research experience was within a larger low birth weight study investigating the relationship between LBW and children's later educational performance. Since then, she has enjoyed working across the field in research, policy and practice in local, national and international contexts. Her research and evaluation activities have focused on the role of mothers in supporting their young children's learning; supports, training and research with young families in a deprived urban community; and parent education within the U.K. Open University; Marion has worked in management positions at municipality level in both community education and early years services.

Vivian L. Gadsden Ph.D is Professor of Education and the William T. Carter Professor of Child Development at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also the University's Director of their National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF). Her primary research examines cultural and social factors affecting learning and literacy across the life-course, across generations, and across diverse contexts. Within this area, she focuses on children and families at the greatest risk for academic and social vulnerability by virtue of race, class, gender, and difference, broadly defined. A significant subset of her work examines low-income, minority fathers' identity and child and family wellbeing. Vivian is Principal Investigator on research studies addressing intergenerational learning within African-American and Latino families; young fathers in urban settings; literacy and health; and children of incarcerated parents. She is Co-Principal Investigator on a federally-funded project on early childhood integrated curricula. She is dedicated to building links between research and practice (particularly focussed on families, learning, literacy, race, and culture).

APPENDIX A:

Summarized Biographies of Participants

The following summarized biographies of the meeting participants regrettably omits many of their numerous publications, consultancies and public service contributions.

Patricia Anderson is currently Professor of Applied Sociology at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Coordinator for the Masters in Human Resource Development, and the Director for the Johns Hopkins-UWI Partnership for Population and Reproductive Health.. She holds a BSc in Sociology from the UWI, Mona and an MA and a PhD in Sociology and Demography from the University of Chicago. Pat's research interests are in the areas of labour market analysis, micro-enterprises, poverty and livelihood strategies, gender and parenting, and social policy. She has undertaken policy analysis work in these fields for several international agencies and has held membership on a host of University academic and administrative committees, as well as on statutory organizations.

Christine Barrow has been a member of Academic Staff at UWI Cave Hill Campus since 1970 and presently is Professor of Social Development. She was Deputy Principal at the Cave Hill Campus from 2002 to 2005 and her research interests include Social Development (Caribbean and Third World) with an emphasis on family systems, child rights and development, early childhood socialization in Trinidad and Dominica, gender ideologies and systems and adolescent sexuality, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

Janet Brown, M.S.W., came to Jamaica in 1981 after 16 years in New York City and Toronto social service settings. She spent 23 years at the Caribbean Child Development Centre of the UWI, serving first as social worker, then from 1985 as Head. Her primary project and research interests center on parenting, with particular interest in Caribbean fatherhood, and on aspects of early childhood development. Her consultancies include policy and programme development in Jordan, Iran and East Africa as well as in Jamaica. Janet served on Jamaica's Early Childhood Commission for five years and continues her work with Parenting Partners Caribbean, an NGO that has developed materials for training and supporting parent group facilitators that are used widely within the Caribbean.

Rose Davies, Ph.D received her Bachelor of Education from UWI Mona (1968), Master of Education, from Erikson Institute in Chicago, I

- ?? customary practices, traditions, and rituals that touch the lives of children,
- ?? how parents ensure the survival of young children,
- ?? developmental timetables and parental goals for development,
- ?? participation of children in the everyday life of communities,
- ?? pre- and post-colonial histories and their influence on the changing nature of childrearing, and
- ?? similarities and differences in beliefs and practices in childrearing and their potential outcomes in the different ethnic groups that make up the cultural mosaic of the Caribbean.

Recent Findings on Parenting Beliefs and Practices in the Caribbean

"Findings" are too often generalised in characterizing Caribbean parenting practices without sufficient confirming evidence from the multi-ethnic populations which comprise the region. Some of the most common include:

- ?? Parents are uncertain about the benefits of play. Some practices in relation to play and discipline are changing to more developmentally supportive behaviours.
- ?? There is little in the way of two-way verbal exchanges between parents and children.
- ?? There are low levels of parent-child stimulation.
- ?? Parenting styles are a mixture of authoritarian/punitive control and affection.
- ?? Physical punishment is pervasive.
- ?? Children suffer dire consequences as a result of serial migration.

Although these generalisations may be broadly true of the Caribbean, little has been studied and less can be said about the cultural *strengths* that support Caribbean parenting. This observation raises more questions, such as does multiple caregiving by the extended family, friends and neighbours work to avert the negative effects of disadvantage or

does it undermine childhood development? How do parents socialize their children to deal with harsh economic and environmental conditions?

By looking at parental beliefs about childrearing and development across cultures, significant differences were found in desired outcomes for children, within and between cultures. For example, some parents are most concerned with raising obedient and respectful children, whereas others want children who are responsible, considerate of others and honest. Studies have also found that parents give different meanings to children's *play*, relating it to health, cognition, enjoyment or sometimes negative or uncertain outcomes. Different religious, ethnic, class groups value different characteristics. As well, families that migrate with a set of values framed within one cultural context see shifts in those values over time within the new host culture.

Professor Christine Barrow's recent research (for CCSI) in four communities--two in Trinidad and two in Dominica - focused on *what parents really do with their children, and what they believe about how their children develop their "evolving capacities"*. Her main challenges were to construct a framework for understanding the data (to get at the WHYs), and to search for the patterns supporting resilience and positive behaviours, not just the common patterns perceived as negative.

Barrow advocates "*a child rights perspective*", looking at children's participation in their own lives as well as issues of provision and protection. She concurs that parenting constructs in Caribbean contexts are generally conservative or traditional. They assume children's incapacity and to some extent incorporate Western notions of children being dependent and innocent. Children were seen as *moving to adulthood, becoming* persons, rather than just *being children*, persons in their own right. The concept of child rights is often opposed by parents who believe they "own" their children, who do not have (some) rights until they are much older.

Poverty, unsafe environments and single parenthood impact on what parents believe they can or cannot do. Impoverished parents often have

APPENDICES

2010 – Sibling Relations
2011 – Early Attachment

It was recommended that disciplinary practices, children's and parents' rights will be cross-cutting issues which could be examined within each of these four focus areas.

C. *Child of Our World*

Inspired by the BBC Production of *Child Of Our Times*, the Bernard van Leer Foundation is collaborating with the UK's Open University to produce *Child of Our World*, which will similarly follow 30 children from 30 countries for six years, commencing in 2008.

D. *IJEYE Special Caribbean Issue*

Siraj-Blatchford's suggestion was realized with the publication in November 2007 of a six-article Journal volume that provides a welcome focus on many of the issues that were central to the Dominica meeting.

little time for much more than ensuring survival of the family. In dire conditions of poverty and stress, children are sometimes under-protected. The space of childhood has literally and figuratively become smaller in poor conditions; children are kept indoors or in the yard for protection; the immediate environment is seen as dangerous; participation by exploration, curiosity, must be restricted. However, within traditional cultural constructs the social capital of the extended family and wider-community supports can still broaden children's worldview in some ways.

In discussion of sub-cultural differences, Professor Pat Anderson referred to her study in which fathers were asked what they considered the most important principle for raising children. She examined the placement of "manners" in the parents' ranking of principles within the three social class groups, and surmised that the lower class group ranked manners highest because they are seen to be essential for moving upwards in life, and in getting support from family and neighbours. Working class parents expressed that their children needed manners to get anywhere in life, but "rich people don't need manners". The middle and upper classes do not rank manners as high, perhaps because they instill the trait automatically and/or they feel it will not be as essential against other traits that can assist their children to achieve. This underscores the importance of learning just exactly what each favoured characteristic means to persons in different contexts; the same concept may mean very different things.

It was noted that the higher educational and economic status (SES) that parents obtain, the more "liberal" they become (in desired traits/principles for children). Higher SES parents place more emphasis on assertiveness and independence than on manners. Anderson's study indicated that the higher class feels more than other levels that they are losing control of their children; they have lower satisfaction in their parenting. But what does this mean? Do their higher levels of education influence their perceptions in this direction?

The issue of parental control is a currently controversial topic, particularly as the issue of child participation grows worldwide. Contrary to

what has been suggested, infants in fact have tremendous control (ask any new parent) but the control a child can exercise lessens from infancy as they get older. Giving them more choices and opportunities in the complex world they are growing up in is really giving them only an illusion of being in control. Few understand that children's rights go hand in hand with parents' rights.

A number of questions were posed to and raised by the meeting participants:

- ?? What more do we need to know about parenting beliefs, goals, and practices in the early socialisation of children to guide decisions about intervention strategies?
- ?? How do different childrearing practices influence social and cognitive outcomes in children from diverse ethnic, structural configurations, and SES backgrounds?
- ?? How do children define the meanings of "family," "father," and "mother"?
- ?? How do transnational parenting and serial migration influence parent-child attachment and child outcomes?
- ?? What are the linguistic patterns, narrative styles, and academic activities that parents/caregivers engage in with children? How do they shape school readiness?
- ?? What are the cognitive and social dynamics of sibling relationships?
- ?? Should we use diverse intervention strategies that converge on the problems associated with childhood social and academic delays?

