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Autobiographical Narratives of Haitian Adolescents Separated from their Parents by Immigration: Resilience in the Face of Difficulty

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES OF HAITIAN ADOLESCENTS
SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS BY IMMIGRATION:
RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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December 2008

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Title: Autobiographical Narratives of
Haitian Adolescents Separated
from their Parents by Immigration:
Resilience in the Face of Difficulty

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Dissertation

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This study examines the self-reported immigration histories of Haitian adolescents who were separated and reunited from family due to family immigration from Haiti to the U.S. From the literature regarding trauma and resilience, it was the researcher's expectation that the child's construing of the events, rather than any specific events in the history, that was most influential in assisting the child in good adjustment during and after the separation, immigration, and reunion.

Twelve Haitian adolescents, 6 male and 6 female, all aged 18 to 20, were drawn from a community sample at a high school. They were interviewed using an semi-structured, open-ended protocol designed for the study. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using interpretative

phenomenological analysis, a specific qualitative analysis technique. The participants also completed the Youth Self Report, an instrument designed to measure psychological problems that is well-validated cross-culturally.

Results of the Youth Self Report and the clinical impression of the author both indicated that, despite lengthy separations from parents and other events that could potentially have been traumatizing, the participants were, as a group, not suffering from serious psychological problems.

The analysis of the interviews revealed a large number of common themes among the participants. Most salient were themes of resilience in difficult circumstances. These included developing self-agency, seeking out social support, and beliefs in the power of forbearance and their ability to overcome difficulty. The salience of these themes tended to support the importance of the interpretative stance of the adolescent for good adjustment.

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And I must thank my friends. Steve Hanft, who read sections, gave feedback, and was always supportive. Jason Kaufman also read and made helpful comments, and he showed me how to construct tables that someone other than myself could read. Lou Cohen got me out of more computer jams than I can remember.

Finally, this project was entirely dependent on the kids who shared their stories with me with great openness. They, and the other Haitian kids I have known over many years, have taught me much about strength in the face of great

difficulty. Although some of them had never heard the Haitian saying, “*Dèyè mòn, gen mòn*” (“Behind the mountain is another mountain”), they all knew how to keep climbing those mountains.

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Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Seventeen years ago, in 1990, I began an internship, as part of my masters degree in counseling, at the Haitian Mental Health Clinic of the Cambridge Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts. As instructed by my professors at the university and my supervisors at the hospital I took developmental and family histories of all my clients. As I was taking these histories my clients were also giving me a great deal of information regarding their immigration to this country, information that was not being solicited in the history forms provided to me; nor was the significance of an individual's immigration history being discussed in the classes and seminars I was taking.

Though neglected in the content of my classes and seminars, the importance of their immigration history was often remarked upon by my clients. One after another they related stories of difficulties negotiated in the course of immigration. One of the most common hardships they reported was separation from family, sometimes for a period

of several years while the family was attempting to reconstruct itself in the U.S.A. This was not peculiar to my clients; in a large study of immigrants from several countries Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco (2001) found that only about 20% of immigrant children immigrate with both parents and about 30% remain in their country-of-origin without either parent for some time before immigrating later to re-join their parents.

One family session with an immigrant family particularly impressed me: I was trying to understand the complicated family history of a set of four half-siblings who had immigrated from Haiti to this country at various times to rejoin their mother from whom they had been separated for varying periods of time. It was all so difficult to follow that I decided to designate different seats in the room as Haiti, Florida, New York, and Massachusetts and to have the children move around to those seats to represent immigration from one place to another. At one point near the end of this family immigration representation the youngest child sat alone in the seat designated Haiti and a look of sadness came over him. I asked him if he had been lonely there after his brothers and

sisters had left and he said that he had. His mother and siblings said they had never known this. The emotional consequences of the family's chain immigration had never been discussed in the family, just as it had not been discussed in the psychological literature that I could find at that time. The idea for the present study was generated from that and similar moments in my work with these immigrant children. The emotional significance of family separation during immigration was, in my experience, an under-discussed matter both within families and among professionals in the field of psychology.

This study collected the autobiographical narratives of Haitian adolescents who, because of family immigration, were separated from and subsequently reunited with one or both parents. The autobiographical narratives focus on the experience of family separation and reunification. My primary source of data collection came from interviews with adolescents who had immigrated from Haiti. They also completed the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991b), a self-report questionnaire on psychological problems. Twelve

participants, six male and six female, were recruited from a public high school with a significant Haitian population. The interviews and self-report questionnaires were used to gather information on the participants' immigration history, family separations and rejoinings, the meanings ascribed to those events, and present psychosocial adjustment. The interviews were all recorded, transcribed and qualitatively analyzed to discover themes within and among narratives. Finally, circumstances and attributions that appeared to be associated with better or poorer adjustment are discussed.

General Purposes of the Study

There is an old, ever-growing and fairly extensive body of psychological research on immigration. However, the effects of immigration on children have been less widely studied, and there has been little written on the effects of family separation during immigration upon children (e.g., Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Rousseau, Drapeau & Corin, 1997; Smith, Lalonde & Johnson, 2004; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie, 2002). None of the published research documents in a detailed manner the first-person narratives of children who

have been separated from their families due to family immigration and then been reunited with their families. The present study intends to make a beginning in filling in that gap.

