Gender relations in Canadian multicultural families: Link between culture and gender role socialisation*

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Abstract: *This article is a secondary analysis of the data gathered from 12 focus groups which were set up in 2006 with 64 members of three communities (Somali, Chinese and Lebanese origins). Its aim is to explore the barriers to social integration encountered by young women from those communities, given that Bruns (2011) points out the need for more research into issues relating to young women. For each community, four focus groups were conducted, represented by four subgroups: young women, young men, adult women and men. Their verbatim comments were subjected to content analysis in terms of gender role socialisation. Regardless of cultural background, the young women objected to the pressure exerted on them to carry out gender-based roles and duties. They all faced barriers to their social integration and clearly recognized that a double standard exists: young men have more freedom and parents are generally stricter with their daughters. This cross-cultural observation leads us to reflect upon social work as it relates to young women and calls for meaningful intergenerational dialogue.*

Keywords: *Gender role socialisation, young immigrant women, social exclusion, social barriers, social integration, gender stereotypes, cross-cultural studies*

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Introduction

In terms of barriers to and experiences of integration into the host country, research thus far has centred more on adult members of ethnocultural minority communities and on the networks that either promote or hinder their social integration, thereby revealing little about youth and the specific challenges they face (Reynolds, 2010). The few existing studies about integration networks used by youth portray them as being passive, and are seen as competing against adults to benefit from available resources and networks rather than applying more proactive strategies. Another angle largely ignored in past research is the interconnection of factors such as gender, ethnocultural origin and age as they apply to the mental health of women (Barn, 2008). Nevertheless, more recent research has begun to address this intersectionality (Bruns, 2011). Bruns asserts that special attention must actually be focused on the next generations, and on the realities that confront young women, in order to incorporate them into processes of social change. They, then in turn, perceive society with a deeper sense of belonging to a worldwide and more diverse community.

For her part, Weller (2010) advances that young members of ethnocultural minorities are actually social actors in full development mode: they forge an identity and create complex affiliations on their own, even going so far as to building a social support network from within their families or their immediate surroundings. They have their own strategies for adapting and getting things done. It is from this particular angle that the present article will analyse the perceptions that 12 focus groups (n=64) had of young women belonging to three ethnocultural groups in Ottawa, namely, communities of Somali, Chinese and Lebanese origin. For each of these three communities, four focus groups were conducted, represented by four subgroups: young women, young men, adult women and men. Each subgroup comprised an average number of five participants. We will analyse those perceptions, transcending differences in cultural origin as is suggested by Barn (2008).

The question underlying this study thus becomes: In what ways do young women from minority communities face barriers to integrating themselves into Canadian society? With the aim of defining the specificity of social work that empowers women, Payne (2005) points out that the social process which serves as a framework for intervention, and stimulates the development of women's social and personal identities, becomes the very pivot around which intervention evolves. On the basis of findings drawn from the three communities, the elements that converge toward a deeper understanding of the social integration process which these young women undergo will, in turn, become the springboard for establishing avenues of intervention tailored to them and their families.

Context

In 2006, one out of five people living in Canada was born elsewhere and three quarters of those newcomers were members of visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2008). In Ottawa, where the present study was conducted, immigration is a fairly recent phenomenon, more than half of its immigrants having arrived after 1991. In 2006, 20% of the city's population belonged to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2008). The Black population constitutes the largest group, corresponding to one quarter of all visible minority people. The Chinese community ranks second in size, making up one fifth of Ottawa's visible minority population. However, Arabic is the third most common mother tongue spoken in this city after English and French (Rogers & Young, 2007), and people of Arab descent are the ethnocultural group with the second fastest population growth (18.3%) since 2001 (Greenberg, 2008).