EMERGING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

As these questions suggest, we do not know enough about most Caribbean sub-cultures to speak definitively about practices, particularly since so many of the studies cited have adapted instruments developed in other cultural contexts. Even if the same instrument was used to

2. Identify strategies for producing and/or adapting key measures of child development at 2+ and at 4+ and for parenting practices (measuring parental sensitivity to the child as a key example) and parental involvement in their child's learning.
3. Caribbean research, supported by studies elsewhere, has provided sufficient evidence about the basic components of safe, healthy and enabling learning environments to drive policy initiatives to shape those learning environments, identify key supports for parents, inform teacher and practitioner training, and to promote through the media what makes the difference to children's outcomes. We therefore can with confidence provide information, demonstrate beneficial effects, educate, resource, advocate and provide protection where needed.
4. We do not, however, know enough to explain why child rearing practices are the way they are and what their impact is on child development. Many areas remain to be researched, as identified at the meeting.
5. Examination of sub-cultures within each country, even family sub-cultures, is now essential if we are to truly address the broad spectrum of issues among Caribbean children.
6. Examination of the interplay between poverty, class, and cultural/ethnic differences is equally important.

B. Think Tank II

In March 2007, CCSI hosted a second *Think Tank* to share its vision for a *Learning Community*—an informal network of researchers, independent or linked to institutions regionally and internationally, that will work on selected topics, culminating in an annual researchers meeting ("learning event") similar to the Dominica meeting. The Learning Community should inform interventions and regional policies in its outputs. BvLF agreed to support this Learning Community programmewithin its next five-year funding cycle. The participating stakeholders, including many of the researchers from the Dominica meeting , selected areas for a learning community focus, namely:

- 2008 – Early Learning
- 2009 – Gender Roles and Childrearing Practices

CONCLUSION

The move away from deficit models to approaches which affirm the cultural and personal strengths of the subjects of research and intervention is a welcome shift. Best practice approaches must have good pedagogical and child rights-based principles underpinning all work. Such principles manifest in listening to the voices of people and children before intervening and avoiding top-down programme designs. We also have to facilitate a wider public debate on parent/adult rights in relation to children's rights.

The next step is to deliberate how best to take forward the agreed collective priorities, in ways that researchers and funders/agencies can assist each other to achieve separate and common goals, identify possible partners, and ultimately broaden the evidence. A website and/or communication network needs to be established that will facilitate the continuation of this dialogue and feed CCSI's strategic decision-making.

Caribbean researchers were encouraged to team up with North American and European colleagues to seek funding in the developed world to tackle aspects of the emergent research agenda. Students could assist this effort.

Post Dominica Meeting Developments

A. Continuing collegial interaction and collaboration

Following the meeting Sian Williams as meeting facilitator, communicated with participants suggesting possible collaborations in the key areas reiterated for development, including:

1. Publish a technical paper reviewing methodologies that have been used in the Caribbean by researchers, including approaches, instruments, and combination of methods; this paper could identify validated approaches, ones should be validated, as well as those that have fallen short of significant usefulness.

measure specific behaviours and beliefs across the Caribbean, it would be unlikely to achieve cultural equivalence, as meanings and interpretations differ even within the same country, or the same ethnic or socio-economic groupings.

In studying parental practices, measuring parental sensitivity to the child is central to understanding outcomes; however, by what yardstick do we measure sensitivity? In cultures in which physical discipline is "normative", how do children interpret levels of affection and parental sensitivity within this context? And in the Caribbean context, where multiple caregiving is more common than in some cultures, whose responsiveness should be measured? Whose makes more difference?

1. Deconstructing the Caribbean: Ethnicity, Culture and Social Class

Examination of the different cultural communities within each country, even family sub-cultures, would assist researchers in finding what might also be common and cross-cutting across the Caribbean. The concepts of *ethnicity, culture, and social class* need to be addressed when examining beliefs and practices, as some parenting practices cut across these distinctions, while others are unique to a given sub-category. Some researchers believe that social class differences are stronger influences on parenting practices than ethnic differences; there may thus be more within-culture variations than cross-cultural.

What role does religion play in shaping people's childrearing practices? Church attendance of the children was reported in some studies, but do we know what it means to parents when they send or take their children to church (or to temple, or to the mosque)? What role do they expect the place of worship to play? Do parents feel responsible, capable in terms of their children's moral and spiritual development?

2. Child Rights: Children as active participants

What are the needs and rights of parents alongside those of children? Children themselves have a role in shaping their own family culture, as interactions of temperament may result in families doing things differ-

ently with one child than with another. Parents also often speak of learning from their children; thus their practices may differ along a timeline of parenting. We have not looked sufficiently at the child's role in all this. The researchers recognized the near absence of family research from *children's* perspectives. Obtaining retrospective accounts of young adults with the capacity for self-reflection about their own childhood would also be useful in addressing issues of children's participation rights. Young children are aware of differences in gender, social status and the effects of poverty. Looking at and listening to young children may tell us more about their parents' customs than older children, who are moving away from parental influence to peers.

3. Migration

Culture changes in place and time. The migration of Caribbean people across the world produces creolized culture effects over time; for example, what beliefs do parents who migrate hold on to no matter what? What practices change in adjusting to new host country traditions and laws? What do children retain of their parents' practices within migrant families? How do music and the media contribute to cultural adaptation?

Reynolds' study of three generations of Caribbean mothers in Britain found that individuals, as well as each generation, are quite selective about what they deem as "Caribbean" in their lives, what they wish to retain and what to reject. What role do community networks (Caribbean communities in cities abroad, as well as community sub-cultures here at home) play in child-rearing?

4. Defining "responsible parenting"

Participants were cautioned about defining or prescribing "responsible parenting" from too narrow a perspective. How do parents understand their roles? In what contexts? For example, a mother's complaint about her "troublesome" child is debatable if in fact she is in stressful circumstances and is ignorant of what to expect from a quite normal child whose behaviour is age-appropriate.

The organizers urged use of the knowledge we have to better serve the most disadvantaged, and to study deviations of 'normative' behaviour. We know that social class plays a dramatic role in intervention outcomes but we need a better understanding of why things work or don't work for parents. Some questions remain: how can we better assess a person's or a community's social capital as part of an *audit of strengths*; and, could a *one-stop shop service delivery model* work in our contexts?

The meeting outputs will help the Foundation and CCSI to shift beyond a primarily programme focus to a broader plan of action targeting long-term outcomes. This planning process must be organized with a wide group of stakeholders, who then become the plan's implementers. CCSI would remain the coordinating office for such a plan, but not a project implementer. The research issues that the Foundation/CCSI could tackle over the next five-year period include:

- ?? *contributing* to a longitudinal cohort study, as full support would be far beyond the Foundation's resources;
- ?? supporting the establishment of a "learning institute", some form of regular structure for contributing research inputs linked to an academic website for wide sharing;
- ?? Determination of an organizing principle or framework, and a broader plan to be implemented systematically with partners.

The resource limitations of the Foundation were recognised in balancing a research-driven agenda to support programme interventions, while meeting acute needs with more preventative approaches. Once priorities for regional research are clear, CCSI could serve as a "conductor" of a wider research agenda with many collaborators, working independently and/or in partnership.

The group welcomed the suggestion from Iram Siraj-Blatchford that a team of participants provide the articles for a special Caribbean issue of the International Journal of Early Years Education, for which she serves as editor, that could be widely shared within the region.

Longitudinal studies should happen collaboratively alongside smaller projects. The Profiles Project was cited as an example: the \$US350,000 spent on the longitudinal study produced a “big bang” for the relatively small investment, especially when compared to some programmes that have cost more but have come and gone over the years with little impact.

The use of University students (as in the CCSI/UWI internship programme) is an underestimated resource. Not all good projects have to be high cost. Given a clear focus and rationale, student work can strongly serve research needs.

Another effective approach is to work collaboratively with more than one funding source. Longitudinal work usually needs multiple funders. The ECD Working Group of CARICOM could be key to supporting this type of collaboration with all donors present around the table and planning together.

Responses of the Meeting Organizers

For the organizers, this meeting was part of a larger process to be shaped by the meeting’s outcomes and identified priorities. CCSI/BvLF’s areas of particular interest for follow-up included:

- ? The development of policy briefs that could be widely shared as advocacy tools for policy makers and partners. Such short summaries of key research implications for policy and practices would be useful in the development of policy, new interventions and research. These briefs could be adapted for different audiences.
- ? The publication of the Literature Review, and/or a collection of edited research articles to serve other researchers, programme developers, students, advocates and funders.
- ? The development of a range of radio and television spots to provoke wide discussion around issues not sufficiently discussed across the region.