This study collected and analyzed the immigration experiences of Haitian adolescents who had immigrated and re-joined some part of their family in the U.S. The study was designed to study Haitian children for several reasons. First, it is a people, culture and language familiar to me. Second, there is good reason to believe that different cultural contexts will provide different meanings to familial separation (e.g., Boyce & Fuligni, 2007; Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada & Moreau, 2001; Vega & Rumbaut, 1991). Third, there is a dearth of psychological literature on Haitian adolescents and their experiences in their adjustment to this country (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002).

The primary mode of data collection was interviews with the study participants. The interview included questions regarding the participants' family immigration histories, caretaking by parents and substitute caretakers in the absence

of parents, reunification with parents or other family, and the participants' evaluations of all of these events. Additionally, self-report inventories on psychosocial problems were administered.

The analysis of the interviews attempts to identify aspects of the narratives that relate to psychosocial adjustment. Although the majority of child immigrants experience separation from a parent for some period of time during family immigration (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), research has reported widely varying psychological consequences of those circumstances (e.g., Arnold, 1997; Breslau et al., 2007; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Rousseau et al., 2001; Smith, Lalonde & Johnson, 2004; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). Some reviews of the research have found that it demonstrates that immigration by itself is a risk factor for mental health (Hull, 1979), others that immigration appears to have a protective effect against mental health problems (Fuligni, 1998; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998), and others have found the research results equivocal (e.g., Aronowitz, 1984; Breslau et al., 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). It is not clear

from the present available research why some children negotiate these circumstances well and others not so. It is my expectation that this research will indicate that a significant aspect of adjustment is the meaning the children ascribe to their circumstances. Research literature on attributions indicates those have a strong correlation with symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Feiring, Taska & Lewis, 2002; Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995, Himelein & McElrath, 1996; Joiner & Wagner, 1995; Kolko, Brown & Berliner, 2002; Muris, Schmidt, Lambrichs, & Meesters, 2001; Rapee, 1997; Rumbaut, 1999; Tremblay, Hebert & Piche, 1999; Valle & Silovsky, 2002).

The adolescents' attributions regarding the family separation and reunification were a primary focus of the analyses of the narratives. For example, how have these adolescents made sense of what happened to them? Do they see themselves as having been abandoned by the parent during the separation or as having been protected by the parent from the difficulties of family resettlement? Was the separation viewed as something done for the convenience of

the parent or viewed as necessary for the protection of the child? The adolescent's understanding of the separation and related circumstances will help in understanding his/her present adjustment and may also be indicative of how he/she approaches other adults in their world.

Diagrammatically, this argument can be represented as in Figure 1. In the figure, the major contributing circumstances regarding the child and his/her family are seen as being mediated by the child's cognitions, affects, and attributions. It is these latter elements, rather than the specifics of the circumstances themselves, that are most directly related to the child's adjustment.

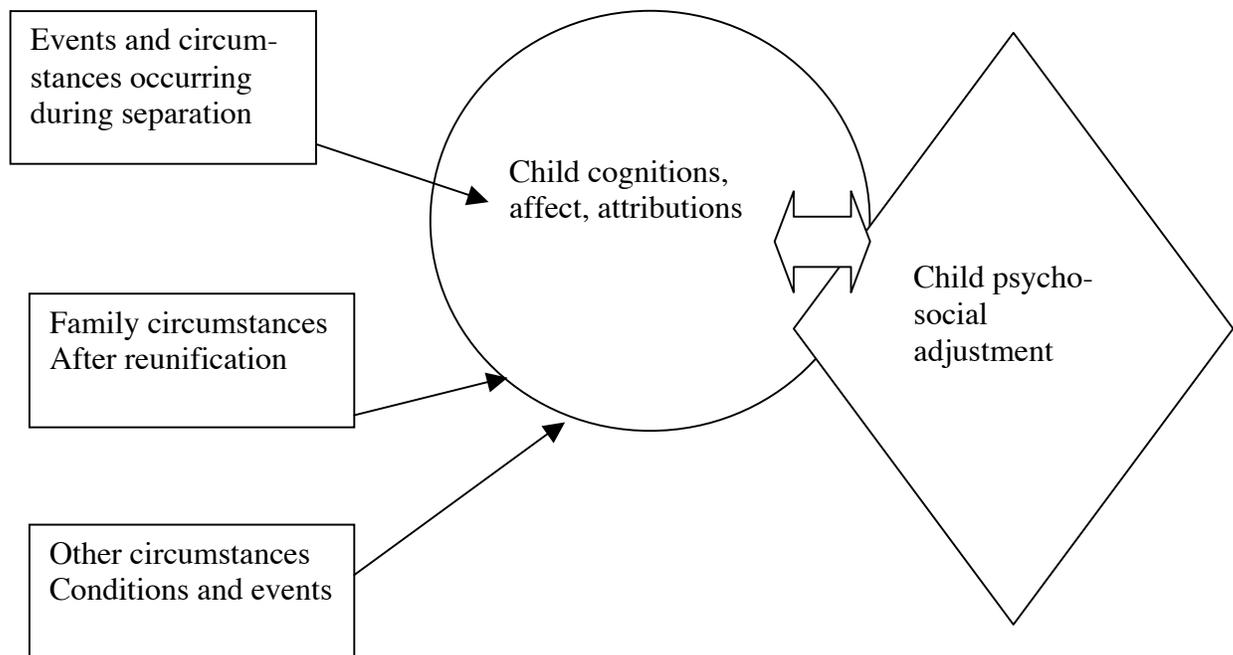


Figure 1. Relations between family separation and psychosocial adjustment.