To better grasp how complex day-to-day life can be for visible minority communities, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) led a research project from 2005 to 2008 called *Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa* (Moscovitch & Mohamoud, 2005). Given the very different ways that ethnocultural communities experience social exclusion and inclusion, the Council chose to conduct an in-depth study of three different groups and used case-study methodology based on focus groups and interviews with key community leaders to document each community's particular characteristics (SPCO, 2008). In line with census data, the SPCO (2005) chose the Somali community to illustrate the Black population's experience because it is the largest group, having arrived during the 1990s, often as refugees and of Muslim faith. The Chinese community was selected because in 2001 it constituted the largest visible minority group in Canada. Note that, although the Chinese have a long tradition of coming to Canada, only one out of four people of Chinese origin was born on Canadian soil, the community's rapid growth stemming from recent immigration (Statistics Canada, 2008). The Arab population was represented by the Lebanese community, which was selected by the SPCO (2005) since it is the largest in Ottawa and includes both Christians and Muslims. In point of fact, Hayani (1999) stated that from 1946 to 1997, roughly 60% of Lebanese immigrants were of Christian heritage. Because of Lebanon's recent political situation, one out of four people of Arab descent born outside of Canada is Lebanese (Statistics Canada, 2008).

While the SPCO's analysis (2008) sheds light on economic exclusion and 'racialisation' of poverty as core issues for these communities, this article addresses only the part of that study concerning 'Family Circumstances and Gender Issues.' SPCO considered that the social exclusion of ethnocultural minority families led to so many questions that they conducted further specific analyses in 2010. With respect to young women in particular, SPCO is of the view that 'adolescents internalize gender equality values faster than their parents. As a result, parental pressure on girls to adhere to traditional gender roles creates conflicts' (p. 17).

For our part, we undertook an in-depth study of all perceptions vis-à-vis the social

integration of these young women in order to arrive at a deep understanding of the complexity of gender role socialisation. In addition to casting light on the process of social integration, this article will provide further insight into the ways in which the following research questions: culture influences gender role socialisation, and how the culture of origin and the integration of immigrant families influence young women's social integration.

This paper begins with a review of current literature on gender role socialisation, stereotypes and cross-cultural studies. It then addresses gender role socialisation issues for each of the three communities on the basis of information drawn from the 12 focus groups (n=64). It will conclude with cross-cultural observations and present issues to be dealt with in social work practice with women. Building on these last issues, Barn (2008) invites social workers to reach beyond a concept of intervention that emphasizes differences among cultures. She urges us to seek out the common threads that are interwoven throughout different cultures and the cross-cultural issues that emerge therein.

Gender role socialisation and culture

Despite increased worldwide economic development and greater access to education (Coles, 2006), it is understood that gender role socialisation and stereotypes still assign 'beliefs of appropriate roles and obligations' to women and men (Sigal & Nally, 2004: 27). Their preconceptions determine how they perceive themselves, others, opportunities and structural barriers (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

According to the social learning theory, gender roles and behaviour are learned through 'a broad network of social influences operating both within the family and in the many societal systems encountered in everyday life' (Bussey & Bandura, 1999: 676). This learning occurs through three modes of influence:

1. modeling of behaviour and rules;
2. direct instructions from people's immediate circles that dictate what is appropriate;
3. reinforcement of approved behaviours, especially those that yield a reward (Bussey & Bandura, 2004).

In the family, differentiated socialisation occurs through parents' reactions, family activities, sibling behaviour and sibling comparisons (McHale, Crouter & Whiteman, 2003). Peers have a major impact by approving conduct that allows people to fit into a group, thus gaining a social life and youth loyalty (Best & Thomas, 2004). The media, for their part, offer representations of stereotypical gender roles and power in which men are still often portrayed as masters of the situation and women are seen from their emotional side or from the angle of family harmony (Leeder, 2004).

Gender stereotypes can still be placed on a continuum ranging from a traditional perspective to a modern frame of reference (Best & Thomas, 2004; Sigal & Nally, 2004). In cross-cultural studies, Best and Thomas (2004) argue that modern and more egalitarian positions concerning men and women are seen more in occidental countries like Canada, which are urbanized, economically developed, more individualistic and which have higher education rates and a greater number of women attending university or pursuing careers. Those egalitarian views are supported by a number of legal rights that give women greater control over their own lives. This ideological stance does not at all go as far to eliminate the view that men are stronger and have more power than women. Sigal and Nally (2004) maintain that in a traditional belief system, men are considered responsible for their family's financial security and are portrayed as having much more prestige and power. This traditional ideology legitimizes men's control over women's functions on the basis of often informal standards that govern the behaviour of one and all, and penalizes those who shy away from that behaviour. In such contexts, the extended family takes on great importance: the greater good of all takes precedence over individual needs. Members are responsible for ensuring the continuity of the family and safeguarding its reputation and code of honour. According to that code of honour, the man, who is responsible for protecting his family, is empowered not only to make the decisions but also to control the activities of the female members of his family, especially those related to their chastity.

