Developing Culturally Sensitive Parent Education Programs for Immigrant Families: The Helping Youth Succeed Curriculum [*]

By

Zha Blong Xiong, Ph.D.
Department of Post Secondary Teaching and Learning **

Daniel F. Detzner, Ph.D.
Department of Post Secondary Teaching and Learning

Zoe Hendrickson Keuster, B.A.
Department of Family Social Science

Patricia A. Eliason, M.A.
Department of Post Secondary Teaching and Learning

Rose Allen, M.Ed.
University of Minnesota Extension Service

College of Education and Human Development
University of Minnesota
140 Appleby Hall
128 Pleasant Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

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** Address correspondence to: Zha Blong Xiong, 140 Appleby Hall, 128 Pleasant Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55455. E-mail: xiong008@umn.edu.

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Abstract

This paper describes the process by which the Helping Youth Succeed (HYS) curriculum was developed for Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese immigrants in the United States to help address and minimize conflicts between immigrant parents and their adolescent children. A detailed explanation of this model is provided to encourage the development of additional culturally specific parent education curricula for other immigrant/refugee groups and/or diverse populations.

Keywords: Southeast Asians, parent education, immigrant families, refugee family education.

Developing Culturally Sensitive Parent Education Programs for Immigrant Families: The Helping Youth Succeed Curriculum

In an ideal world, the aims, objectives, and foundational constructs of every parent education program would be uniquely matched to the interests, motivations and demographics of its participating families. With unlimited funding, programs could be designed to encompass a specific population's skills, education levels, social networks, learning styles, personalities, developmental concerns and cultural heritage. But too often, parent educators are constrained by time and finances and simply do not have the resources to create individualized curricula that can adequately address the widely divergent needs and populations they serve. This article offers one approach to this dilemma by outlining the development of *Helping Youth Succeed: Bicultural Parenting for Southeast Asian Families* (Detzner, Xiong, & Eliason, 1999), a low-cost, community-based parent education program expressly targeted to four Southeast Asian immigrant groups (Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, & Vietnamese). In sharing the research, design and development methods used to create this program, we hope to provide an adaptable template for parent education program development that can be applied to other immigrant populations.

Rationale for Immigrant Parent Education Programs

Focusing on immigrant populations is important since the number of immigrants in the United States has increased significantly over the past few decades (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Spain, 1999), and children of immigrants are one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population. Immigrant children account for almost 20 percent of the children in the U.S. (Rumbaut, 1999). Research on immigrant families has shown that conflicts between parents and their second-generation adolescents are more prevalent and intense compared to conflict with first generation children and within non-immigrant populations (Hyman, Vu, & Beiser, 2000; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996). Rumbaut (1996) found a significant relation between level of family conflict and adolescents' school performance, as measured by GPA, in a study that included Southeast Asian families. His findings revealed that adolescents in high conflict families had significantly lower GPAs than adolescents in low conflict families. Adolescents from conflicted families also tend to be more likely to become delinquent (Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 1998) and marry early (Ngo, 2001). In general, parent-adolescent conflicts have been found to serve as a risk factor for adolescents to develop a myriad of problems, such as delinquency, depression, and poor school performance (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Shek, 1998; Shek & Ma, 2001).

Despite the research showing negative mental health and academic outcomes for Southeast Asian adolescents experiencing family conflict, little attention has been focused on developing prevention programs to reduce the incidence of these negative outcomes, and these programs are often outside the range of services offered by parent educators, K-12 schools, and social programs that are charged with helping recent immigrants adjust to the realities of their new environment. Much dissonance results when the mores and cultural traditions of the

American teenage experience come up against immigrant family structures with different expectations for young adults (Detzner, 2004; DuongTran, Lee, & Khoi, 1996; Zhou, 1997).

Although these issues have confronted many generations of new Americans, they have become more acute since the 1965 immigration reform legislation opened the doors to many more newcomers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America whose cultures and beliefs are vastly different from the majority culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1997). The resulting societal discord calls for culturally sensitive parent education programs for immigrant families. Culturally sensitive parent education programs expand the traditional American interpretation of parenting competency and acknowledge the many different ways there are of being a parent and of rearing children. These programs seek to strengthen cultural differences rather than deny or denigrate them, and to understand and reflect an immigrant group's unique values and beliefs (Gorman & Balter, 1997). In addition, these programs can include critically important elements not found in other parent programs, such as helping families cope with discrimination and misconceptions from the mainstream culture.

