

# Resilience in Immigrant and Refugee Families: The Sudanese in Canada

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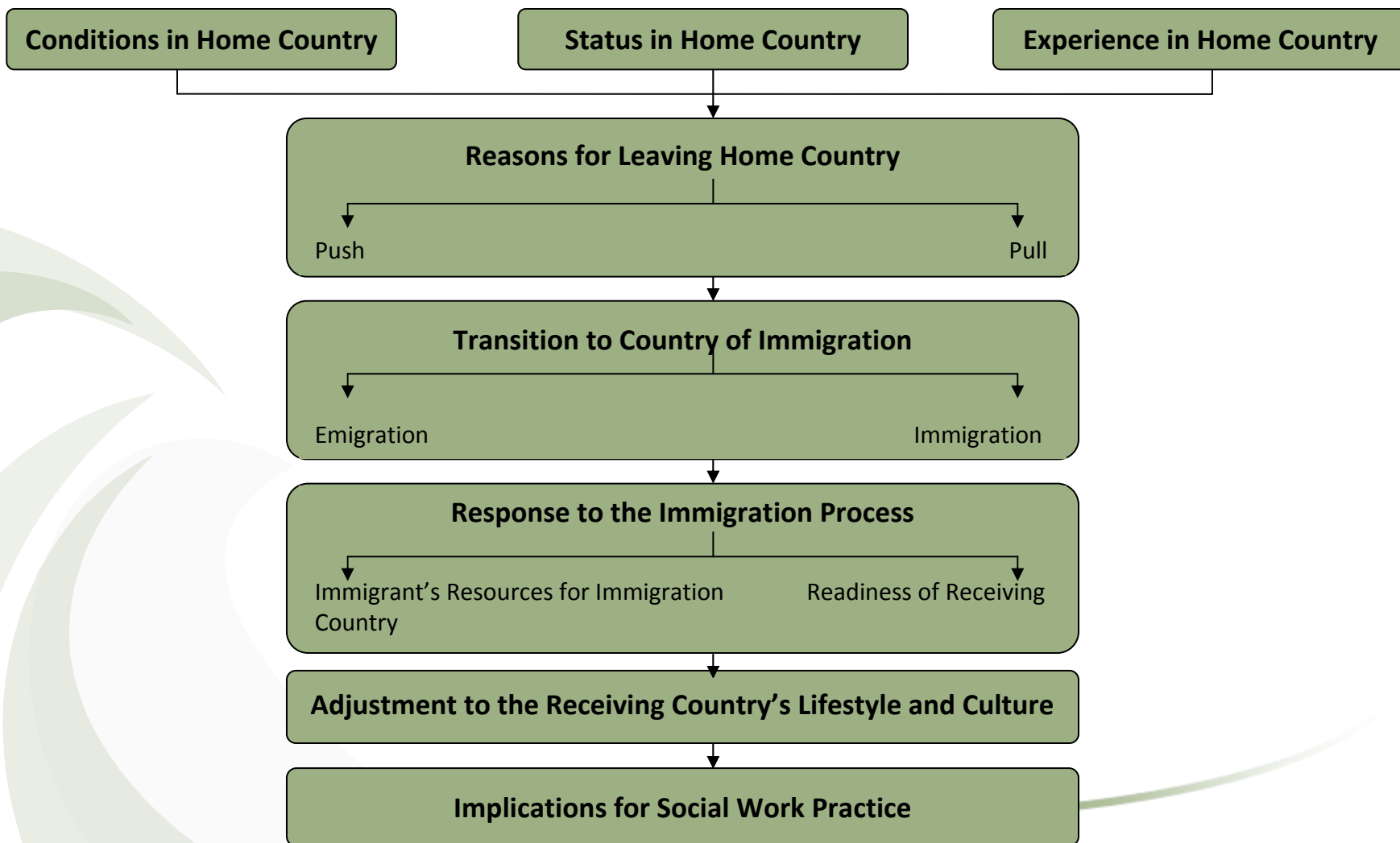
# Objectives

Participants will:

- Increase their knowledge about the concept and process of family resilience
- Increase their understanding of the salient issues confronting immigrant and refugee families in Canadian society
- Become more knowledgeable about issues confronting Sudanese families and communities in Canada and interventions designed to foster resilience