As a result, differentiated gender-based socialisation allows sons more freedom, while parents are stricter with their daughters, even in an immigrant context (Dion & Dion, 2004; Sigal & Nally, 2004; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). Coles (2006) emphasizes the obedience expected of daughters as one aspect of this control over their lives. Within this double standard, young women may have curfews, clothing restrictions, dating limits, and extra household chores or responsibilities toward their younger siblings (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). According to Dion and Dion (2004 and 2001), they become the future guarantors of family values and are relied upon to perpetuate the culture of origin.

Any analysis of gender role socialisation issues in the context of immigration must examine the acculturation process that is also taking place within these families. Acculturation may be defined as the 'process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations among both groups' (Berry, 2006: 14). In this case, acculturation applies to immigrant communities and the host country. Berry (2006) notes that this process must take into account not only the social policies geared to facilitating the integration of newcomers, but also the discrimination and barriers experienced by some individuals and ethnocultural groups. As well, different generations of the same family often experience the acculturation process differently. Even when a family has been in the host country for many years, intergenerational tensions may arise if the older generation continues to adhere more to the values and

standards of their native country and if the younger generation is more integrated into the dominant culture (Bornstein & Cote, 2006).

This review of literature suggests that, throughout the process of acculturation, the daughters of immigrant parents are more likely to come into conflict with traditional gender roles assigned by their cultures of origin (Dion & Dion, 2004; Sigal & Nally, 2004; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Dion & Dion, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In line with that observation, this article will seek to identify the link between culture and gender role socialisation. Thus the overarching research question behind this article remains: in what way do young women from minority communities face barriers to integrating themselves into Canadian society?

Methodology

To address those questions, we undertook a secondary analysis of the data gathered in the 'Family Circumstances and Gender Issues' component of the SPCO research project *Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa* (Moscovitch & Mohamoud, 2005). The focus group interview questions sought to explore:

1. identity, belonging and social exclusion phenomena;
2. intergenerational issues – relationship between parents, their children and grand parents;
3. gender issues – respective roles, changes and marriage conflicts in the community, coping strategies adopted by couples and families.

This article, as a secondary analysis, reconsiders those data in light of the literature on gender role socialisation and issues related to young women (Turgeon & Bernatchez, 1992).

The SPCO collected their data from 12 focus groups in 2006. As already stated, for each of the three ethnocultural communities, the focus groups were divided into four subgroups: young women, young men, adult women and men. A total of 64 people were recruited in different settings, including university and college cultural centres, community centres, ethnic radio stations, and from various cultural meeting places, such as online communities, churches and mosques. During the recruitment phase, SPCO presented the research project to the members of the focus groups as a choice forum for re-examining their communities and daily life therein, with the aim of identifying a pathway for action on the part of political stakeholders.

The sample consisted of individuals participating on voluntary basis who recruited other participants from among their acquaintances (through the 'snowball effect' sampling method) and typifying each community (Mayer & Deslauriers, 2000). SPCO sought focus group participants with specific characteristics of their communities in

terms of age, family role, neighbourhood, language, length of Canadian residency, and the young people were required to belong to the first or second generation.

The Somali community was represented by 21 participants (average of five people per focus group) who were Muslin and had lived in Canada for 15 years on average, which tallies with the massive influx of Somali refugees during the 1990s, most of whom settled in Toronto and Ottawa. The two groups of young people were aged from 16 to 18, all attending either Grade 11 or 12 in high school, college, or university. The parents were 40 years old on average and university graduates. No direct questions about income were asked but people had to rank themselves on a continuum of wealth, since this is quite a sensitive topic. In the Somali community, the median income was $11,693 CAD, which was 39% of that of the city of Ottawa ($30,226 CAD). More than 55% of its members lived on an annual family income of no more than $20,000 CAD (Mohamoud & Mulenga, 2006).