Because many existing parent education programs were created with middle-class, American parenting practices at their core (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976; Gordon, 1970; Popkin, 1990), they are often inappropriate for new immigrant populations. Among the relatively few parenting programs targeted to immigrants and ethnic minorities, three distinct models can be found. *Translated parent education programs* are those originally developed for the mainstream culture. They are simply mainstream parent education programs that are translated into an immigrant group's native language in hopes that the lessons of American parenting will be adopted by new immigrant families. Some examples of this are the Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) (Gordon, 1970) and the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)

(Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). *Culturally adapted parent education programs* are programs developed for mainstream populations but culturally sensitized to the immigrant group. Preserving the foundational principles underlying the original program materials, the lesson plans may be adapted to incorporate ethnic differences, or the structure of the class sessions altered in consideration of cultural sensibilities. An example of this is the Minnesota Early Learning Design (MELD, 2004) that has taken mainstream parenting materials and adapted them for immigrant populations. Most immigrant parent education programs tend to fall into the translated and culturally adapted categories since they are relatively easy to modify and do not require expensive design and development costs (Short & Johnston, 1994).

But simply translating material or tweaking it in minor ways may not result in an effective program because the goals for which it was originally created differ fundamentally from those which would best serve an immigrant population. For example, a goal for a mainstream parenting program might be to shore up parents' support networks (Zigler & Black, 1989, cited in Gorman & Balter, 1997) or encourage open dialog between parent and child (Wolfe & Edwards, 1988). While entirely appropriate for a majority of American families, these goals may be in direct opposition to the objectives of many cultural groups. Families from some Asian cultures, for example, may already have a strong, family-based network that is actually threatened by the American focus on the small, nuclear configuration. Similarly, some cultures might find the direct, US-style of parent-child communication uncomfortable, even dishonoring (Detzner, Xiong, & Eliason, 1999). Well-intentioned service organizations and programs can unwittingly diminish an immigrant parent's sense of power and authority when they present concepts that contradict a culture's traditional values.

By contrast*, culturally specific parent education programs* are designed to intentionally encompass the values and beliefs of the immigrants' native experiences. These programs strive to facilitate successful parenting within a specific cultural framework (Gorman & Balter, 1997; Ying, 1999). Programs developed from a culturally specific foundation are rare; the ground-up development of such a program is often a cost-prohibitive and formidable task. To address this problem, we have experimented with a new way to create effective, culture-specific parent education programs that builds on family strengths and cultural practices and minimizes costs. An example of this type of program is the *Helping Youth Succeed: Bicultural Parenting for Southeast Asian Families* curriculum, the evolution of which we will outline in this paper.

Southeast Asian Context and Parenting Practices

Southeast Asians, including Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese, are refugees who fled Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos after the end of the Indochinese war to the United States. (For a complete review of the immigration history of these groups, see Rumbaut, 1991, 1995, 1997.) Although the term "Southeast Asian" was used to describe these four groups in accord with the literature (Hyman, Vu, & Beiser, 2000; Lynch & Richards, 1997; Tobin & Friedman, 1984), individuals from these groups do not necessarily identify themselves as such. They may prefer to refer to themselves as Hmong, Cambodian (or Khmer), Lao (or Laotian), or Vietnamese. Additionally, each cultural group arrived to the United States with a different religious practice, language, life experience, and history (Rumbaut, 1995). For example, Vietnamese and Lao tended to be urban dwellers, while Hmong and Cambodian tended to be rural residents prior to resettling in the United States. Most Lao and Cambodians were heavily influenced by the Theravada Buddhism, which is a more strict Buddhist tradition, whereas most Vietnamese were influenced by the more liberal Mahayana Buddhist tradition, along with a mixture of

Confucianism and Taoism (Lee, 1996). Hmong, on the other hand, were heavily influenced by a mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, shamanism, ancestor worship, and belief in spirits (Gates, de Esnaola, Kroupin, Stewart, van Dulmen, Xiong, & Boss, 2000).