5. Research Bias, Values, Ethics and Protection

Researchers can see and hear what they expect or want to see and hear, based on pre-conceptions or on research approaches that may not have been proven valid in a given context. Every effort must be made to avoid such bias. But how do researchers avoid value judgments in assessing what they find in the field?

Is it possible to have an ethics policy *without* value judgments? We cannot get to the truth without assumptions about people and their situations being challenged. Are there some values that we believe are universal standards against which observations can be measured?

How invasive can researchers become? When studying powerless groups in society, often painful, even horrible situations are uncovered, such as child sexual abuse. What should be done? What is the legal responsibility of field researchers? Research procedures must protect the child, the family *and* the researcher.

6. On Poverty

Poverty denies the rights of people. The poor often do not experience “entitlement”; it is therefore hard to envision their children’s entitlements. But are cultural patterns of parenting solely determined by poverty or its lack? There are other factors at work. If the CHILD is placed at the centre of analysis, are children in poverty different from other children, or if they are in some ways, is it poverty or other factors that make them so? What makes some children in very poor circumstances do well, while others flounder? The desire was expressed to identify the families’ strengths and achievements, such as their resourcefulness in dire poverty, noting that negative practices are not found only in poor families. Conversely, positive practices are also found in poor families.

PARENTING: MOTHERING AND FATHERING

- ?? Children's physical environments and their effects (such as toxins, natural disasters or violence).
- ?? children's health issues;
- ?? specific categories of at-risk children, including children with HIV/AIDS or disabilities, and victims of abuse.
- ?? Issues concerned with moral education, and the role and power of religious beliefs in influencing parenting practices.

A final collective recommendation was made for the development of a regional research agenda to take priority issues forward via partnerships with other groups, such as the CARICOM Working Group on Early Childhood Development and donors other than the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Dissemination of findings

How can the evidence we have be better shared with other countries, regions? The idea of a website (such as CCSI's or CaribECD) for sharing research and programmatic outcomes linked to University departments and/or studies was supported.

The internet is also an increasingly available and useful tool for helping children and parents learn, and can engage people at their own level. It was suggested that the Gates Foundation should be explored. Many practitioners are still intimidated by Internet Technology (IT), but it is now an important part of children's experiences. Texting, for example, can quickly reach adolescents and children as well as parents, and is a quick and efficient way to communicate important brief messages.

Mobilizing resources

The major role of NGOs and Aid agencies was acknowledged. "We do not always see them working at greatest benefit; sometimes we need to bite the bullet and instead of saying, "we can't afford it", ask, "can we afford NOT to do it?" The *cost-benefit analysis* of a major integrated project (like the one-stop-shop approach) might prove that the initial cost could be saved in the long-term.

The presentations and discussions in this session sought to "take apart" the concept of *parenting*, to examine aspects of motherhood and fatherhood, their disparate and similar tasks, and the differences in socio-cultural beliefs and practices related to gender within the family and community contexts.

what other Caribbean countries see as their needs for research? We should refer to *Caribbean/cultural communities*, and avoid the generalized label of a *Caribbean identity*, and remain sensitive to the differences that exist from country to country, as well as from group to group within each country. The differences can be significant.

- ?? *Stimulation of research at the practitioner level* is important for obtaining reliable impact evaluations and establishing data bases. Persons new to research can be guided by a body of work on *practitioner enquiry*. Practitioners have to be careful about how they collect data from people they work with, or children they teach every day, e.g. remembering to get consent forms and protecting confidentiality. *Practitioners' reflections* about their own experiences and observations are too infrequently obtained, but can greatly enrich dialogue on issues. There has been insufficient work on the *conceptual frameworks* which underlie our investigations and our services.
- ?? We have used the concept of *learning communities* with middle schools and high schools, but not yet in early childhood work. Preschool teachers are very isolated with a lot of autonomy. A *learning community* would bring them together to share and to improve their practice.
- ?? *Capacity-building* in the range of research methods is essential in addressing the insufficiency of skills researchers in the region. Offering research scholarships for doctorates on given topics was suggested; this could result in enlarging and ensuring work of high caliber.

Important research areas not discussed

It was agreed that there were areas barely discussed in this meeting which should be considered in a future research agenda:

- ?? Research for purposes of strengthening policy, particularly policy related to meeting the needs of families with special needs children, and to taking lessons learned to scale nationally and/or regionally;

WHAT WE KNOW

Measures of Parenting

Heather Ricketts presented data obtained from a special module on Parenting that was added in Jamaica's 2004 annual Survey of Living Conditions (SLC), which provides a national profile of socio-economic and social indicators.

Just over 1000 caregivers with primary responsibility for the overall well-being of the 2,500 children in their households were interviewed; 90% of those interviewed were female. The areas queried within the survey were:

- ?? Parent-child and parent-school interaction
- ?? Parental stress
- ?? Discipline and punishment
- ?? Parenting support
- ?? Television viewing and supervision
- ?? Child care
- ?? Parent-child separation
- ?? Parental attitude to child's sexual awareness

Three of the most significant and interrelated findings were:

1. The level of interaction/stimulation at home particularly with young children is quite low, and the impact on child development and intelligence is of concern.
2. Parents experienced relatively high levels of parental stress. The significant stressors were poverty, large numbers of children, lack of a partner to support parenting tasks, and having little or no parenting information.
3. There is heavy reliance on corporal punishment particularly for young children. The more stressed parents were, the more frequently they used corporal punishment, quarreling and shouting, and the lower the level of interaction with their young children. Younger parents and better educated parents were more interactive, and higher levels of interaction meant better moni-

toring and more positive forms of discipline. The interface between parents and their children's school was generally limited, rising with parents' income level. Parents with ONLY children under 12 (who would generally be younger parents) used praise, hugs and kisses LESS than parents with only older children or with both younger and older children.

Many parents felt trapped or controlled by their parenting, especially those with four or more children; feelings of fulfillment as a parent conversely went down with the number of children.

It was suggested that Jamaica's SLC data should be reviewed for more distinctions related to the age of parents. It is also important to disaggregate interactions by caregiver, rather than just parents in order to find which adults do what with children, as some caregivers remain invisible to investigators.

In a current Jamaican longitudinal study, generational changes are being seen; younger mothers are showing more affection than older ones. In a Barbados study, this change was attributed to learning alternative models from other cultures via travel and media exposure (such as The Cosby Show).

Discussion pointed to studies which showed that high levels of child minding by boys, single parents, young parents, and older siblings led to anti-social behaviour in children. But with high or moderate levels of grandmother care, children scored higher for emotional well-being. As well, children with siblings were found to be more socially adjusted than children who were only children.

Caribbean Mothering in the UK

Tracey Reynold's research looked at three generations of African-Caribbean mothers in the U.K., where the idealised mother is white, middle class, heterosexual, and living in a nuclear family unit. Other mothers are judged in relation to this ideal and are often rendered problematic, invisible or absent in public debates on issues of concern to mothers. Caribbean mothers there are often characterised as single

2. Valuing play

The meanings of cultural forms of play, the strengths and skills derived from traditional, informal play need to be understood.

3. Children birth-to-three

This cohort remains under-studied, both in their homes and in other settings.

4. Building resilience

An examination of actors within our contexts which promote positive resilience in children is needed. The importance of *transitioning* is not reflected in policy nor practice. More data is required on *children's transitions*; from home to group settings, preschool to grade one, home to other homes, and caregiver to caregiver.

Recommended methodologies

The following methodologies were recommended for moving forward to answer some of these remaining questions:

- ?? *Longitudinal studies*, for their long-term learning value.
- ?? *Mixed methodologies*, for more in depth examination: quantitative, qualitative, participatory research, focus group discussions, and use of multi-media.
- ?? *Multiple methods* could be integrated in one study, or complement each other in stand-alone studies
- ?? *Multidisciplinary teams*, to broaden and deepen analysis of data and observations.
- ?? *Multi-site studies*, to provide comparative material within the region. The requirements for a multi-site study to be undertaken in the Caribbean include: capacity building to ensure comparable expertise in all sites; political will to carry through and support; good guidance from experience elsewhere; and, collaborators in other contexts who could mobilize other resources.
- ?? *Multi-cultural studies* to enhance understanding of our diversities and similarities. How can we more effectively tap into what

We need to locate “fatherhood” and “motherhood” within our wider cultural and socio-economic environments. For example, we in the Caribbean continue to privilege motherhood over fatherhood, especially with small children, so what are the effects of this on children, and on partners? We must aim to understand the concepts of fatherhood and motherhood in various contexts (especially in relation to the antenatal and post natal periods) and the meanings of fatherhood and motherhood for very young parents.

We also need to incorporate a rights perspective, to demystify the notion of children’s rights. We need to understand what Caribbean fathers, mothers, and children understand about their rights, in both local and international contexts.