The Chinese community, the second largest visible minority group in Ottawa, was represented by 21 participants. They were all recent immigrants and generally had a university diploma, which is consistent with Canadian statistics on this community (Statistics Canada, 2007c). The groups of young people included young adults aged 20 to 24, some of whom had come to Canada on their own to pursue their university studies. The parents, aged 30 to 50, came from different parts of China. This community is the most economically advantaged of the three study groups. Members took home a median income of $23,157 CAD, or 77% of the median income for Ottawa. However, 41% of them earned less than $20,000 CAD a year (Mohamoud & Mulenga, 2006).

The Lebanese community was represented by 22 participants. This sample differed from the other two in that respondents have lived in Canada for a longer time, sometimes as long as 30 years, and most were of Christian heritage. The fact that the SPCO was less able to recruit enough participants from among Muslim Lebanese descent is a limitation for this study. Key leaders in this community explained that this may be due to a weaker link with more recent immigrants on the part of mainstream institutions coupled with a degree of mistrust stemming from negative experiences of discrimination by the Muslim communities since the events of September 11, 2001 (SPCO, 2008). The young people, aged 18 to 24, were either second generation or had arrived as young children. The parents, aged 35 to 60, had lived in Canada for at least 15 years, and some for more than 30 years. Their education was quite varied: some had completed secondary school, while others had a master's degree. Several either worked in the service industry or were owners of service businesses; half of the community earned $17,602 CAD a year, representing 58% of the Ottawa median income (Mohamoud & Mulenga, 2006).

The focus group interviews lasted two hours on average. They were conducted by members of the community, all of whom were of the same gender and culture as the participants. These focus group interviews were mainly held in English or, when necessary, in the language of origin with the help of an interpreter. Those

parts of the interviews were translated into English and validated with members of the community.

This research group sorted the verbatim English transcripts with N-Vivo 7 and codified them by means of content analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1991). All results were first analysed inductively within each focus group on the basis of categories organised under two themes: gender roles and gender role socialisation. Within this analysis through each focus group and given the frequency, extent and intense tone of the comments the social integration issues faced by their young women emerged with internal consistency and constituted one of the main challenges in each community in terms of the gender role situation. Accordingly, the data analysis and interpretation strategies developed by Huberman and Miles (1991) were used in considering the consistency of the participants' statements, thereby helping to reveal a clear consensus running through the comments and explanations offered by the young women from each of these three communities. In the same view, among the four focus groups from each community, there was also a consensus with respect to the social integration issues faced by young women of their own community. The complementarities of the comments of the four focus groups from each community helped to develop a community pattern. We then followed the community case study method in order to maintain consistency with SPCO's analysis. Afterwards, the data were analysed horizontally to compare the dynamics of the three communities and to arrive at a cross-cultural interpretation. Comparison of these patterns allowed us to establish a conceptual consistency among the communities. This analysis included a consensus validation process among four judges (Huberman & Miles, 1991) who formed this research team from among different disciplines and social backgrounds. In addition to this rigorous process, SPCO shared the research results as a whole with the communities involved to confirm, clarify, add details and, in turn, facilitate an interpretation of the validity of those results (Laperrière, 1997). As with other qualitative research studies, the results can only be generalized from a theoretical perspective (Pires, 1997). The insight provided by the focus group interviews and the clear consensus emphasize the validity of this study (Laperrière, 1997).

Analysis of results

The Somali Canadian community

Even though members of the Somali community have been in Canada for 15 years or so, the difficult socio-economic situation facing them has had a major impact on how men and women fulfill their family obligations. The 21 respondents of the four focus groups from that community all admitted that it was hard for Somali adults to find work, especially for men. To avoid unemployment or low-paying jobs, the

fathers often chose exile; going away to work in other countries, they sent part of their wages to their families. That money, however, was still not enough to meet their families' needs. Note that 62% of the Somali community in Ottawa is made up of children or young people living at home (SPSO, 2008), placing a heavy family and financial burden on the parents. As a result, mothers go back to school in order to learn English and obtain a Canadian diploma, allowing them to find work in their host country.

Given this context, gender roles have changed. Women bringing in a salary and taking care of the children, often on their own, must see to everything. They develop management skills, including money management. They assert their choices and make decisions. The children increasingly view them as the key person in the family: the one who takes care of them or the one to go to for important decisions. The male participants in the discussion group blamed these circumstances as one of the causes for the fathers having lost their status within the family, even more so if they were unemployed or lived away from home.