Despite these differences, however, all of the four groups tend to share certain values, such as an orientation to group, self-discipline, hierarchy of authority, moderation and harmony, and filial piety (Detzner, Xiong, & Eliason, 1999; Suzuki, 1982), and experience common challenges as refugee parents trying to raise their children in the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1995; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Children who grew up in these family environments are taught to sacrifice their own personal interests for the greater collective good of the family, kin, or clan; to be modest and humble in order to achieve virtue and gain respect from others; and to control temper, delay gratification, and know when it is appropriate to be assertive. To maintain these values, obedience, good behavior, and loyalty are stressed over self-expression, assertiveness, and independence (Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2005). Additionally, resettling in the United States has brought about powerful philosophical shifts, since the values and socialization methods of Southeast Asian cultures differ greatly from the dominant culture of the United States. Due to these differences, there is a wide gap in the rates of acculturation for parents and their children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). Research showed that as families stay longer in the United States, children become more acculturated and adopt more U. S. values. This accelerated acculturation tends to weaken the parents' authority to discipline and transmit traditional family values to the children and intensifies the intergenerational conflict between parents and adolescents (Detzner, Xiong, & Eliason, 1999).

The Helping Youth Succeed Curriculum

The goal of *Helping Youth Succeed* (HYS) was to create a culturally specific parent education program for Southeast Asian immigrant families (namely Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese) that would address and minimize conflicts between parents and their adolescent children (Zhou, 1997). From the outset, we wanted a design that would incorporate the entire family, and wanted to build the program on a firm grounding in the cultural values, beliefs, norms and traditional practices of these immigrant groups. We assumed that healthy enculturation would necessarily entail blending non-negotiable elements of the native culture with unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable aspects of the new. Knowing that immigrant parents tend to feel doubtful and alienated due to immigration, the distrust of the service systems, and shame for disclosing family problems (Xiong, Tuicompee, LaBlanc, & Rainey, 2006), we sought to create a means by which immigrant parents would feel empowered to trust their own knowledge and parenting instincts and in others. To accomplish this, we wanted to create an atmosphere in which there was no obvious expert, allowing the parents themselves to be the authorities and sources of support for each other.

The program is composed of twenty-four "family stories" that reveal parent-adolescents conflicts and dilemmas encountered in everyday life. The stories are intended to serve as the centerpiece of facilitated discussions among small groups of parents who identify the core problems presented in the stories from the perspective of the parent and the adolescent and potential solutions that respect traditional values within the American context. By using stories of common conflicts in Southeast Asian homes instead of their own very real family tribulations, the issues are removed from the shameful admission of their family conflicts while exploring potential solutions to vexing parenting difficulties. Instead of bringing parenting experts and

adapted materials to immigrant parents, HYS empowers parents to develop bicultural ways of thinking about and solving parenting problems using stories that emerged from research in the communities. Examples of stories include titles such as "My parents don't speak English after all these years"; "I don't understand this idea of a dance party"; "What can I do with a child who is hard to discipline?"; "Mom won't let me go on a sleepover with friends"; "Why can't I wear baggy pants like everybody else?"; and "My son's friends are all gangsters". In addition to the written stories in English and the native language of each of the four cultural groups, the curriculum includes a facilitator's guide, and a multilingual videotape of six family stories. The program is intended to be highly flexible and adaptable to diverse groups and situations. Experienced facilitators are important to the success of the curriculum. Although the program can be utilized without facilitator training, our experience suggests that facilitators benefit from training and on-going support from other facilitators. Details about the three year development of the curriculum may be helpful to others who seek to develop parent education curricula

The Development Process

Developing a prevention program that is research-based and focused on culturally specific groups takes more planning, time commitment, and coordination than simply adapting existing programs for a new population (Dumka, Roosa, Michaels, & Suh, 1995). What follows is the step-by-step process of the program development for the Helping Youth Curriculum (Figure 1). Our goal is to provide a template for agencies, program planners, family life educators, and evaluators who want to develop similar programs for other immigrant and/or diverse populations.

Literature and Program Review

The literature review found a few segmented works that tended to focus on a single group, instead of several groups who shared similar parenting experiences and challenges (Xiong et al., 2005). For example, the "New Beginning" for Cambodian families (Scheinfeld, 1993) in Providence, Rhode Island, Tacoma, Washington, and the Bronx, New York, which was sponsored by the International Catholic Child Bureau, focuses only on the Cambodian population.

Because the curriculum was intended for a local audience during the early stages of development, we also wanted to conduct a search for curricula and unpublished parent education programs at the local level. We gathered information from local agencies to learn more about their programs offered for parents. The research revealed that although most agencies have a variety of parent training programs, few used a structured curriculum to guide the education. An exception to this practice was the curriculum published by MELD (MELD, 2004), a parent education agency in Minnesota, which was designed specifically for Hmong parents.