2. Parental stress

The topic of high levels of parental stress was repeatedly raised. The research agenda should include studies which examine its multiple causes, how it is defined in various contexts, what parents actually DO in relation to their stress levels, and what interventions could be effectively responsive? It was suggested that the *causes and ameliorations of parenting stress* could be an organizing concept for complementary studies.

3. Effective parent support

How is parent support most effectively delivered? What methods and approaches have the greatest impact on the parents, and on the children?

? ??In relation to children

We do not know enough about factors affecting child outcomes.
More evidence-based data is needed on:

1. Corporal Punishment and Effective Alternatives

The impact of various forms of corporal punishment, in homes, and in school remains understudied. As well, much remains to be learned about effective alternatives.

mothers heading households without men. They are seen as either “supermothers” (if educated and middle-class) because they “can’t find educated male partners” and so cope alone, or they are “babymothers” re-creating the cycle of poverty by taking early motherhood as the only viable route to adulthood.

These women cannot escape their racial identity and inequality within the society and this affects their mothering identity and practices. For example, teaching skills to their children for confronting racism and celebrating Caribbean heritage is a priority. Most of the Caribbean women interviewed do not feel they belong in the UK, they don’t feel “British”. So they turn back to the Caribbean, their parents and grandparents, to forge a cultural identity which they then pass on to their children. Important signifiers of these efforts are:

- ?? Teaching children respect and good manners, especially to adults
- ?? Use of corporal punishment to maintain discipline
- ?? Regular church attendance (for moral education)
- ?? Cooking and teaching children how to cook Caribbean food
- ?? Modeling and teaching individual and collective resistance to racism

Experiencing “racialized environments” is often negative, but socializing children to deal with it is empowering; stereotypes can be turned on their head. From children’s viewpoints, both the external and internal adaptive forces within families shape their identity.

A number of community events and welfare services have emerged to provide “community mothering”—concrete and emotional supports responsive to Caribbean migrants’ feelings of social and economic exclusion. Policies to engage these families usually target the women, often ignoring the role men play, as often is the case in the Caribbean. It was noted that even the concept of “community mothering” is gender-loaded; it should be “community parenting” supports.

Some similarities between these findings and the situations reported of mothers who remain in the Caribbean were identified:

- ?? The women are often described in deficit terms.
- ?? Their families are affected by migration and re-migration.
- ?? Parenting policies and interventions are in short supply in both settings.
- ?? Parents have high aspirations for children's educational achievement. Many in the UK want to send their children to Caribbean supplementary schools in the UK or to the Caribbean for schooling, even if conditions here do not match their aspirations.

The main differences noted between the situations of Caribbean mothers in the UK and their sisters at home are:

- ?? The more starkly racialised context in the UK; parents teach both boys and girls strategies to avoid problems in public spaces.
- ?? Childshifting is not a UK experience. Those who have experienced this as children are determined that their children will not.
- ?? The UK welfare safety net of provisions available to support parenting.

Caribbean Fatherhood

Margaret O'Brien's review of fatherhood work in the UK examined how mothers and fathers parent collaboratively, even if in separated circumstances. There are many different cultures of fatherhood, but there are two dominant sets of cultural anxieties about fathers: one set is concerned about "fathers in crisis" — the "deadbeat dads" approach—examining fathers who are unable or unwilling to care and provide for their children. The other set, with which the researcher was more concerned, is interested in "fathers in transition", moving from positions of father right/power to father love/care.

The National Cohort study of children born in 1958 in the UK, studied periodically into their 40s, offers the following evidence of the impact of involved fathers on the outcomes for children (involvement was measured when children were age 7):

Discussion on the Way Forward

Participants used this final session to reiterate the questions and emergent issues noted previously at the end of each section, and others. The discussion also centred on the most appropriate methodologies to pursue to address these. This rich and lively discussion is hard to briefly summarise; key areas, however, which participants generally agreed needed further research follow.

A. In relation to parents

We still know too little about what parents actually do in the home with their children. We could benefit from research in the following areas:

1. Parenting constructs

- ?? We have not yet grasped the various cultural constructs of "motherhood", "fatherhood", and "parenting"; how roles are divided and why, what differences exist between socio-economic, ethnic and cultural groups; and the role of gender in assigning roles.
- ?? We also do not know the weight and/or substance of what teachers in early childhood settings do to socialize children in their role as part-time surrogate parents.
- ?? What are distinctive Caribbean parenting practices within international literature? What are common to other cultures?
- ?? Shared parenting in the Caribbean context has not been examined. Adults other than biological parents regularly play parenting roles, but are rendered virtually invisible in the literature. We need to think of all the things that lead to successful development of a child, then note who does what in relation to all those functions, rather than think narrowly of only father and mother. We need a framework for understanding our sub-regional concepts of fathering and mothering.

There is widespread concern about high levels of aggression and crime in the society. The extensive data within the 11-12 and 15-16 reports detail the high levels of domestic violence, and school and community violence to which many of these children are subjected and also witness. Many, too, have become perpetrators. This stark information, along with the complementary data from the Profiles Project for children at age 6, is assisting the Commission and many other organisations to tackle issues of corporal punishment, domestic violence, and child abuse with strategies such as parenting initiatives, training programmes, public education, conflict resolution training, counselling programmes, and legislation.

Analysis of the data was also able to show that regular church attendance, reading books, and extra-curricular activities were positively related to school achievement; number of hours of television watched was inversely related to school achievement. This finding assisted the Jamaica Broadcasting Commission to develop a code of broadcasting ethics for all electronic media and in public education campaigns about appropriate programming for children.

There have been many other outcomes of this “impossible”, “insane” longitudinal undertaking:

- ?? Some 60 publications have derived from these studies
- ?? Three used in international meta-analyses so far
- ?? Major source of information on children
- ?? Major impacts on government policy at each step
- ?? Capacity Building: 3PhD's and 1 MSc Thesis so far
- ?? Many spin-off studies and research projects

Data collection was underway for the cohort at age 19-20. Other dimensions were added, for example, childhood factors in relation to prevalence of chronic diseases such as asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and osteoporosis.

Developing countries should be encouraged to undertake such studies despite the initial cost, so that scarce resources can be more effectively and efficiently utilized, guided by evidence-based interventions.

- ?? positively related to their later educational attainment;
- ?? children were less likely to be in trouble with the police;
- ?? associated with good parent-child relationships in adolescence and also with later satisfactory partnerships in adult life;
- ?? protected against an adult experience of homelessness in sons of manual workers;
- ?? protected children in separated families against later mental health problems.

An “involved” father in this case is one who:

- ?? spends time going on outings with his children
- ?? reads to his child
- ?? takes an equal role to mother in the management of their children; and
- ?? is interested in the child's education

There are many studies showing even minimal investment of fathers is associated with good outcomes in children in terms of social behaviour, better mental health, protection for sons, and academic achievement. It was suggested that we should also measure the impact on the child of differing levels of economic and emotional support from the father to the child's mother.

Incarcerated Fathers

Professor Vivian Gadsden's research in the US focused directly on children of incarcerated fathers and parenting to increase positive outcomes for children. Little work has been done in this area. Most interventions were aimed at the welfare of the children of prisoners with little concern for their incarcerated parents. Most grant-making organizations assume an attitude of “[We] really don't think they should have relationships with their kids”.

In studying low-income fathers from minority groups in the US, there was no way to avoid looking at the role of incarceration, and particularly at the intergenerational transfer of behaviour. A very high percentage of low-income Black American and Latino Americans have either been

behind bars for some periods of their lives or have had serious brushes with the law. As the evidence mounts on the importance of fathers' participation in their children's lives, the significance of fathers' *absence* also mounts. And absence by incarceration means "presence" of another kind in a child's life and carries many implications for child outcomes that have only begun to be examined. The implications for Caribbean fathers in prison and their children is virtually unexamined.

Changing Roles of Fathers

Professor Patricia Anderson's current research examines whether and how men's fathering roles are changing, as measured against a 1993 UWI study on the same topic. Her current work used some of the same base questions of the '93 study but deepened the enquiry by looking also at how men define masculinity as well as fatherhood, and sought to obtain more information on what fathers actually DO in relation to their children. The study also interviewed middle class men, which the earlier study had not done.

Anderson presented some of the study's preliminary findings:

- ?? Fathers who positively internalize their 'nurturing role' display more interaction with and responsibility for their children.
- ?? Men identify strongly with their father role.
- ?? Men contribute more to parenting than they are generally credited.
- ?? Involvement in fathering is part of a developmental process for men.
- ?? There are strong gender-differentiated socialization patterns for boys and girls.
- ?? "Outside" children often suffer if men are in a domestic union with new children.
- ?? Conflicts between parents lead to negative outcomes for children.