For their part, the mothers recognized that, given the magnitude of the work facing them, they could not or did not have the time to do everything. If a member of the extended family (such as a grandmother) lived nearby, that person would take on many of the household chores. Mianda (2007) pointed out that immigrant African women living in Canada could no longer rely on a solid informal support network. So, they called upon the younger women, who, by their own accounts, became second mothers. Within the focus group of seven young Somali women, there was consensus on that fact:

My mom thinks that girls should not even go outside; we are expected to help our mothers, to take care of the house. I do everything for her; I clean everything. I am also pretty much stuck to cooking; but my mom says that you are a girl, you should do this.

These heavy family and household responsibilities meant double duty for those young women because they also had their school work to do. This extra load became an obstacle hindering their social integration. We noted a consensus between these seven young women rebelling against the fact that their brothers were rarely, if ever, asked to do housework, with some of the boys even being excused from doing it. At the same time as they saw their mothers escaping their traditionally prescribed roles and gaining empowerment over themselves and their families, the young women saw themselves being assigned these same roles and duties. According to these young women, their mothers justified a double standard (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003) between them and their brothers, one which favoured their sons by waving the threat of 'downward assimilation' (Portes & Rumbault, 2001):

I am always asking my mother Why do I have to do it; why don't you push my brothers do it? She says They are so good; they are the best boys in the neighbourhood. I feel that my

brothers they do not clean or cook and I don't think that is fair. My mom says it is because one is going to university.

In the same vein, the four subgroups stated that some Somali boys engage in at-risk behaviour and that this damaged the entire community's reputation. A father explained that 'downward assimilation' by referring to the poor job prospects facing some of these youth: 'The first generation of Somalis is suffering already from poverty, unemployment and exclusion and I don't think the second generation will fare any better.' As a consequence, high expectations have been placed upon young women: 'My mother puts pressure on me because she knows I have potential, I can go far. In her eyes, I really have to succeed in school.'

Moreover, some also had restrictions on their comings and goings, which were related to their inherent gender roles and the obedience expected of them. Portes and Rumbault (2001) indicated that all these limits, although they are challenging for young women, protect them from the dangers lurking in 'downward assimilation': using alcohol or drugs, joining street gangs, or committing minor acts of delinquency. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) brought out the young women's sense of grievance, frustration and anger against these constraints during their attempts to build a social life for themselves that did not involve any at-risk behaviour.

In summary, the socio-economic situation of the Somali community exerted enormous pressure on its members, including the young women. Those young women took over the housework because their mothers needed to work, and this was compounded by the fact that there were many young children in this community. Household chores and the restrictions on their comings and goings became clear obstacles to their social integration. The different Somali groups agreed that the situation of the boys, who were more prone to at-risk behaviour, was very worrisome and tarnished the entire community's reputation. This context led Somali parents to pay little heed to their daughters' demands to be given more freedom and to be treated more fairly. The entire community's agreement with this attitude maintained a certain barrier to the young women's social integration. On the other hand, the young women developed a consciousness of constricted gender role, to which they were strongly opposed. The mothers had assumed *de facto* traditional male roles while requiring that their daughters subscribe to traditional female roles and, at the same time, attain high academic achievement with better professional prospects.

The Chinese Canadian community

As in the Somali community, the economic insecurity of the 21 Chinese respondents had major repercussions on their daily lives. Note that income, and especially male incomes, influenced the individual's and the family's social standing in the Chinese culture: 'In China, men go outside and get money: the more, the better.' Nevertheless,

the insecurity facing these newcomers has led to a massive influx of immigrant Chinese women onto the job market. As has occurred in the Somali community, paid work has empowered women and changed gender roles. The men, who saw themselves as disadvantaged, brought up the rising divorce rate caused by a change in women's traditional role.

Yet, the six young women, aged 20 to 24, who have lived in Canada for an average of five years, all seriously wanted to become socially integrated. One of the strategies they recommended for social integration was marriage. Statistics confirm this: 'In 2001, 56% of the Chinese community aged 15 years and older were married, compared with 50% of all Canadian adults.' (Statistics Canada, 2007: 4). It is important here to understand how marriage is perceived and how crucial it is in the Chinese culture. Hynie et al. (2006) advanced that 'cultures that are highly collectivist, such as China, tend to view marriage in terms of the maintenance, continuity, and well-being of the family' (p. 232). One father said: 'In a Chinese marriage, the relationship between husband and wife is secondary. It is just the family. There is no space for romance, just the responsibilities and chores. You have to earn money.' In this vein, a 30-year-old adult woman, who was separated from her husband and had a young child (who would, in her mind, compromise the chances of her ever remarrying), specifically referred to the following young women when discussing the issue of marriage as a way of social and economic integration: 'Single young women (international students) come here alone, are good in English, want to find white guys from the majority, guys with a good job or more money or good looking.'