Study Questions

The principal questions of the study were:

1. What are some of the circumstances described in the autobiographical immigration narratives of Haitian adolescents who immigrated to this country after a period of family separation due to

the earlier immigration of one or both of the child's parents?

2. What were the cognitive and affective strategies used by the adolescent to accommodate to the stresses of family separation and reunification?
3. What is the current psychosocial adjustment of the participants?
4. What cognitive and affective strategies appear to have assisted the participants in their psychosocial adjustment?

As this is a qualitative study with a small sample size, I did not expect these questions to be answered in a definitive manner. Rather, the effort was to examine and analyze the data for themes and cognitive strategies that were useful to the participants and to document those. It is hoped that the findings from this study will be useful in the identification and treatment of poor psychosocial adjustment in adolescents with a history of immigration.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined below in the specific sense they are used in this study:

Attribution – An individual’s understanding of the events; specifically of the motivations of the actors in that event.

Autobiographical narrative – A story told by an individual about some aspect of his/her life.

Chain or serial immigration – The process of family immigration in which a pioneer family member establishes him/herself in another country and brings over other family members in a serial or chain-like fashion.

Internalizing/externalizing problems – Internalizing problems, e.g., depression, anxiety, psychosomatic problems, are mental health problems affecting an individual’s internal, subjective sense of well-being. Externalizing problems are characterized by behavioral problems, e.g., aggression, noncompliance with adult authority, and emotional reactivity.

Lakou – A Haitian Kreyol word for a family compound

where the extended family is co-resident in several buildings.

Lakou is derived from the French, *le court*, the courtyard.

Psychosocial adjustment – The general well-being of an individual; the level of positive adaptation to environment and presence or absence of mental health problems.

Resilience – The capability of an individual to maintain good adjustment and adaptation to challenging circumstances.

Socioeconomic status (SES) – Social and economic placement of a family or individual, usually indicated by income level, educational level, and job status.

Transnationality – A situation of immigrants in which they reside, in an alternating fashion, both in their home country and the country to which they have immigrated. This is a common circumstance for the pioneer family members who are in the process of bringing their spouses and children to the host country in a process of serial immigration.

Limitations

This study is an exploratory, qualitative study of a highly specific population and context. Thus, broad claims for generalizability will not be made for the results. Indeed,

generalizability is not usually a goal of qualitative research, rather what is more important is that the research findings can be examined for what Merriam (1998) has called transferability to other specific contexts. Erickson (1992) goes further and argues that determining generalizability should always lie with the reader rather than the researcher, i.e., after the researcher has provided the parameters of the research, it is the job of readers of that research to judge for themselves to what extent they consider the results to be generalizable or transferable. I interviewed 12 Haitian adolescents of the ages 18-20 and it will ultimately be the readers' decisions if they believe there is some transferability of findings to Haitian adolescents in general, to adolescents of other ethnicities, to people in general.

The sample was not intended to be a random sample, but was rather a purposeful sample of the sort recommended by many writers on qualitative research methods (e.g., Maxwell, 1996; Seidman, 1998; Weiss, 1994). In purposeful sampling, an attempt is made to find a sufficient number of diverse informants so that a wide range of circumstances are

represented and that, despite a wide range of circumstances, common themes will emerge and re-emerge in the interviews. This certainly occurred with the sample in the study. As the reader will see, the circumstances that the participants described were quite diverse, yet common elements and themes are evident in them.

The study participants gave retrospective self-reports. There is no reason to presume that their present understanding of events was identical to understandings that they had at some earlier point in time. Nor should it be presumed that the participants' recollection and reporting of events would fully accord with accounts that could be collected from other sources. The study does not attempt to document objective immigration histories of the participants. Rather, it is the subjective accounts of the participants at the time of the interview that was collected and analyzed. McAdams (2006) makes the point that life narratives should not be viewed as an accurate telling of events, but as the narrator's attempt, in their choosing of events, to construct meaning and thematic material by which to live.

Questions regarding the validity of qualitative analysis done by a single reviewer of interview data can also be raised. To avoid errors of bias I used several techniques recommended by writers on interview research. One method is member-checking, in which the results of the analyses are discussed with participants to see if it rings true with them (e.g., Maxwell, 1996; Stake, 1995; Stoecker, 1991). The goal here is not that participant and researcher will agree fully on all interpretations, rather that there will be some concordance between the understandings of the researcher and the participant in the creation of an "intersubjective representation" (Warren & Karner, 2005).

Another method in establishing the credibility of the findings is the presentation of rich data (Maxwell, 1996). When readers have the opportunity to review data in detail through extensive quotation of the transcriptions, they can then reflect on whether the conclusions drawn by the researcher are in accord with their own viewing of the data. To this end the presentation of the study results will include many excerpts of transcribed interviews.

Finally, estimation of validity rests upon the belief of the intellectual honesty of the researcher, that he/she has honestly looked at all of the data without excluding or lightly-weighting that which does not fit his/her beliefs (Harvey, Mishler, Koenen & Harney, 2000; Maxwell, 1996; Stoecker, 1991). I want to reassure the reader that I have not skewed my data to promote certain findings. Rather, I made every attempt to select and present the data in a manner that best represented it in its entirety.