Initial focus groups and the emerging data from an accompanying household survey (1142 interviews in four communities) suggested that fatherhood is no longer as heavily or as exclusively economic in definition as it was in the first study. Fathers spoke more of fatherhood as "master status" generating respect, giving direction in life. The focus

- ?? the relationships among cognition, educational attainment and behaviour.
- ?? the factors which influence cognition, educational attainment and behaviour.

Data were obtained through questionnaires administered to children, parents and teachers, and physical and cognitive assessments of the children. The areas covered included:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| School achievement | Behaviour |
| Sexuality/reproductive health | Health and healthy lifestyle |
| Nutrition | Drug use |
| Violence | Self-esteem |
| Career choices | Social support systems |

When these children reached 15-16 years old, additional instruments were added to learn more specifically about behaviour strengths (from parent and teacher perceptions), levels of parental stress, ADHD incidence and school characteristics. The children were also asked for additional information on family life, peer relationships, school life, emotional life, and health and nutrition indicators.

This data produced clear snapshots of the family structures, in particular parent figures, for children; those structures for many children change over their lifetime. The data also documented the under-achievement of boys in relation to girls, especially in the public primary and all-age schools. Since *cognitive* tests of both genders resulted in very similar scores, even higher in some areas for boys, the causes of the under-achievement are seen to lie more clearly within educational institutions and in the socialisation of male children.

Before these studies, there were no population based data documenting behaviour problems in young persons. Jamaica now has a picture of presenting behaviour complaints (at age 15-16), with suicidal thoughts, drug use reported by child, and somatic ailments presenting as the major complaints.

The final presentation which follows captured many of the key issues that were the source of deliberations and focus of recommendations, and demonstrated practical, useful approaches for moving forward. The final discussions on the way forward follows the case study.

Broad Benefits of Longitudinal Research: The Case of Jamaican Birth Cohort Studies

“If your idea isn’t ridiculous when you start, you aren’t doing anything important.”
Albert Einstein

Dr. Samms Vaughan provided a summary presentation on the broad benefits, direct and indirect, of the longitudinal Jamaica Birth Cohort Studies which began with a national sample of over 10,000 newborns in 1986. When being proposed, this initial cohort study was considered impossible, impractical, even “insane” by detractors. Its aim was to identify causes of perinatal, neonatal and maternal mortality and morbidity, by examining a wide range of variables within all births in Jamaica (10,500) during September and October 1986

The outcomes of this work were far-reaching. The primary causes of perinatal and neonatal deaths were determined, as were the factors contributing to maternal death, and the hospital conditions which contributed to mortalities. As result, Ministry of Health policies were reviewed, the obstetric and new born services were reorganized, a system for antenatal referral of high risk women was introduced, in-service training programmes were developed, related quality assurance programmes were instituted, maternal mortality surveillance and data systems were initiated or upgraded.

Funds were obtained to extend work with this cohort when the children were approaching age 11. The objects of these two studies were to determine:

- ?? the patterns of cognition, educational attainment and behaviour of Jamaican children at the end of the primary and secondary years.

groups aided the design of two new scales for measuring “masculinity” and “fatherhood” dimensions.

Patterns emerged between the three communities of fathers. For example, *honesty* was the most valued principle for middle class fathers, followed by *respect for others*, and *fearing God*. In the working class and lower class communities, *manners* topped the list and then *respect for others*. The third most important for working class fathers was *honesty*; for lower class fathers it was *to be loving*.

The principles which fathers espoused for their sons as different from their daughters bore similarities in listing but differences in rank order between the communities. The top three for all fathers *for sons* were: *to be manly*, *to be focused and independent*, and *to not keep bad company*. *For girls*, the top three for all fathers were: *self-respect*, *to be ladylike*, and *to do schoolwork*.

Gender did not make much difference, however, in the ways fathers showed approval: for younger children fathers gave hugs, expressed pleasure, encouraged and praised them and gave kisses (in descending order of frequency); for older ones the order was expressing pleasure, giving encouragement and praise, hugs, and rewards.

To discipline or show disapproval, fathers were rougher on younger boys than on younger girls, using physical punishment more often than other methods. But for older children, fathers seemed to treat them more or less the same, with physical punishment falling behind serious talking, reasoning and shouting.

Between 50% (lower class) and 60% (working class) of fathers said they had been the kind of father they wanted to be. The reasons they gave for this vary. Giving financial support was the most significant reason for their satisfaction, with “being there for the children” in second place. More middle class fathers were satisfied that they had trained their children in values compared to the other two. On average, though, only 17% were satisfied that they had “been responsible”.

When fathers expressed dissatisfaction with their father role performance, financial problems topped the list of reasons, especially among the poorest men, followed by the fact that their children did not live with them, and they wished to spend more time with them.

The Jamaican questionnaire examined how men were affected by the fathering they received, and what images they think their children have of them as fathers. Anderson noted that very often unprompted answers related the absence or behaviour (positive or negative) of their own fathers to the way they now father their children. Some fathers felt they are a good father to one set of children but not for another (usually earlier) set.

In the discussion, Dr. Samms-Vaughan noted that she's working with a US researcher in Jamaica to measure testosterone, prolactin and steroid levels (using urine, blood and saliva test samples) in different sets of biological and step fathers during and after playing with their children. In similar studies elsewhere the father's testosterone goes down and prolactin goes up as a result of this nurturing interaction. But nowhere else have they looked at step-fathers' reactions. All look forward to the findings in this new area of work.

EMERGING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

1. *Disciplinary Practices*

The differences in punishments meted out by fathers and mothers were brought out in two presentations. We need to get *children's perceptions* about the discipline they receive from their mothers and fathers (and others), as well as about how they see their parents solving their differences.

2. *Fathering*

Some areas in which deeper examinations of fatherhood would be useful include:

THE WAY FORWARD

This final session with participants asked them to tackle the following questions:

- ?? *Do we know enough to proceed with a sound enough basis for some interventions?*
- ?? *If yes, in what areas, what interventions, and for what purposes?*
- ?? *And what are our aims now for future research to further inform our practice?*

3. Areas needing further research

Some gaps that remain in our understanding of social-emotional development, particularly within our Caribbean contexts were agreed:

- ?? The impact on children of relationships with others, including parents and other care givers such as grandparents, siblings and other relatives
- ?? The role of young children's peer interactions and play on their social/emotional development
- ?? Young children's feelings and emotions, particularly before age four, presently almost totally undocumented
- ?? Young children's social milestones
- ?? Social/emotional strengths in Caribbean contexts; indicators of resilience
- ?? The role of culture in the development of behaviour problems and strengths
- ?? The development and testing of new methodologies to ensure validity in our environments.

- ?? To distinguish between idealism and reality: e.g. challenging the myth that if fathers just keep some kind of contact with their children, or keep sending money, the children will be fine.
- ?? Issues of class, levels of education and employment in relation to the meanings of fatherhood, fathers' performance and levels of parental satisfaction. Fathering is not oppositional to mothering; the complementary strengths that both parents bring to parenting remain to be explored.
- ?? The effectiveness of interventions generally to engage fathers in greater participation in their children's lives
- ?? What types of programmes targeting fathers best address specific issues, such as children's schooling, or parent-child relationships, or other aspects of father involvement
- ?? Issues of men's physical and mental health in relation to children and families.

3. Incarcerated Fathers

Questions raised regarding incarcerated fathers include:

- ?? If fathers are incarcerated, how can they exhibit father's care behaviours? How can they monitor their children?
- ?? What issues are important for a man's re-entry to his family?
- ?? How does the prison system itself deal (or not) with the fatherhood issue of the inmates?
- ?? How does a father's incarceration contribute to a child's behaviour and performance? How does length of imprisonment bear on these issues?

It was noted that these same questions must be raised about incarcerated mothers, another unexamined area.

4. Role of Stepfathers, Social Fathers

Fathers are far more changeable figures for children than are mothers. We know very little about the roles stepfathers play, the meanings fatherhood has for them, and how children view them. We need to understand the role of other male relatives and social fathers in the lives of children.

5. *Good father to whom?*

Many of the Jamaican findings mirror what they are finding in the USA, that almost everywhere men construct images of themselves positively. What are the sources of these images? Why are these images so ajar with popular negative stereotypes within Caribbean cultures? Other related questions include:

- ?? What are children's perceptions about the value of fathers, and the implications of separation from them?
- ?? How much do fathers help their children negotiate the outside world?
- ?? When men father children with multiple partners, in and outside of marriage, what are the implications for fathers, for children, and for partners?
- ?? What are the experiences of "outside" children vs. "inside" children.

6. *Caribbean Ideologies*

The historical ideology of Caribbean motherhood needs to be examined critically. Why does the image persist, alongside negative fatherhood images? And, in the words of one Caribbean researcher, "why do mothers whatever they do always seem to make children feel guilty?" Many questions arose from this rich discussion. A few of those seeking to broaden our grasp of culturally embedded parenting ideologies include the following:

- ?? How can we relate the concept of "community cultures",/ "community mothering", which help cultures/families to survive, to other contexts here or elsewhere?
- ?? How successful is "going home" or "sending home", literally or figuratively, in maintaining Caribbean identity, particularly within the generation born abroad?