Nevertheless, the six young women interviewed all agreed that various barriers stymied their hopes of finding a partner. Once again, the financial issue played a crucial role in that regard. Some linked that barrier to the immigrant status of young men of Chinese origin: 'Most of the Chinese guys are poor, because you need time to get a good job. Immigrant, your job isn't really secured and your language isn't good. Your language gives you security when you look for a job.' Others linked the barrier to themselves: 'I am not young any more: I'll be 25 years old. It is kind of hard to find a good guy who doesn't want a young girl. I don't really have a high degree: only a bachelor. I don't have a master or a PhD. It's difficult to get a good job, make a lot of money, and be attractive.'

When these young immigrant women do marry, however, they may experience inequality (especially economic) if their spouse is a member of the dominant culture, as this adult woman admitted:

Because he was a Canadian and was born here, he has more power. When we fight, his language is much better than mine. I can't say something, It is easy for him to get a job and he looks down at you: You know the food you eat and the place you live in are from my money. Now he wants the child and said: I can give the child a better life because I have more money.

What is more, the young men and women representing the Chinese community

did not share the same definition of gender roles. Unlike the young men, the young women rejected the traditional belief system favouring a predefined gender-based division of labour and male decision-making power; rather, they espoused a more equal share of household labour. These results were consistent with those of Barry and Beittel (2006) and Zhang (2006) who maintained that these young women have internalized more modern and egalitarian values than the males in their communities. These opposing views created a further barrier to marriage and social integration that applied, in this instance, to someone from their own ethnocultural background.

Young women also try to integrate by changing their physical appearance so that it matches as closely as possible that of Caucasian women in the dominant culture. They take tangible steps to assimilate. According to Berry (2006), assimilating means blending into the host society by disowning one's culture of origin. This led one woman to dye her hair, another to buy only designer clothes, another to dream of having white skin, and all of them to change their first name to Anglo-Saxon names.

On the whole, the young Chinese women in this study had a strong desire to integrate into Canadian society, and even assimilate into the dominant culture. They favoured certain features of the Caucasian (or dominant) appearance. Placing value on physical features that were sometimes opposite to the innate traits of their own origin, and the fact of being part of a visible minority, may have led them to feel a 'heightened sense of nonwhiteness' (Zhou & Lee, 2004). Marriage is another way of becoming assimilated. The young women's drive for practical and economic concerns about marriage, and pursuing Caucasian husbands, may have been understood as a continuation of a traditional gender role, where women conform to the dictates of potential suitors.

The Lebanese Canadian community

As in the other two communities, the roles that men and women played in the Lebanese community differed from the traditional frame of reference coming from the culture of origin. Unlike those in the other two groups, the Lebanese participants did not believe that these changes were rooted in difficult socio-economic conditions. The initial period of survival and adaptation had long since passed, as these participants could have been in Canada for up to 30 years. They referred instead to their prolonged contact with the dominant Canadian culture, which promoted gender equality. Moreover, there was a noticeable difference between the men and the women in the way these changes were interpreted. One mother described this transformation: 'What was acceptable in the home country isn't acceptable any more, now you raise your head and say no to him.' One father stated it in different terms: 'We have something in Lebanon about saving men's face, especially in public. Women are the ones doing everything behind the scenes. As long as the man feels that he is the final arbitrator. The final decision has to be his.'