Chapter II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

This study documents and analyzes the self-reported experiences of immigrant adolescents who have been separated and later reunited with family due to family chain immigration. In the following review of the research I review and highlight some research pertinent to this question: Is it the nature of specific events and circumstances in child separation during family immigration that are risk factors for mental health problems, or perhaps how those events and circumstances are subjectively appraised that make of them risk factors for mental health problems?

The review traces a path through the research on depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, two common sequelae to untoward events, and how attributions play a role in determining whether or not those sequelae will indeed occur. That section also includes a discussion of the research literature relating to resilience to life difficulties. There follows a discussion of the research on immigration, specifically the research that has attempted to discover if being an immigrant

is a risk factor for mental health problems. That section includes a discussion of the literature on child immigration and of voluntary vs. involuntary immigration, as child immigrants can be understood, in some sense, as involuntary immigrants. There will then follow a discussion of the research literature regarding the effects on psychosocial adjustment of family-child separation. Finally, because the study participants will be adolescents who have immigrated from Haiti, there will be a discussion of Haitian and Caribbean family structure, of immigration from the Caribbean, and how the cultural and societal contexts could have effects on the attributions of children in these circumstances.

These various topics are discussed to set the stage for the examination of the participant interviews. Will depressive or posttraumatic symptoms commonly result from the separations from parents and the circumstances endured while that occurred? Were there other indications of problems of adjustment due to the immigration? Were their immigrations seen as involuntary by the participants, and did that affect their reactions to it? Did the cultural and familial

contexts of their experiences significantly influence how they understood their experiences? These questions and others are informed by the discussion here of relevant research.

Adolescent Depression; Risk Factors and Attributional Style

There has been much written about depression in children but the significance of specific correlative factors still appears to be only moderately defined. There have been several epidemiological studies attempting to define risk factors and reviews of those will be discussed below (Fleming & Offord, 1990; Muris, Schmidt, Lambrichs, & Meesters, 2001; Rapee, 1997; Rumbaut; 1999). There are also several studies that have studied the relationship between depression and attributional style; these studies explicitly or implicitly critique the search for constitutional and situational risk factors. Reviews of those studies (Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995; Joiner & Wagner, 1995; Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986) are discussed below.

There have been several studies which have attempted to define situational risk factors for childhood depression. Fleming and Offord (1990) reviewed 14 epidemiological

studies of childhood and adolescent depression. The studies all had relatively large sample sizes, ranging from 150 to 8,200. Fleming and Offord found that many factors correlated with depression in some studies but not in others. These mixed-result factors included gender, parental psychopathology, race, school performance, and SES. Only four factors were found to consistently correlate with higher rates of childhood or adolescent depression: age (older age correlates with increased incidence of depression), family dysfunction, low self-esteem, and stressful life events. Rumbaut (1999) summarized the results of a series of large longitudinal studies of adolescents from a variety of immigrant backgrounds. That study had some similar findings to the Fleming and Offord review: variables that correlated with an increased risk of depression were being female, being older (and also immigrating at a later age), perceptions of family disunity, high parent-child conflict, and a sense of poor control of the events in one's life.

In a paper reviewing studies of the correlation between parent-child relations and mood and anxiety disorders, Rapee

(1997) concluded that there is strong evidence that perceived parental rejection is correlated with depression and that perceived excessive parental control is correlated with anxiety disorders. Muris et al. (2001) studied attributional style, parental rearing behavior, and child coping skills in a large community sample of adolescents. Their findings supported those of Rapee, that perceived parental rejection is correlated with depression. Muris et al. additionally found that depression correlated with low active coping skills, low feelings of self-efficacy, and certain attributional styles, which will be discussed below.

All of the above-cited studies and reviews point not only to some situational factors but also attributional factors as correlates of increased risk for depression. There is a large literature on attributions and specifically on attributional style as it relates to depression. There have been a few reviews of that literature, one of those (Sweeney, Anderson, & Bailey, 1986) regarding adults and two others regarding children (Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995; Joiner & Wagner, 1995). All three of these literature reviews drew the same conclusion, that

there is very strong support in the research for the correlation between a particular attributional style and an increased risk for depression.

Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale (1978) identified a particular attributional style in their reformulation of a theory of helplessness as it leads to depression. They theorized that ascribing internal, stable and global causes for negative events, and external, unstable, and specific causes for positive events causes individuals to feel poor control over events in their lives and thus leads them to feelings of helplessness and depression. All three reviews support this theory, but not all aspects of it equally. Sweeney et al. (1986), in their review of the literature regarding adults, noted that there is stronger correlation between a helpless attributional style for negative events and depression than there is for a positive attributional style for positive events and the lack of depression. However, Gladstone and Kaslow (1995), reviewing the literature regarding children and adolescents, found that both positive and helpless attributional styles correlated with either reduced or increased rates of depression respectively. All three reviews

noted that these results indicate correlational as opposed to causative effects, although Sweeney et al. believe that the studies may indicate causation from attributional style to likelihood of depression.