The present CHA services cannot manage even the small minority, those identified as being most at risk. The Early Childhood Commission intends to assist in taking this *integration of early stimulation into health services* model to scale. The primary benefit of this model is to build on what already exists, therefore making this intervention more cost-effective than the pilots and NGO programmes aimed at this target population to date.

EMERGING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

1. *Reaching hard-to-reach families*

There is always a resource question in tackling solutions. It is important to make practical links and maximize available channels to deliver important messages:

- ?? Dissemination of *what we do know* is vital.
- ?? Literacy issues must be tackled creatively if people 'on the ground' are to be engaged with issues
- ?? Community institutions can play key roles: early childhood resource centres (based in each parish in Jamaica), religious centres, community and sports centres, clinic waiting rooms, training facilities could serve public education functions for the dissemination of print and electronic messages as well as host parenting education/ support activities.
- ?? Community-appointed mobilizers were very effective in a Jamaican NGO (Hope for Children parenting initiative); their work with neighbours ensured high attendance by 600 parents who 'graduated' from a ten-week parenting course. The programme highlighted one of the key aspects of successful parenting programmes—the parents' own self-development.

2. *Men-only approaches*

Men are often more responsive to men-only approaches; co-parenting programmes can bring men and women together *after* separate work. Fathers have expressed that child health clinics are not designed for them; many other children's services are not father-friendly.

Proposed Integration of Health and Education Services

Dr. Samms-Vaughan shared a schema for early assessment of young children's development within existing health and education structures, proposed by Jamaica's Early Childhood Commission. The Health services monitor the antenatal period and birth of almost all children and then see children at least six times by age six related to immunizations and health check-ups; a child health and development passport is being introduced. The ECC proposed that the clinics during these visits could monitor the mother's physical and mental health and nutrition status, provide parenting education on brain development and general ECD, and identify risk factors (medical, developmental, and psychosocial) for purposes of referral. Preschool settings could complement this basic support by ensuring family links with the health sector, conduct readiness evaluations, parenting support programmes, prepare children for a smooth and happy transition to Primary school, and refer to help services as needed.

Training Community Health Aides (CHAs)

Having reviewed issues of qualifications and training, as well as concerns about models and methodology used, the researchers agreed that persons with primarily health backgrounds could make the shift to more broadly developmental interventions as they were very effective in programme delivery. An interdisciplinary course needs to be built for such personnel, however, possibly with TVET and/or existing training institutions to equip these persons to meet enlarging demand.

Training the CHAs and measuring their impact over time is possible. This approach substantially addresses the issue of sustainability, although there is still the need to identify the additional resources needed to implement it.

This approach could be extended to basic school personnel, being trained to do outreach activities with parents. It was noted that there are lessons to be learned from the Cuban model, where early childhood workers deliver parenting supports to parents and children in park and other outdoor settings with very limited resources.

PARENTING AND HOME LEARNING

The emphasis in this section shifts from childrearing and parenting in the home to the broader inter-relationship between the home and the childrearing and socialization that takes place in early childhood institutions. In terms of benefits to the child, a child's caregiver at a day care centre can be as important as the caregivers in his/her home.

WHAT WE KNOW

Lessons being learned in the field were the focus of the presentations in this session, with research seeking to measure the impact of work to improve parenting practices, teacher training, and preschool learning environments.

***“In de Pot”*: Assessing Parenting interventions**

Dr. Carol Logie outlined Trinidad and Tobago's effort to assess the impact of a parenting intervention with 188 families who came together in small groups for eight-module parenting courses. The programme was developed in consultation with parents within poor communities, and the facilitators were trained to work with participatory methods and at low levels of literacy. The research question the Government hoped to answer via this intervention was: *How do we build a framework for analysing varied parent values and norms within our cultural contexts?*

The programme name came from the practice of having participants place their questions and concerns for each session in a big iron pot in the middle of the room. These questions and concerns were answered through participatory discussion among parent participants with facilitator inputs. The research elements of the project are to be developed or strengthened in the next phases of the programme.

***The Case of “Nancy”*: A study in classroom practices**

Dr. Rose Davies' recent doctoral research profiled the work of four Grade One teachers of six-year-olds, all recent teachers college graduates. Two of the teachers were trained for early childhood settings, the other two for the primary education system. Research modes included classroom observations over an entire school year, interviews, informal conversations, reviews of relevant documents, and personal journals.

Of the four teachers under observation, “Nancy” stood out as unique, and her story is presented in order to pose questions about how, and

were tried at first, but the mothers did not come regularly. They sometimes met in groups within their own communities.

Mothers and children were visited regularly and at the end of the intervention, the stimulated children showed marked gains in DQ measures compared to the control children. The mothers also showed significant differences in terms of their developmentally appropriate knowledge (such as age appropriate activities, encouraging child learning, and discipline strategies) and practices (incorporating play into daily routines and the frequency of activities) in relation to their children. It was noted that in another study, findings indicate that parent groups work better if they are organized within the community settings.

The challenges presented by such findings are of course how to develop and finance the materials and training activities to take this intervention to scale across the country, and how to most conveniently and cost-effectively link families to group support services.

The Roving Caregivers Programme (RCP)

The Bernard van Leer Foundation, through CCSI, has for several years supported this NGO-based early stimulation programme in Jamaica and more recently in the Eastern Caribbean via home visits to rural poor families with children age 3 and under. As the programme is being replicated in the Caribbean, CCSI is now building in baseline data so the short and long-term effects of this model can be better evaluated. Evaluations of the programme in Jamaica have shown positive effects in parent knowledge not in parenting behaviour; child outcomes have been more difficult to measure. There is also concern raised about the “wash-out” effect of gains made by the children by the time they reach primary school. The major challenge presented by the RCP model is how an NGO-based programme model can be taken to scale and sustained.

Two evaluations of the RCP have been undertaken by participants at this meeting—Dr. Christine Powell and Professor Jaipaul Roopnarine. For information about access to these published reports check the ccsi website: www.ccsi-info.org.

In both, a trained community health aide visited the mother and child, dealing with developmental as well as health and nutrition issues.

Risk factors, such as under-nutrition and low birth weight are associated with developmental deficits, along with other risk factors such as poverty and environments lacking stimulation. Early stimulation programmes in the US have demonstrated long-term benefits for at-risk children, but programmes are usually centre-based and high cost. TMRI sought to demonstrate a lower-cost model which provided stunted children from 6-9 months of age (a) a nutrition supplementation (milk-based formula and cornmeal), (b) a stimulation programme in the home, (c) both, or (d) no intervention as a control. A group of non-stunted children also participated.

At 24 months the control group had lost ground, as measured by a development quotient (DQ) scale, but the children receiving both supplementation and stimulation had nearly reached the DQ of the non-stunted children. Those who received only supplementation gained a few points on the DQ above the control group, and the stimulation group made even more gains, though not as much as the group which received both interventions.

They were able to measure whether these benefits were sustained through several follow-up assessments of these children, up to age 17-18. Children who received stimulation compared to those who did not showed positive gains in IQ, higher cognitive function, higher school achievement and completion, better psychosocial functioning, and fewer behaviour problems. Most effects were at levels of significance. This is the first known study which looked at stimulation in the treatment of stunted children.

TMRI then asked, through a second study, whether these demonstrated gains could be extended to more at-risk children and through the system of public health services. The second study sought to answer this question using nutrition clinics (specialist arms of the network of maternal and child health clinics). As in the first study, community health aides (CHAs) were trained in psychosocial stimulation activities and made home visits to mothers and children. Group sessions at the clinic

whether, our training of early childhood teachers can replicate this “expert novice”. Nancy’s achievements over the year included:

- ?? Sustained consistent classroom management competence, in spite of day to day challenges.
- ?? Being an extraordinary influence on the children in terms of re-orienting those who entered school “on the wild side” to more pro-social behaviours, such as attitudes to cleanliness, respect toward others, reduced aggression in interactions, sharing and caring behaviour, and display of social graces.

What did the study suggest was different or special about Nancy?

- ?? Her love of children seemed inherent; she was warm, nurturing, affirming.
- ?? She obviously believed in the principles behind developmentally appropriate child development practices.
- ?? She demonstrated clarity of goals for the children, as well as the values and attitudes to be inculcated in her interactions with them.
- ?? She was consistent in modeling desired behaviours, always reinforcing positive behaviour, and treating negative behaviour constructively.
- ?? She focused on building relationships with the children and the parents, resulting in greater parent cooperation. Children tried to transfer behaviours from the classroom to home, where Teacher’s word became “gospel”.