Advisory Council

After gaps were identified, an advisory council was formed to work collaboratively with the research team to ensure that the development of the program was specific to the respective cultures. Advisors were selected from the four Southeast Asian communities from various non-profit agencies (or mutual assistance associations) to work collaboratively with the research team to strategize the most appropriate approach for each population. The advisory council and the research team met for several months to devise a research design that would tap into the experiences of parents and adolescents. As a result, a narrative-based research design using

focus groups as the approach to data collection was adopted to capture stories of parenting strengths and challenges from multiple perspectives.

Successful focus groups depend on the experience of focus group facilitators (Krueger, 1994). Thus, several knowledgeable community members who could potentially serve as focus group facilitators for the study were identified in collaboration with the advisory group. Once sufficient names had been generated, potential facilitators were contacted, carefully screened, and selected, resulting in eight human service workers (one male and one female, one older and one younger) from within the four major Southeast Asian communities. This composition of facilitators was necessary in order to be sensitive to gender and age issues inherent in the Southeast Asian culture, and to enhance group interaction. The facilitators attended a two-day training workshop that introduced the recruiting strategy for the project, the focus group method, interviewing protocol and skills, and other logistical issues (Krueger, 1994). The facilitators were also asked to help develop and evaluate the focus group questions with the research team.

Focus Groups

To help structure the conversations on parenting experiences, challenges, and strengths with parents, youths, and leaders, we chose the National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM) as a heuristic guide (Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994). NEPEM is a parent education model that consists of a summary of positive parenting behaviors found to correlate with positive child development. It was developed by a group of Extension Specialists (Smith et al., 1994) to assist family life educators in formulating parenting programs using a life span perspective (Xiong, Detzner, & Rettig, 2001). The model identifies six parenting categories, each consisting of several parenting skills called "priority practices." Priority practices refer to foundational parenting objectives that can both guide parents to develop more

effective relationships with their children and serve as guideline directives to help external social systems "to be more supportive and accountable for their impacts on families" (Smith et al., 1994, p. 15). The six parenting categories are: care for self, understanding, guiding, nurturing, motivating, and advocacy (Table 1). NEPEM was selected as a conceptual framework because it focuses on global parenting categories and diverse parenting skills (Xiong, Detzner, & Rettig, 2001). Specifically, the NEPEM model supports the concept that all parents, except those who are psychologically incapable, have skills and strengths in raising their children within their own cultural context. Given the necessary resources, most parents will be empowered and motivated to solve their own problems and raise successful children.

The strategy was to begin with a series of community-specific focus groups aimed at identifying best parenting practices and the most salient adjustment challenges encountered by new immigrant parents and adolescents. The first round of discussions focused on adolescent-parent relationships, with separate groups established for parents and teenagers in the Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese communities. Each focus group was conducted in the native language and facilitated by the two trained facilitators who were members of the ethnic group. Because Asian cultures have a long tradition of oral history and storytelling, the facilitators encouraged the informal sharing of stories and anecdotes in hopes that key issues would naturally emerge. In addition, all participants were directed to discuss their experiences through the lenses of the six NEPEM categories (Appendix A). This task was not always easy; some of the distinctly American values outlined by the categories did not seem intuitively apparent to the Southeast Asian participants (Xiong, Detzner, & Rettig, 2001).

Focus group participants were recruited from various non-profit organizations that serve Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese communities in Minnesota (Xiong et al., 2005).

Forty-four Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese immigrant parents (24 mothers and 20 fathers) and thirty-nine adolescents (19 males and 20 females) agreed to participate in the four culturally specific focus groups and two mixed ethnic focus groups. Of the forty-four parents, there were 12 Cambodian, 8 Hmong, 11 Lao, and 13 Vietnamese. The ages of parent participants ranged from 25 to 66 years, with more than 80% between the ages of 36 and 55. All of the parents were first generation immigrants who had lived in the United States for at least five years. Of the thirty-nine adolescents, there were 11 Cambodian, 7 Hmong, 10 Lao, and 11 Vietnamese. The adolescents were between the ages of 14 and 20, with more than two-thirds between the ages of 15 and 19. All participants were offered a $25.00 honorarium and refreshments for participating in the two-hour focus group discussions.