Summarizing all of this, the research has indicated that a few situational variables have been found to correlate with an increased risk of depression, to wit, increased age, femaleness, family relational problems, and stressful life events. One of those situational variables, a stressful life event, is certainly present in the life of a child separated from his family by immigration, and another of them, family relational problems, is not unlikely to occur under those circumstances. What the research has also indicated is that a helpless attributional style and certain perceptions also correlate strongly with increased risk. These conclusions are relevant to the present study because children who have had a lengthy separation from a parent during the course of immigration have suffered stressful life events and could be expected to have developed attributions regarding those events.

Trauma, PTSD and Attributions in Adolescents

When posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first entered into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980) one of the diagnostic criteria was that the traumatizing event be “outside the range of usual human experience”. Breslau and Davis (1987) challenged this criterion saying that there was no empirical support for this type of distinction between precipitating events. Their review of the literature showed that individual psychological characteristics, social supports and attributions had more effect on the development of post-traumatic symptoms than the type of event. Sutker, Uddo-Crane and Allain (1991) reached similar conclusions and called for a redefinition of criteria for the disorder.

In response to critiques of this sort and field studies supporting the critiques, the authors of the DSM-IV (1994) modified the definition of PTSD so that the stressor was no longer required to be “outside the range of normal human experience” but only required that the person’s response to the stressor involve “intense fear, helplessness, or horror”.

Risk factors for PTSD. There is a large research literature on children's exposure to trauma, the risk factors for developing a subsequent traumatic disorder, and the relationship of attributions to the development of a traumatic disorder. Yet a review of that literature (Pfefferbaum, 1997) found that the epidemiology of the disorder in children remains only moderately understood. Most individuals exposed to seriously stressful events do not develop PTSD symptoms; this has been found to be true for adults, (Norris, 1992), young adults (Breslau, Davis, Andreski, & Peterson, 1991) and children (Green et al., 1991).

Research has attempted to identify risk factors for developing PTSD after exposure to trauma, but uncertainty remains regarding these. The importance of contextual factors in increasing or decreasing risk appears to be undisputed. Several studies and reviews of the literature agree that problematic home contexts represent increased risk for development of symptoms post-trauma (Brent et al., 1995; Breslau et al., 1990; Goenjian et al., 1995; Green et al., 1991; Pfefferbaum, 1997). Breslau et al. (1991) and Laor et al.

(1996) independently found that separation from family increased risk of traumatic reactions. Meiser-Stedman (2002) found that parents' reactions to a potentially traumatizing event and their ability to discuss it with the child are important variables in whether the event will result in long-lasting symptoms.

In a recent study, Montgomery and Foldspang (2006) interviewed the parents of 300 Middle Eastern refugees. They found that the children had been exposed to a wide range of troubling events and that the majority of them displayed several of the symptoms of PTSD and other psychological disorders. Although almost all of the children had lived under conditions of war and witnessed bombings, the only events which were strongly correlated with PTSD and other symptoms were having had their mother tortured and/or their father disappeared. The authors conclude that these threats to family constituted far more significant threats to the security of the child than other violent events.

Several researchers have found that certain demographic variables are risk factors for PTSD. Some researchers have

reported being adolescent as increasing risk of PTSD after exposure to potentially traumatizing incident (Goenjian et al., 1995; Green et al., 1991; Pfefferbaum, 1997). However, more recent research and reviews (Dyregov & Yule, 2006; Meiser-Stedman, 2002; Montgomery & Foldspang, 2006) have questioned this, pointing out that earlier research used diagnostic protocols not designed for use with children, who present with a wider range of posttraumatic symptoms than adults. Also, being female is reported by many researchers as representing increased risk (Dyregov & Yule, 2006; Goenjian et al., 1995; Green et al., 1991; Pfefferbaum, 1997). Although girls are frequently exposed to different type of violence than boys, regression analyses indicate that the increased risk in symptom development in females does not appear to be related to the difference in type of events (Cuffee et al., 1998).

Co-morbidity with depression is very common with some overlap of symptoms. The relationship between these disorders is complicated but many researchers agree that they are interrelated in traumatized children (e.g., Goenjian et al., 1995; Solomon & Canino, 1990). For example, in studies of

Cambodian refugee children in the U.S. (Sack, 1998; Sack, Clarke & Seeley, 1996), it was found that these children were frequently co-morbid for PTSD and depression. These researchers found, however, that the different disorders correlated with different stressors. PTSD correlated with the specific high-intensity stressors of war trauma, home abandonment and resettlement, while depression primarily correlated with ongoing post-resettlement life stressors of lesser intensity. Breslau et al. (2000) did not confirm this finding. They analyzed some large data sets of young adults and found that, in individuals exposed to trauma, those that developed PTSD were much more likely to develop depression than similarly-exposed individuals who did not develop PTSD. They conclude that PTSD and depression, when co-morbid, are more properly understood as a single complex disorder.

Finally, several researchers (Dyregov & Yule, 2006; Norris, 1992; Pfefferbaum, 1997; Solomon & Canino, 1990; Stein, Walker, Hazen & Forde, 1997) have found that it is common for children to display many of the symptoms of PTSD, but not meet full diagnostic criteria of PTSD according

to the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Some of these researchers (Norris, 1992; Solomon & Canino, 1990) were able to document that this partial PTSD is as disabling as full PTSD in children and that therefore, studies which utilize only the DSM-IV definition on PTSD will seriously under-report the prevalence of trauma-related dysfunction. Accordingly, they recommend using definitions of PTSD that focus on functional impairment rather than a highly specific symptom list.