In the case of “Nancy”, **consistency** was the most dominant characteristic. For example, Nancy upheld her values so that children knew what to expect. She also was consistent in NOT using corporal punishment, determined to find effective alternatives; for this Nancy credited her child management course as well as her upbringing.

Nancy **invested time** to win over the children AND the parents. For example, a father who was opposed to all the “play-play areas” in the classroom was invited in to watch the child at play at the end of the school day. By interpreting what the child was learning through the play, the father changed his tune completely.

Children's participation in their own learning

Jeanne Montie shared some of the longitudinal work High/Scope (USA) has done in examining pre-primary environments of four-year-old children in 15 countries. The children were observed in whatever environment they spent the most time (home or group care) during the day. During the observation period the observer recorded what the child was doing and what the caregiver did. Four major findings across all countries were presented:

- ?? Children who attended settings in which free-choice activities predominated performed better on age-7 language tests than children who attended settings in which personal care and social activities predominated (such as feeding, routines of care, group social activities like show and tell).
- ?? The preschool teacher's years of education are related to children's better language performance at age 7.
- ?? The amount and variety of materials available for children's use during the day are also related to children's better language performance at age 7.
- ?? The predominant use of whole-group activities is related to poorer cognitive performance at age 7

These four findings speak to the importance of children's participation in their own education and development. The effects of adult-child and child-child interaction on child outcomes depended on other country level characteristics. In countries in which the settings were more child-directed, the adult-child interaction had a more positive effect on language skills than when the settings were more adult-directed.

In Finland, Nigeria, and the USA the observations were done in homes as well as group settings. In all three there was more free choice in activities for children, more adult-child interaction, and less non-engagement (such as gazing out the window, no interaction) in the home than in group care.

The Home-School Connection

Wherever children are, at home or in group settings, learning is happening, and much of it is unintentional; however, when parents and staff

Two screening instruments drew out parental concerns regarding children three years old and below. Parents were concerned about behaviour as early as three months. These are *perceptions* of behaviour problems, not really established behaviour problems. The parent may have the problem, be overstressed and/or have wrong expectations.

Types of discipline parents most commonly used with young children:

- ?? From 8-11% used non-violent methods (talking, time out, removal of privileges);
- ?? 15% used shouting as the most common psychological form of discipline;
- ?? 31% slapped with their hands, and
- ?? 13% beat with an object.

Too many children reported being victims of violence within their communities as well:

- ?? 33% have been beaten up
- ?? 15% have been threatened with killing
- ?? 5% have been threatened with stabbing
- ?? 4% have been threatened with shooting

Not only do children experience violence directly, they witness high levels of community violence (such as seeing fights, weapons, drug dealings, a dead body and hearing gun shots). The effect of this violence at such young ages is that the brain becomes "wired" for violence. Other effects in the preschool years (too often ignored) include:

- ?? Poor development of sense of trust and safety
- ?? Inability to overcome fears
- ?? Absence of parental stability and protection
- ?? Impaired attention
- ?? The younger the child, the greater the impact

Integrating Early Stimulation into Health Services

The results of two home visiting intervention studies of the Tropical Metabolism Research Institute (TMRI), UWI, both with long-term benefits from early childhood stimulation, were shared by Dr. Christine Powell.

Samms-Vaughan addressed the need to develop our own measures of attachment which may differ from the North American/European norms, as is true for age of walking and for the start of cooperative play, but the science of measuring social-emotional development (SED) is still in evolution. Rarely do parents seek help with their children's behaviour until it seems severe and often too late to easily reverse.

Some of the findings from the Profiles Project which bear on SED include:

- ?? Parental education was associated with cognitive, academic and behavioural outcomes. Its association with behaviour problems was weak.
- ?? The nature of parenting figures affected cognitive function and behaviour problems.
- ?? The relationship between parenting figures and between biological parents, both measures of emotional stability, also affected school achievement and cognitive function.
- ?? Extended family members readily adopt parenting tasks and provide stability, chiefly for mothering.
- ?? Family interactions occur largely through routine domestic activities.
- ?? Extremely high parental stress levels were found in Jamaica across all social class groups.
- ?? Harsh disciplinary measures are commonplace.
- ?? Parental stress affected all outcomes: academic, cognitive and behavioural.
- ?? Parental mental health problems were only associated with parent-reported child behaviour problems.

Signals and effects of high levels of parental stress

- ?? Children not meeting parental expectations
- ?? Parents not meeting their own expectations of parenting
- ?? Parents perceiving children's behaviour as directed at them
- ?? Parents' cry for help

of ECIs plan for children's learning, it makes a difference. We know how powerful parents are as teachers as the learning context is embedded in the culture of the parents. In fact, children come into preschool with the assumption that everyone there knows all that happens at home. It is important for early childhood educators to know what parents and significant others do to extend and enhance learning. *Strengthening teachers' skills in interacting with parents* would reap more benefits than just attendance at PTA meetings.

In the Perry Preschool project (High/Scope USA), which followed disadvantaged preschool children for 40 years, there was a strong parent involvement component including weekly home visits throughout this high quality preschool programme; its long-term positive benefits are well-known.

Monte noted that home visiting curricula are now being developed in the USA that integrate all developmental areas: cognitive, language, social/emotional, and physical. Some schools also have weekly times set for home/parent visits, for mutual feedback to take place. However, *reaching parents* now is more complicated as most are now working. It was noted that the home-school connection in the USA is promoted, but often poorly done. There is a lot of resistance from teachers, and working with families is not taught within the early childhood curriculum for most teacher training courses.

In some environments, the values of some families and cultural groups collide with the values of the school. This dynamic tension does not always serve the needs of parents and/or children. In the Caribbean, for example, many parents push for early academic achievement in children which is often dissonant with the child-centred and play-focused curriculum of preschools.

Measuring Effectiveness of Preschools

Iram Siraj-Blatchford introduced participants to the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project in the UK, a multi-method longitudinal study that began in 1997 and involves several Universities and

the disciplines of sociology, history, education and health as well as others. The project seeks to address the following questions:

- ?? What is the impact of pre-school on young children's intellectual and social/behavioural development?
- ?? Are some pre-schools more effective than others?
- ?? What is the impact of home and childcare history (before age 3) on children's development?
- ?? Can pre-school experience reduce social inequalities?
- ? What is the relationships between teacher qualification and children's performance?

The EPPE study was conducted in the UK with 141 randomly selected preschool centres of all types (including those integrating parenting programmes) and in-home settings. The total sample of 3100 children entered the study between the ages of 3.0 and 4.3 years of age. The data on the children and the settings included assessments of the children's development and of school settings over time, interviews with the children, family background information, and case studies.

One of the most interesting findings was that the parent's involvement in the child's education was a significant factor; the influence of the *home learning environment is stronger than social class*. Key indicators in assessing parental impact were the frequency of library visits, the child's painting/drawing at home, whether the child plays with numbers/letters and/or the parent teaches letters/numbers to the child, and the use of songs and nursery rhymes with the child.

The study confirmed that:

- ?? *Preschool helps to reduce the impact of disadvantage.*
- ?? The types of preschool settings also make a difference. Integrated centres, nursery schools and nursery classes (as compared to play groups, private day nurseries and local authority day care nurseries) are best for cognitive and social outcomes.
- ?? Staff training levels are important; the higher qualified managers are getting better child outcomes on all four scales, including literacy, mathematics, science and environment, and diversity.

WHAT WE KNOW

Early Development of Emotional and Social Health

Dr. Maureen Samms-Vaughan kicked off the session on parents' roles in the social and emotional development of their children. She reminded participants that there are **critical windows** for the development of vision, hearing, speech and motor skills, after which acquisition is more difficult or may be impaired. For example, if you cover a child's eyes for two years, s/he cannot ever see well again. *Emotional* control is also set within the first three years of life, but there is less clarity about what and when is most critical in its development. Emotional control patterns can be gained or changed later, as during adolescence when the frontal lobe has a growth period for regulation and affect, but it never again has the plasticity which it has in this early period.

Social and emotional development tasks in early childhood involve:

- ?? Displaying emotion
- ?? Emotional self-regulation
- ?? Interpreting another's emotions
- ?? Development of self concept
- ?? Development of self esteem (physical, academic, social)
- ?? Development of self control (delayed gratification)
- ?? Achievement motivation

These tasks are accomplished via:

- ?? **Nature** (a person's temperament, providing predictable responses to the environment)
- ?? **Nurture** (via important attachments which become specific at 7-9 months in cultures which have measured it). This is most studied as parent-child attachment; we know less about attachments to other adult family members, siblings, peers and teachers.
- ?? **Social Learning** (in interactions with peers and others)

PARENTING and SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Drawing

Neuroscience has in recent years settled without doubt the critical importance of the earliest years for the development of the senses and motor skills, AND the capacities for emotional control. Although emotional control patterns can be gained or changed later in life, there is never again the plasticity that exists in the first three years of life.