Family Story Construction

The focus group data were reconstructed into narratives that reveal typical family dilemmas (The focus group questions used by the facilitators are provided in Table 2). The family story format was chosen for several reasons. First, oral history and storytelling are important in all four cultures, so it was hoped that the stories would suit the communication style of this audience and stimulate productive discussion. Second, for cultural reasons, it was important to provide an indirect means of discussing what could sometimes be very personal and difficult topics (Strom, Johnson, Strom, & Daniels, 1992; Xiong, Tuicomepee, et al., 2006). Finally, the family stories seemed to lend themselves well to dialog because they were based on collections of stories and real-life experiences gleaned from the focus groups.

To construct family narratives, we used content analysis to analyze the data collected from the focus groups and then sorted incidents into themes according to NEPEM categories. The result was a distilled composite set of 24 family stories that illustrated the spectrum of

frequently cited dilemmas. The family stories were divided among the six NEPEM categories, with one case from each of the four cultural groups per category

Each family story is divided into three sections. The first is a discussion of a problem or issue from the viewpoint of an immigrant parent, an adolescent, and one other person, often offering an "American" perspective. The second section presents background on the issue from both American and Southeast Asian perspectives. The third contains suggestions from members of Southeast Asian communities for addressing the problematic situation presented by the story. Although these family stories are based on real situations, each is a composite of many different stories. The dilemmas that were selected from the focus group data were present in all four cultural groups. For example, one story considers an adolescent's question, "Why is calling a boy on the phone such a big deal?" Three different perspectives are given: a 15-year old daughter, the girl's father, and the daughter's American girlfriend. The context and facts section for this story describes the Hmong perspective that regards such behavior as inappropriate for girls who are not married; the American viewpoint takes the more casual approach that boys and girls can just be "friends."

After the initial draft of the family stories were completed, they were sent to the focus group facilitators for their comments and feedback to ensure that the summarized scenarios were consistent both with what the facilitators gleaned from parent and adolescent comments during the focus group sessions and with their own personal experiences as Southeast Asian professionals working with these populations. These additional comments were incorporated into the draft curriculum.

The draft curriculum included detailed narrative descriptions of the challenges Southeast Asian immigrant parents and adolescents face in the United States, facilitator instructions for

how to use the curriculum, a brief history of the program's development, and the stories themselves. Though the handbooks intended for use by the program's participants did not suggest solutions for the outlined dilemmas, the curriculum's facilitator's guide featured a comprehensive list of all of the resolutions that emerged during focus group brainstorming. This draft curriculum was sent to program directors of mutual assistance associations (or non-profit organizations that served immigrant children, youth and families) of the four respective communities soliciting their reactions and feedback, their overall comments on the appropriateness of the curriculum, and any suggestions they might make for the program's content or presentation. We incorporated their insightful feedback in subsequent versions of the program. For example, two program directors stated that due to language barriers, a curriculum based on stories but provided only in written text format would limit parents' participation. Both directors urged us to find a way to address the low literacy level of the intended populations using alternative media.

Pilot Testing

The second version of the curriculum was pilot tested at six sites; one site per cultural group, with an additional two sites for the Hmong population, which was proportionately several times larger than the other groups in the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota (Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, 2005). Each site was instructed to choose any two cases or family stories to try out with parents. In each session, the facilitator was instructed to read the case in the respective language to participants and ask three open-ended questions: what was happening in the scenario, why were the characters responding the way they were, and how one might improve or resolve the conflict presented. In the earliest focus groups, the discussions tended to get stuck in the negatives of the presented situation—the parents and adolescents definitely

identified with the given scenario and had trouble moving past their own difficult experiences and the emotions evoked by the dramatization. Despite our intentions to equip parents with a set of resolution outcomes, a common theme of the initial focus group evaluations was that the stories focused exclusively on the negatives. Many parents did not have experience in proposing ideas for possible solutions to situations like these, and in some cases the time constraints of the sessions precluded adequate discussion time to reach satisfying resolutions and insight. The parents in these groups stressed the need for positive outcomes and indicated that unless they were assured the sessions would end with constructive suggestions, they would not likely attend the program. Using this feedback as guidance, subsequent focus groups concentrated on brainstorming an array of possible solutions for the family scenarios. We collected all of the proposed resolutions and listed them in the facilitator's guide to use as motivational tinder if a particular group had difficulty imagining positive outcomes. But we believe these should be used only as a last resort; it is preferable for the group to generate its own list of strategies.