# Framework for the Immigrant Experience

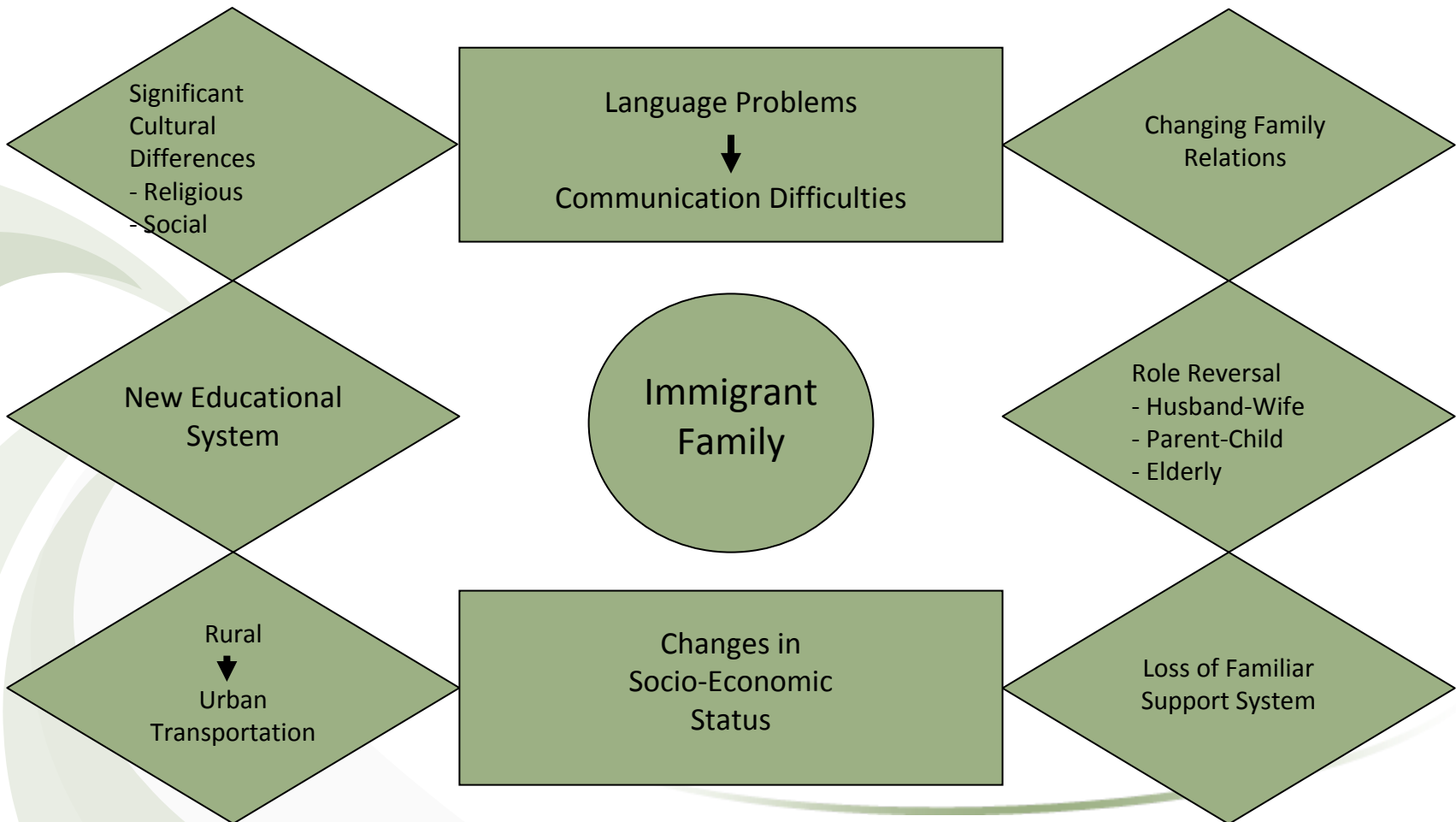
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# Cross-cultural Adjustment

## “A Changing Way of Life”

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# Study Objectives

- To examine the similarities and differences related to the settlement experience between the three sites
- To understand Sudanese concepts of family and dynamics within Sudanese families
- To understand Sudanese concepts of health and well being