The role of attributions in PTSD. Whether the type of traumatizing events of and/or degree of exposure to those events also correlates to symptom development and severity are a matter of disagreement between reviewers of the research literature. Several reviewers have found that severity and frequency of events do correlate with increased likelihood of symptoms occurring (Goenjian et al., 1995; Green et al., 1991; Pfefferbaum, 1997), but other reviews of the specific relationship between PTSD and child physical and/or sexual abuse have not been able to find any strong correlations between type or severity of incident and likelihood of

symptom development (Joseph, 1999; Valle & Silovsky, 2002). In a recent review Meiser-Stedman (2002) concluded that the likelihood of posttraumatic symptoms occurring is “dose-related”, i.e., repeated traumatization do incur increased risk, but that the full context in which the child is living is a highly significant moderator of that risk.

Over the past few years a body of research on trauma, child abuse, and attributions has developed. The findings from this research have paralleled some of findings of the research regarding depression and attributions. This research indicates that it is the subjective valuation of events that is more predictive of the development of anxiety symptoms than the “objective” rating of those events (Feiring, Taska & Lewis, 2002; Himelein & McElrath, 1996; Kolko, Brown, & Berliner, 2002; Neuner, Schauer, Catani, Ruf, & Elbert, 2006; Tremblay, Hebert & Piche, 1999; Valle & Silovsky, 2002). That is, the attempts to rate events as more or less traumatizing, because of the severity of the event, have not yielded much success.

Some specific findings from the research on trauma, abuse and attributions are important to note here. There are

strong correlations between development of internalizing, i.e., depressive or anxious, symptoms and the victim seeing him/herself as responsible for the abuse and/or having a sense of shame about the abuse (Brown & Kolko, 1999; Feiring et al., 2002; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997; Valle & Silovsky, 2002). Similarly, Salmon, Sinclair and Bryant (2007) found that children's appraisals of themselves as more weak and vulnerable following trauma increased the risk of ongoing symptoms. Victim attributions that are angry or hostile towards the perpetrator have been found to correlate with externalizing behaviors (Brown & Kolko, 1999; Chaffin, Wherry, & Dykman, 1997; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997). Ehlers, Mayou, and Bryant (2003) found that anger and a sense of unfairness after an injury in a car accident was associated with long-lasting PTSD symptoms.

It has also been noted that those victims who have a style of thinking and talking about the abuse which is neither avoidant of the subject nor dwelling upon it, are more likely to have lower levels of symptomology (Himelein & McElrath, 1996; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997). Meiser-Stedman (2002)

identifies the attempt at suppressing thought of the event as particularly maladaptive. The attributional research has also found that there are correlations between the child's perceptions of family support or the lack of it and the likelihood of symptom development following the abuse (Brown & Kolko, 1999; Shapiro & Levendosky, 1999; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997; Tremblay et al., 1999). Thus, the research indicates that not only are attributions following abuse correlated with symptom development, but also that the type and manner of attributions and cognitions are specifically related to the type and severity of symptoms that develop.

Although almost all of this research has been cross-sectional and the findings are therefore only correlative, there has been at least one longitudinal study that found positive attributional change over time to be correlated with a decrease in symptoms (Feiring et al., 2002). Those authors point out that this does not demonstrate causation but it is an indication in that direction. Indeed, the strength of the research on attributions is such that, in a review article, Spaccarelli (1994)

develops a transactional model on the effects of child sexual abuse in which the child's cognitive appraisals and coping strategies are the final mediators of the variables of the impact of events, age, gender, and social support. Similarly, Meiser-Stedman (2002) notes that the child's ability to fully and verbally process traumatic events are instrumental in recovery from those events, and that the family has an important role in aiding or hindering that.

Adversarial growth and resilience. Building on the research demonstrating that potentially traumatizing events often do not appear to have long term detrimental effects on people and on the research regarding attributions and trauma, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) have developed a model of posttraumatic growth. Over several studies (e.g., Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1993, 1995) they have found that many individuals who have experienced a potentially traumatizing event will afterwards describe the event as having had positive effects on them, such as an enhanced appreciation of life, a sense of greater personal strength, an improved capacity for intimacy, and greater hopefulness. Tedeschi and Calhoun postulate that

posttraumatic growth occurs when a person, trying to make sense of a very challenging event, is able to manage potentially overwhelming emotions and engage cognitively in a re-understanding of his/her world. The model posits that there are several components to a person being able to do this, including personal ones, such as openness to experience, and environmental ones, such as the availability of social support.

Constructs similar to posttraumatic growth have been proposed and variously called stress-related growth (Aldwin & Levenson, 2004), perceived benefit after trauma (McMillen & Fisher, 1998), and adversarial growth (Linley & Joseph; 2004). Resilience, i.e., healthy psychological development despite the presence of potentially traumatizing stressors, is a related construct.

Linley and Joseph (2004) reviewed 39 studies on what they call adversarial growth, stating that this is the same phenomenon as posttraumatic growth and other similarly named constructs. They supported this argument with a factor-analytic study (Joseph, Linley, & Harris, 2005) of three instruments that attempt to measure either posttraumatic

growth, perceived benefit after trauma, or thriving after trauma. They found that all of the instruments loaded primarily on one factor, identifiable as growth or positive change after trauma. The Linley and Joseph review contained only one study with adolescent subjects. The other studies reviewed were with adult subjects.