The pilot test also informed us that the printed curriculum alone would not be appropriate for Southeast Asian parents. Participants from all of the sites consistently stated that they wanted the research team to produce a translation and a video component of the curriculum for them because they did not know how to read in English. Unless we could develop a method to convey the scenarios that did not involve reading in English, it was clear to us that many parents would probably not participate in the program. We consequently sought additional funding for translation and video production.

Both the translation and the video production were complicated because of the four Southeast Asian languages involved. We wanted to ensure a completely accurate translation; therefore we enlisted the help of the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Translation

Laboratory. Trained pairs of translators consulted with us and worked in teams to translate each family story carefully and appropriately. This was an expensive undertaking, but we felt it was necessary to have professionals do this important work. All twenty-four of the stories were printed in the parent's family story booklets translated into each of the four native languages.

To ensure a process that was respectful to the communities, an Asian media outlet that has extensive experience working with the Asian communities in Minnesota was selected to develop and produce the video along with the research team. The result was that six of the family stories, one from each NEPEM grouping, were dramatized by real families, not actors, into a multiple-language video presentation. These stories, along with the translated family story booklets, form the core of the parent education curriculum.

Lessons Learned

There were several lessons learned through the process of developing this curriculum that we believe will be useful to individuals and organizations who wish to develop similar programs for other immigrant populations. First, we learned that in working with immigrant populations, or populations that have low literacy in English, it is necessary to include plans and budget for the translation of the materials, and to allow for the development of alternative formats, such as videos, in addition to printed materials. Although printed materials are excellent resources for facilitators and parents, they are of little value to participants with low literacy skills. Multiple media can assist learners at various stages of literacy; however, translation and alternative media add cost and time to the projects. Although it cost more to hire trained professionals from the communities who were knowledgeable about and sensitive to the cultures represented, it was well worth the expense to get the best and most accurate work possible.

Second, we learned that a true collaborative engagement between university researchers and community representatives to develop culturally relevant curricula takes time and requires flexibility. This project required nearly three years to complete. We think the development process can be shortened if planning and fundraising are conducted simultaneously and a template is available. We believe the template provided in this paper will facilitate the work of planners, evaluators, and family educators as they develop curricula for other populations.

Third, the NEPEM model was designed to be easily adapted to parents' cultural beliefs and practices. However, we found that while some of their parenting categories (nurture, understand, guide, motivate) were readily comprehensible by Southeast Asian parents and adolescents, other concepts (care of self and advocacy) were less familiar (Xiong, Detzner, & Rettig, 2001). We could have avoided this problem if we had sought community input on the cultural appropriateness of the model. Future program developers who want to use NEPEM or any other parenting models as conceptual framework to guide their work should consult with community members prior to the adoption of the model.

Finally, we learned that focus group research is a powerful tool to assess an immigrant community's experiences in an efficient way. The method compelled us to collaborate with ethnic community facilitators who could conduct the discussions with sensitivity and native knowledge, fostering trust between the team and participants, and diminishing language and cultural barriers. The open-forum nature of focus groups encourages interactions and exchanges on multiple topics in a limited time period. The focus group format created opportunities for facilitators to ask for more details at any point in the conversation (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004). The open discussion format provided opportunities for the narration of rich stories about

parenting in the American context which became the centerpiece of the *Helping Youth Succeed* curriculum.

The curriculum is currently is use at multiple sites in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and at least eight other states. Although a comprehensive evaluation of the program has not yet been conducted, we did preliminary evaluations with parents and facilitators who utilized the curriculum in 2002-03. What we learned was that the family stories were powerful and effective tools for evoking discussions about family problems. There was universal acclaim for the accuracy and realism of the stories across cultural groups, however, a concern expressed by parents who used the curriculum is that the stories tend to focus on the negative aspects of parent-adolescent relations without providing positive solutions. In effect, the parents wanted "experts" to tell them what they should be doing to solve these conflicts when the basic premise of the curriculum is that the real experts on parenting are immigrant parents themselves. We concluded that facilitators need to emphasize more thoroughly and repeatedly the importance of parents using there own experiences, traditional practices, and common sense to arrive at solutions that will work in the American context. Although this difficult work requires rethinking of commonly held assumptions about parenting, it is critical to helping parents regain their authority within families.