The six young women in this focus group, who were all second-generation or who came when they were very young, loudly criticized their parents for being far more permissive with their brothers and in favour of traditional gender roles assigned to young women. Like the young Somali women, they railed against this double standard (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). However, the issues that provoked their ire were not the same as those of their Somali counterparts. What most provoked the young Lebanese women's sense of frustration and anger was the different restrictions imposed upon them. Several of them mentioned that, while their brothers were allowed to stay out late and bring friends home, they themselves were forbidden to come home after a certain hour, to sleep over at a girlfriend's or simply go out with their female friends, or to get phone calls from boys. McIrvin-AbuLaban and AbuLaban (1999), in a study of young people of Arab origin in Edmonton, Alberta, confirmed that roughly 70% of the young women in their study reported having problems with the limits set by their parents with regard to their social outings, choice of friends, and time spent with their friends. The same number stated that their parents would not be favourable to their going out with a man.

In addition, there was consensus among the four subgroups: the young women's sexuality, even chastity, was controlled by the entire community. All said that their social environment regulated male-female relationships, curtailing young women's freedom of action. One mother stated that community disapproval was manifested by grandparents' negative reactions towards the young women going out with boyfriends. Others mentioned that social disapproval came in the form of comments made by members of religious institutions, who monitored the young people's relationships and shared their observations about the young women's behaviour with the young men who interested them. The young men in the focus group confirmed that some of their acquaintances would go to the members of the religious institutions to get information on a young woman to whom they were attracted. As a result, some of the women got labelled. This label may have been transferred to the parents, who were seen as ineffectual, that is, unable to raise their daughters properly. As described by that young man, brothers may then have taken on the role of controlling their sisters and their reputations:

> *There are some parents who put some pressure saying: I want to know and making sure who is dating my daughter, and checking him out. There are brothers who prevent their sisters from going out. They don't want to see them in a club or talking to guys. They are always trying to keep their sisters away from guys.*

The same young man shed light on the young woman's reactions to all that control. The latter willingly admitted that they lie to one and all, as shown in the next quote :

A major pressure is trying to please two major groups: keeping your parents happy and trying to have friends, because friends mean doing things with them, doing things that they allow

you to do. Do I lie to my parents or please my friends and be part of them? It is not to hurt your parents but it's just to satisfy your own sort of growth..

Anisef and Kilbride (2003) stated that young women can develop a double life as a way of adapting to and eluding social control. Some parents in this study (fathers and mothers) said that it took more flexibility on their part to raise their daughters, in a way that would not lead them to reject their Lebanese culture and adopt the more permissive lifestyle of their peers and of the dominant Canadian culture.

In short, these young Lebanese women were faced with many restrictions, related mostly to their contact with young men. These restrictions became major barriers to their social integration. As reported in Sigal and Nally (2004), this community, which legitimized men's dominance over women, placed value on maintaining the reputation of the group and the family. This community functioned on the basis of clear informal standards and governed daughters' conduct by undermining and penalizing those who strayed from those standards and from their parents. The daughters were responsible for preserving the Lebanese culture, while sons were required to protect them.

Discussion

The aim of this article was to answer the principal research question, namely: In what way do young women from minority communities face barriers to integrating themselves into Canadian society? To gain a clearer picture of each of the three communities, we first obtained their frames of reference in terms of gender dynamics. All participants reported clearly that their culture of origin gives prominence to male superiority and a traditional gender-based division of household labour. In all three communities, gender roles have changed since their families arrived in Canada. Gender differences are becoming less pronounced mainly because women are joining the labour force and bringing in wages for the whole family, thereby increasing their decision-making power at home. The results are in line with other studies on this topic and indicate that both the immigrant mothers and young women are more likely than men to adopt modern and egalitarian positions (Best & Thomas, 2004; Sigal & Nally, 2004; Dion & Dion, 2004 and 2001). The men complain of their loss of power within the family and prestige at large.

As another transcultural result, the young women, for their part, all face barriers to their social integration. In this respect, SPCO (2010) observed that these young women 'expressed their disappointment about unequal parental treatment compared to their brothers, particularly in case of house chores and recreational time' (p.17). In line with other research into conditions faced by young women (Bruns, 2011), we advance that the latter recognize that a parental and social double standard exists to the disadvantage of women. Boys and young men have more freedom and parents

are generally stricter about their daughters' movements and contact with young men (Dion & Dion, 2004; Sigal & Nally, 2004; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). SPCO softens such observations by indicating that 'for parents, the main concern was to protect girls' safety and 'good reputation." Coles (2006) counters by stressing that the daughters' expected acquiescence to the control over their lives turns them into guarantors of their culture's traditional values (Dion & Dion, 2004), and even into symbols of family reputation, especially in the case of the Lebanese community. To that end, Barn (2008) clearly cautions that social workers must always bear in mind the concept of family honour throughout their interventions with regard to young women from ethnocultural minorities. She further suggests that the impact on the reaction of other family members never be underestimated, whatever the age of the woman they are endeavouring to assist.