# Study Objectives

- To examine the barriers limiting Sudanese integration in Canadian society
- To explore supports that are available and used by Sudanese in each community
- To identify service priorities with Sudanese community organizations and service providers

# Data Collection

- 32 in-depth interviews (12 Calgary, 10 Toronto, 10 Brooks)
- 3 focus groups with service providers (1 per site)

# Data Collection

## In-depth Interviews

- Migration and Settlement
- Family Composition, Roles and Processes
- Health and Well Being (Including Mental Health)
- Social Supports

Simich and Este, 2006

# Profile of Participants

- Calgary                      7 males                                      3 females  
Brooks                          8 males                                      2 females  
Toronto                        5 males                                      5 females  
   20 males                                      10 females
- Age range                      Males:                      19-41 years old  
   Females:                      23-34 years old
- Range Length of Stay in Canada: 10 months to 6 years
- Majority of participants at minimum completed secondary school
- Majority claimed their English proficiency was good

# Data Analysis

- Thematic analysis using *Atlas.ti* (Calgary/Brooks) and NVivo (Toronto)

# What is Family Resilience?

Characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resistant to disruption in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situations

- McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988

# What is Family Resilience?

Family resilience refers to coping and adaptational processes in the family as a functional unit.

Walsh, 2006

# Individual Protective Factors

- Locus of control
- Emotional regulation
- Self-efficacy
- Effective coping skills
- Education, skills, and training
- Health
- Temperament

Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009

# Family Protective Factors

- Family structure
- Intimate partner relationship stability
- Family cohesion

Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009

# Family Protective Factors

- Supportive parent-child interaction
- Stimulating environments
- Social support
- Stable and adequate income

Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009

# Community Protective Factors

- Involvement in the community
- Peer acceptance
- Supportive mentors

Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009

# Community Protective Factors

- Safe neighbourhoods
- Access to quality child care and schools
- Access to quality health care

Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009

# Risk Factors Impacting Sudanese Families in Canada

- Trauma associated with violence of civil war / ongoing atrocities
- Living conditions in the various refugee camps

# Canadian Context

Financial challenges resulting from underemployment status (lack of recognition of foreign credentials, lack of Canadian experience, language barriers)

# Risk Factor

## *Lack of Financial Security*

As long as you are underpaid, you do not feel good and all the things that you need for your children do not get so you are really under pressure and one can get distressed.

Sudanese Male

# Risk Factor

## *Underemployment*

. . . the majority of them work in meat processing plants . . . Some of them are highly qualified but because they cannot get jobs, with the responsibilities of their families, they do any available job for survival. Due to these frustrations, many people end up in developing mental health problems.

- Sudanese male

# Risk Factor

## *Lack of Social Support in Canada*

... The house [in Sudan] is with a lot of our relatives who come from the countryside so the children are taken care of by a relative

- Sudanese male

... You have nobody to contact because you are always

lonely

- Sudanese male

# Risk Factor

## *Apprehension of Sudanese Children by Child Welfare*

The biggest problem that I as a person has noticed is the breakdown of families and the involvement of child welfare with our children. Most Sudanese children have been taken away from their parents . . .

- Sudanese male

We Sudanese come here and we have lots of problems now with child Welfare because whatever happens in families, child welfare came and took the children and separated families which we do not have in our culture.

- Sudanese Female

# Protective Factor

## *Being Free*

... In Calgary there is good security whereby you can just do what you want and your life is secure compared to where I lived before

- Sudanese male

For me, it is a better life and a safer place.

- Sudanese female

... At least I am safe and do not feel anything life threatening here.

- Sudanese male

# Protective Factor

## *Sense of Community*

Sudanese community in Brooks, it is doing very well for our people and really, they are solving problems in our

## Community

- Sudanese male

... like my community in Brooks, yeah, I am proud of it and they are good people.

- Sudanese male

# Fostering Resilience in Sudanese Families: Strategies

- Community problem solving
- Knowledge of Sudanese culture required by human service professionals
- Employment of Sudanese professionals / paraprofessionals in schools, social services, health care systems

# Fostering Resilience in Sudanese Families: Strategies

- Use of Sudanese translation
- Provision of services in first language
- Working in collaboration with the different systems such as child welfare, police, and education
- Mental health practitioners who understand and have the skills to address the impact of trauma