Table 1

The National Extension Parent Education Model

PARENTING CATEGORY	PRIORITY PRACTICE
CARE FOR SELF	• Manage personal stress. • Manage family resources. • Offer support to other parents. • Ask for and accept support from others when needed. • Recognize one's own personal and parenting strengths. • Have a sense of purpose in setting child-rearing goals. • Cooperate with one's child-rearing partners.
UNDERSTAND	• Observe and understand one's children and their development. • Recognize how children influence and respond to what happens around them.
GUIDE	• Model appropriate desired behavior. • Establish and maintain reasonable limits. • Provide children with developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn responsibility. • Convey fundamental values underlying basic human decency. • Teach problem solving skills. • Monitor children's activities and facilitate contacts with peers and adults.
NURTURE	• Express affection and compassion. • Foster children's self-respect and hope. • Listen and attend to children's feelings/ideas. • Teach kindness. • Provide for nutrition, shelter, clothing, health, and safety needs of children. • Celebrate life with one's children. • Help children feel connected to family history and cultural heritage.
MOTIVATE	• Teach children about themselves, others, and the world around them. • Stimulate curiosity, imagination, and the search for knowledge. • Create beneficial learning conditions. • Help children process and manage information.

ADVOCATE	• Find, use, and create community resources when needed to benefit one's children and the community of children. • Stimulate social change to create supportive environments for children and families. • Build relationships with family neighborhood, and community groups.

Table 2

Focus Group Questions Utilized by Facilitators

Focus Group Questions

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:

1. What do you see happening between _____ parents and teenagers in today's society?
2. Who are the people involved in raising the children?
3. What are the responsibilities of the people who raise the children?
4. What is the difference between a good and a bad parent? What is the difference between a good and a bad teenager?

Transitional statement delivered by the facilitator:
Now that we have discussed what is happening in our community concerning parent-child relationships, who raises the children, parental responsibilities, and intergenerational expectations, let us talk about solutions and problems of raising children.

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS	PRIORITY PRACTICE
CARE FOR SELF	Facilitator: Caring for oneself, to most American parents, means knowing & understanding oneself, managing life's demands, & establishing clear direction. What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who take good care of themselves? What are some **problems** of parents who do not take good care of themselves?	Cope with personal stress Cope with family resources Recognize one's own personal & parenting strengths
UNDERSTAND	Facilitator: to most American parents, to understand their children means understanding their needs and uniqueness at each age of development What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who understand their	Observe and understand one's children and their development Recognize how children influence and respond to what happens around them

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS	PRIORITY PRACTICE
	teenagers? What are **some problems** of parents who do not understand their teenagers?	
GUIDE	<u>Facilitator:</u> to most American parents, to guide means to identify, introduce, and enforce reasonable limits while gradually giving freedom to children by encouraging them to be appropriately responsible for themselves. What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who guide their teenagers? What are **some problems** of parents who do not guide their teenagers?	Model appropriate desired behavior Establish and maintain reasonable limits Teach fundamental values Monitor and facilitate children's activities and their contact with peers and adults Teach problem solving skills
NURTURE	<u>Facilitator:</u> To most American parents, to nurture means to attend to children's needs, build a positive relationship, and send consistent messages of love and support to children. What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who nurture their teenagers?	Express affection and compassion Listen and attend to children's feelings and ideas Help children feel connected to family history and cultural heritage Teach kindness
MOTIVATE	<u>Facilitator:</u> to motivate, to most American parents, means to promote intellectual development in children, to teach children about themselves, others, and the world around them.	Stimulate curiosity, imagination, and the search for knowledge Help children process and manage information Encourage positive behaviors

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS	PRIORITY PRACTICE
	What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who motivate their teenagers? What are some **problems** of parents who do not motivate their teenagers?	
ADVOCATE	Facilitator: to advocate for children, to most American parents, means to seek out programs, institutions, and professionals that provide services important to the child, and to represent children's needs to those organizations or individuals What does it **mean** to you? What are some **good examples** of parents who advocate for their teenagers? What are some **problems** of parents who do not advocate for their teenagers?	Find, use, and create community resources when needed to benefit one's children Stimulate social change to create supportive environments for children and families Build relationships with other families, neighborhood, community, and school groups

Closing Questions:

What have we missed that you would like to add or share with us?

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Figure 1. Program Development Process