In their review, Linley and Joseph (2004) found that a variety of personality, mental status, and environmental characteristics were associated with higher reported levels of adversarial growth. The personality characteristics were openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Mental processing characteristics correlating with adversarial growth were positive affect, fewer depressive symptoms, and coping styles that were problem-focused, and stressed acceptance and positive re-framing of events. Linley and Joseph also noted that traumatic symptoms and adversarial growth frequently co-occur. Janoff-Bulman (2004) makes a similar point, that what she calls positive posttraumatic coping entails both some difficulty from

posttraumatic wounds along with an increased sense of mastery and strength.

The one study with adolescent subjects in the Linley and Joseph (2004) review was Milam, Ritt-Olson & Unger (2004). They studied 400 adolescents who had experienced major stressors, such as the death or major illness of a family member, moving, or failure in school. They found that about 30% of the participants reported some posttraumatic growth, that older adolescents were more likely to do so, that there was no gender differences in this, nor did type of event correlate with likelihood of reporting posttraumatic growth.

Since the Linley and Joseph (2004) review, some additional studies of posttraumatic growth among adolescents and children have been published. Cryder, Kilmer, Tedeschi, and Calhoun (2006) studied posttraumatic growth in 50 children and adolescents who were evacuated from their homes during a flood in North Carolina. Their results agreed with Milam et al.'s (2004) finding of no significant gender differences in likelihood of reporting posttraumatic growth. Cryder et al. also measured the participants' beliefs in their

own competency and found that strong self-competency beliefs correlated with reporting of posttraumatic growth and with perceptions of strong social support. In their regression analysis they found that the relationship between social support and reporting of posttraumatic growth was mediated by the participants' self-competency beliefs.

Laufer and Solomon (2006) studied about 3000 Israeli teenagers exposed to terrorist violence and found that there was a positive correlation between the likelihood of posttraumatic symptoms and of posttraumatic growth.

Barakat, Alderfer, and Kazak (2006) studied posttraumatic growth in 170 adolescent survivors of cancer and also found this positive correlation between posttraumatic symptoms and posttraumatic growth. These researchers note that these findings indicate a complex and as yet unclear relationship between suffering from and recovering from trauma.

Several researchers (Barakat et al., 2006; Cryder et al., 2006; Laufer & Solomon, 2006; Linley & Joseph, 2004; Milam et al., 2004) have found that there is no correlation between severity of event and likelihood of posttraumatic symptoms or

of posttraumatic growth. Laufer and Solomon (2006) and Barakat et al. (2006) also found that there was no correlation between severity of event and subjective sense of threat. The strongest positive correlations that emerged from both studies were between subjective evaluation of threat and posttraumatic growth, i.e., that an increased sense of threat to life increased the likelihood of posttraumatic growth being reported. This is reminiscent of what was noted in the discussion above regarding potentially traumatizing events and development of symptoms of PTSD. It is the subjective evaluation of the event that is most important in the internal processing of the event and the likely sequelae. This appears to support the thesis of Calhoun and Tedeschi (1998, 2004) that posttraumatic growth is the result of the cognitive restructuring necessitated by disillusionment from one's prior understanding of the world. This is similar to the argument that is the basis of Viktor Frankl's existential psychology (1963), that events that shatter our cognitive frame can precipitate a search for meaning that can then develop into a fuller understanding and appreciation of life.

Milam et al. (2004) also found that an individual's religiosity or spiritual beliefs did not correlate to likelihood of reporting posttraumatic growth. This is in contrast to the model of Calhoun and Tedeschi (1998, 2004). Similarly, in a study with 170 bereaved adult caregivers for AIDS patients, Cadell, Regehr, and Hemsworth (2003) used structural equation modeling to test the Calhoun and Tedeschi model and found that spiritual beliefs were a weak correlate of posttraumatic growth.

As mentioned, posttraumatic growth is related to the idea of resilience. In a review of the research on resilience, Rutter (1999) carefully defined resilience not as a character trait, rather as "a range of processes that bring together quite diverse mechanisms operating before, during, and after the encounter with the stress experience or adversity" (p. 135). Rutter noted that a variety of responses by the child, family, and environment to the stressors contribute to whether the child will demonstrate resilience in the face of a stressor or not. Some of the processes he noted are the possible negative chain reactions that can develop around stressful events.

Those can produce counterproductive coping strategies used by child, e.g., drug use, or by the family, e.g., extrusion. Rutter writes that resiliency results when this sort of counterproductive response is reduced and corrective or neutralizing experiences are increased. One example of a neutralizing experience that Rutter discusses is particularly pertinent to the present study: for a child living in a home with marital discord, having a close and positive relationship with at least one parent offers protective influence against the negative effects of that situation.

Rutter's (1999) review stressed that it is the cognitive processing of events that is very significant in determining the results of stressful experiences. He provides an example from research on adult attachment. The positive attachment to a parent or other adult in the midst of difficult childhood experiences has been shown to be tied to the individual's ability to accept those bad experiences, and accentuate the positive while not denying the negative. Rutter's approach to this appears to converge with the research results discussed above regarding posttraumatic symptoms and posttraumatic

growth, i.e., it is not so much the event, but rather the responses to, and the meaning made of the event, that determine long term positive or negative adjustment to it.