- ?? There are more cognitive gains for children in centres that encouraged high levels of parental involvement.
- ?? At the end of primary year one (age 6), children from high quality preschools generally had higher reading attainment and fewer conduct problems.

The British Treasury at one point asked whether they should just give parents £1000 instead of providing preschools; wouldn't it be cheaper helping parents to teach their own children? The study did the cost-benefit analysis and it would in fact take much more money for parents to get reading scores up to the same level as one year of preschool.

In discussions of this project, participants cited other research evidence related to parenting interventions:

- ?? Research confirms that parent interaction with their children matters a lot, particularly in early years when children are exposed to fewer out-of-home influences.
- ?? The evidence is much weaker when it comes to the effectiveness of parenting programmes, which vary widely in terms of aims and provisions.
- ?? Parenting programmes may change parents' behaviour, but the evidence that they change child outcomes is less strong.
- ?? There are some well-documented programmes that have demonstrated impact on outcomes (such as Reach out and Read, Parents as Teachers, home-visit training for new mothers).

Influencing Policy Development

It is important to learn more about *what* about these programmes make the difference, as this is the evidence that will drive policy initiatives, just as the recent early brain neuroscience has amplified the voices of early childhood advocates.

It was agreed that it is also important to have a common understanding of the outcomes we seek for children in the Caribbean. In the *Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean* produced in 2004 (CCDC/Child Focus Project), a curriculum resource guide sets

out guidance for teachers/caregivers to support the development of specific aspects of the following child outcome areas for children birth to 3, 3-5 and 5-7 years:

- ?? Wellness
- ?? Effective communication
- ?? Valuing culture
- ?? Intellectual empowerment
- ?? Respect for self, others and the environment
- ?? Resilience

Using such a document as a regional guide to curriculum development would go far to ensure that the quality and consistency of preschool offerings within the Caribbean were improved.

Evidence from Longitudinal Studies

A. EPPE Phase 2

Phase 2 of this U.K. based Project has followed the children through to age 11, looking specifically at whether schooling serves to narrow the equity gap related to four areas: *gender, ethnicity, English as an additional language, and poverty.*

The measures indicated that overall boys do less well than girls in language and literacy as well as on independence and concentration/self-regulation, and this gap remains similar from age 3 through to age 7. In terms of ethnicity, Black Caribbean, Black African and Indian children generally catch up to mixed race and UK white children by age 7 in language and literacy. For children with English as a second language, the gap in language and literacy widens by age 7, but in terms of independence and concentration/self-regulation, these children catch up with their English-only classmates by age 7.

Four major influences affect the attainment gap:

- ?? Social class/parental education
- ?? Poverty/free school meals
- ?? The home learning environment
- ?? Preschool education

- ?? How can parent-school communication focus on setting and achieving agreed goals for children based on shared knowledge?
- ?? What other resources can support early learning, such as public libraries, community and sports centres, and churches? We need to pay more attention to the total environment and its opportunities.
- ?? How can parental inputs help teachers and schools to become more effective, less defensive?

10. Policy Development

- ?? What do we know from research about the two major types of early years policy – in relation to parenting programmes and to early education programmes?
- ?? What role does *quality* play? How can we measure it and then improve it?
- ?? How do we know whether our policies are effective, and by what measures can programme providers best be held accountable?
- ?? What kinds of programmes can effectively improve child outcomes and narrow the disadvantage gap for children?
- ?? How can cost-benefit analysis serve to promote effectiveness and quality?

6. Teacher Stress

In the Profiles project and its follow-up (children at ages 6 and 9), parents reported improvement in children's behaviour over the period but teachers did not. Teachers reported that the aggression levels of poor children were still quite high. The researchers did not look at teacher stress in the study, but poorer children are in the more crowded schools, have the least materials, and the largest class sizes. Teachers in such schools are also more likely to come from the same background and this too impacts on their classroom interactions.

7. Resilience

It was suggested that we need to explore the concept of children's resilience — what factors contribute to it or erode it within children's immediate environments? What factors make one child more resilient than a sibling within the same family?

8. Teacher Training

- ?? In the context of emerging research on parenting stress, Nancy's role in relation to parents was clearly supportive and valued. Is it realistic to expect this level of parent support from teachers who themselves are often under heavy stress?
- ?? To what extent are Nancy's qualities innate, or can they be acquired through training and modeling?
- ?? What are parents' and teachers' views on how the socialization of children is balanced between home and school? How can this relationship become more mutually complementary?
- ?? What specific preparation do teachers need to work more effectively with parents?

9. Home-School Partnership

- ?? How can we increase home participation in educational/academic goals for children? How can parents become better able to more effectively monitor their children's progress in schools?
- ?? What are the areas where school and home learning overlap?
- ?? Do areas of overlap represent contradictions or complementarity?

The project developed a *home learning environment (HLE) index* based on the frequency of activities which parents and children engaged in which promoted early learning. The strength of influence of these activities on child attainment was significant across classes. The "value added" of preschool was assessed. Case studies of effective programmes illustrated the value of:

- ?? Challenging teaching methods; 'sustained shared thinking', for example, which was observed more in settings with better qualified staff.
- ?? Staff knowledge of the curriculum and understanding of how young children learn.
- ?? Adults supporting children in resolving conflicts.
- ?? Staff helping parents to support their children's learning at home.
- ?? Integrated centres, or "one stop shops" which offer a range of parenting and other supports alongside the preschool programme.

B. Child of Our Time (CooT)

In a special presentation Tessa Livingstone, BBC producer introduced her highly popular *Child of Our Time (CooT)* television series. This longitudinal Millennium project observes and interviews on film 25 families of British children born around January 2000. They were picked from all over the UK and all walks of life, rich and poor, urban and rural, and the group is ethnically mixed.

The project was designed to help the British public understand what really goes on in families as parents and children interact; what makes us who we are? The project films the ups and downs of all the families and their environments, barring little: joys, tragedies, mental and physical illnesses, everything that affects how they are growing up.

Many studies describe children's behaviour and development, but there are few good observational studies which tell us (and show us) in detail what happens in the daily interactions of children with their parents and other caregivers. Since the first year featuring the pregnancies of the

25 families, three or four programmes a year are aired on different aspects of the lives of these children and their families.

The three major techniques used are observation (using cameras in the home), experimentation (parent-child tasks to help think about what is happening in their family) and interviews (using props and *story stems* in which the interviewer or the parent starts a story and the children carry on with it). These techniques are adapted for the ages and circumstances of the children. Some of the BBC children are in high quality schools within the EPPE project (described above), and the preschools' benefits are shown through this series. For example, one child from a very disorganized home in which there were serial father figures and considerable violence brought a range of anti-social behaviours to preschool, Six months into the programme he was more focused, could talk about his home life, was sharing more and fighting less.

The programme is particularly popular with 16-24 year olds, which is good for parents-to-be. It has produced a wide range of spinoff programmes, including curriculum support for 27 primary schools; research partnerships; targeted radio interviews; and a BBC parent website/parent club.

EMERGING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

1. Poverty of Aspiration

Community inertia and discouragement can defeat a good programme's efforts. We have seen that parents' educational status can impact strongly on child outcomes; what would be the value added if we focused on adult education/women's opportunities? Too many women see themselves as failures of the school system, and don't want to return to it. But they want better opportunities for their children. The UK's integrated centre 'one stop shop' approach can ensure a broad range of supports for parents, but it must maintain high quality services and be continually evaluated to make measurable differences.

2. Intervention from Birth

The developmental lag in at-risk children in the Caribbean begins as early as 17-18 months. We can bring at-risk children's level up somewhat with preschool interventions, but cannot close the gap or sustain gains. This calls for early *intervention from birth* with parents to prevent or reduce the gap.

3. Sustainable Gains

It is significant that boys are at greater risk from entry to preschool up through higher levels of schooling. When a quality preschool makes a real difference in countering these risks, can these gains be sustained? Too often poor children who make gains in good preschools end up in poor quality primary schools. Can support from parents address this? Kagitcibasi's study of parent education programmes with preschools in Turkey suggests that this is possible. The Nancy case study showed how teachers/caregivers can create a climate of parent support and cooperation in promoting positive child outcomes.

4. Corporal Punishment

Caribbean parents value education and do a lot of early letter/number work with children; but on the negative side, 20% use beating when children are not learning. We need to help parents link the consequences of this practice with defeating their positive objectives, and help them to better interact with their children. Jamaica has banned CP in preschools recently but it has been commonly used; Trinidad and Tobago has banned it in all schools but it is not yet enforced. Public media debates suggest that parents attribute rising crime and poor behaviour to this ban.

5. Parent Empowerment

When we give parents information about parenting, we should include a subset on helping parents develop their metacognitive skills, to take a critical stance, to help them to question the system, ask questions, raise their expectations, make higher demands. We need programmes that help parents empower themselves in demanding better services.