All the young women in this study, aged from 16 to 24, expressed objection to the barriers hindering them from fitting into and participating in Canadian society. In line with the research of Weller (2010), these young women professed to be active social actors who set in place strategies of their own to confront the barriers they encountered. As noted in other literature (McHale, Crouter & Whiteman, 2003), the young Somali women clearly express anger against their brothers and the excuses their mothers used to shelter them, thus rejecting a continuation of traditional gender roles. The young Chinese women use a number of different methods to assimilate and to pursue inter-racial marriages. This may be viewed as a continuation of traditional gender roles, where women respond to perceived expectations of potential. The young Lebanese women lead a double life (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003) to please their parents and community, which legitimizes strict informal standards on how to be a 'good girl,' as well as to please their peers, who set the rules for having a social life and fitting into the dominant group. They are also rejecting a continuation of traditional gender roles. If we take into account the fact that these young women were attempting strategies to resolve their situation, this can become a foundation on which future interventions for young women from minority communities could be based (Bruns, 2011; Corbeil & Marchand, 2010; Payne, 2005).

In terms of social work practice, these results point out that the young women have a clear perception of the complexity of their situation in life: they are torn between their heritage in one respect, and their hopes for a future firmly implanted in Canadian society in another. They are aware of the difficult conditions of life experienced by their families and communities. They are active and very involved in daily life all at a much higher level than had previously been perceived within the literature (Reynolds, 2010). When the young women find ways to assert themselves, they are thereby creating tension with their parents. From another point of view, 'parental pressure on girls to adhere to traditional gender roles creates conflicts' (SPCO, 2010:17). The parents might regard these behaviours as essentially a threat to their authority that needs to be controlled. Little consideration is given to the context in which the young women are expressing their resistance and to their underlying desire for autonomy,

both concepts being sometimes difficult for parents to conceive.

On the other hand, the principles of cross-cultural intervention and their application to women (Barn, 2008; Kallivayalil, 2005) point to the importance of respecting women's right to speak up for themselves and of validating the issues they confront every day. In this spirit, the social worker will have an opportunity to assist women to reflect on their day-to-day reality and place within the community. Given that one of their goals is to become significantly more integrated into society, the social worker will help them to develop interpersonal contacts and to take full advantage of the resources available in their community in a positive and respectful way. In other words, the social worker will encourage committed involvement on their part so they may better their lives, their environment and their community. This entire social and family-centred process channels these young women toward solidifying their social and personal identity, thereby creating a focal point for intervention (Payne, 2005).

The results analysed through this article will encourage social workers to re-examine the intervention methods they apply to opinions and concerns expressed by all family members, including young women, and to focus much greater attention on gender socialisation and its impact on each family member. To facilitate this re-evaluation, it will be necessary to open up the process to: (1) allow young women to discuss and clearly define their experiences; (2) identify sources of social pressure and better place them within the context of daily life; (3) create more opportunities for young women to engage their parents in dialogue which respects all parties involved and takes into account the concerns and aspirations of each person; and (4) ensure that by working together, new ways can be found to express personal reactions and to find appropriate solutions for all concerned. Moreover, helping the young women and their parents to find common ground for communication in a spirit of mutual respect   represents an avenue to be further explored. As advanced by Bruns (2011), such intervention will contribute to meaningful intergenerational discussion, to a clearer understanding of one by the other, and to a process of mutual enrichment.

If social work is to maintain its relevance in matters of social justice and human rights, a concerted effort needs to be made to acknowledge and denounce the veil of silence imposed on many young women. With its tools of intervention at hand, the discipline should direct its attention toward ideological and systemic sexism as well as to its manifestations in daily life and within the family context. We highlight the fact that according to some cultural frames of reference, the emphasis can be placed on a more collective vision: the equality of a group or an extended family whereby the ensemble may prevail over the individual. In any context, when the social worker implements a non-sexist perspective, it will help the young women to participate more in social development and intergenerational dialogue.

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