Other reviewers of the research on resiliency in children have come to similar conclusions. Luthar and Zigler (1991) report that the research indicates multiple factors operating when resilience occurs, and that these include constitutional and environmental factors in the child and family, interactional factors within and outside the family environment, and degree of stress load. They point in particular to the cognitive appraisal by the child of his/her family as a buffering factor that looks promising and needs more investigation. Luthar and Zigler also found similar results to those noted above regarding posttraumatic growth, that resilient responses do not preclude traumatic responses and that the research indicates that traumatized yet resilient children frequently show somewhat higher levels of internalizing symptoms than children not exposed to traumatizing events.

Masten (2001) also reviewed the research on resiliency in children and makes similar points. She notes that the research shows that resilient children are likely to have a positive self-image, seek out and find family and social resources, and find ways to be effective in situations that may not initially appear positive. Masten notes that resiliency, not crippling traumatization, seems to be the more normal response to potentially traumatizing events. As she reviews the history of the research in this area she describes a change in psychological thinking from a deficit model, that predicted that only extraordinary qualities would be protective against risk situations, to a model that emphasizes how commonly it occurs:

The great surprise of resilience research is the ordinariness of the phenomena. Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon that results in most cases from the operation of basic human adaptational systems. If those systems are protected and in good working order, development is robust even in the face of severe adversity. (p. 227)

It is worth noting that her caveat, that adaptational systems are “protected and in good working order”, may not be a condition that is always easily satisfied.

Bonanno (2004) makes some similar points in an article examining the research on trauma and its sequelae. From this examination, Bonanno concluded that the psychological community in general has seen the loss of relationship through separation or death as necessarily traumatizing, but that, in fact, research has shown that most people deal with loss through “transient rather than enduring” reactions of “yearning and emotional pangs [along with] intrusive cognition and rumination” and that “resilience to the unsettling effects of personal loss is not rare but relatively common” (p. 23). Bonanno says that hardiness to traumatic events is bolstered by:

being committed to finding meaningful purpose in life, the belief that one can influence one’s surroundings and the outcome of events, and the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences (p. 25).

Immigration and Mental Health

There has been a long-standing controversy in the research literature regarding what Klimidis, Stuart, Minas and Ata (1994) call the migration-morbidity hypothesis, i.e., that immigrant status is associated with increased psychological problems. They cite conflicting research findings in this matter, some research affirming that immigrants are in general at increased risk for development of a broad range of psychological disorders and others failing to find that. Klimidis et al. failed to confirm this hypothesis in their own research in Australia comparing 600 native-born and Vietnamese adolescents, and propose that it is simplistic to think that immigration status alone, among the complexity of factors impinging upon immigrants, would be itself a determinant of psychological health or pathology. This proposal certainly appears to accord with what generally are the beliefs about the complexities of psychological health and illness. There is, however, a long history in psychology of research studies finding psychological illness to be more prevalent among immigrants.

Probably the earliest epidemiological study supporting the migration-morbidity hypothesis is the 1854 study by Edward Jarvis, a prominent psychiatrist of the day identified by Stoep and Link (1998) as the founder of American psychiatric epidemiology. Jarvis was commissioned by the Massachusetts state government to take a statewide census of the “insane and feeble-minded”. To do this he surveyed all doctors and clergy in the state, and the superintendents of all hospitals, jails, and almshouses, resulting in a comprehensive epidemiological study by a highly respected figure. Jarvis found that immigrants were over-represented in the ranks of the psychologically afflicted vis-a-vis their population numbers: “The greater liability of the poor and struggling classes to become insane seems to be especially manifested among these strangers dwelling among us” (as quoted in Stoep & Link, p. 1397). Stoep and Link re-analyzed Jarvis’ data, stratifying it for both immigrant and economic status, and found the opposite result from what Jarvis had reported, i.e., they found that when the immigrant population, about 75% Irish, were stratified for SES they were less likely to be “insane

or feeble-minded” than native-born Americans; the positive correlation between lower SES and mental illness remains strong in the re-analysis but that between being foreign-born and mental illness vanishes. Stoep and Link questioned why Jarvis found as he did, particularly because he demonstrates elsewhere in his paper his knowledge of stratification statistics.

A quote from Jarvis’ report might demonstrate what attitudes could have led to this poor science:

To put together in the same wards, insane persons of these two races [American and Irish], with such diversity of cultivation, tastes and habits, who stood aloof from each other in all social life when they are well enough to select their own companions - to require them to live in the same halls, to eat at the same table, to bear with that which was offensive, and from which they would have shrunk in health, is not the best way to calm the excitements or sooth the irritations of this disease, and is contrary to the principles everywhere acknowledged. (as quoted in Stoep & Link, p. 1400).

Stoep and Link concluded that an era's "sociopolitical zeitgeist" determines many of the parameters of research, its interpretations and use, and advise appropriate caution. While it is not easy to find examples of bias influencing research that are as blatant as Jarvis', keeping Stoep and Link's caution in mind as we review the literature may help us understand one of reasons for the disparate results that we find in the research.

There are several reviews of the literature of immigration and mental health. None of the reviews are formal meta-analyses, rather they are descriptive summaries of the many research findings related to the question of the migration-morbidity hypothesis. All of the reviews note that the studies in this area have used a wide variety of methods, instruments, and definitions and thus it is very difficult to compare and contrast the findings. Yet the reviews do come up with some conclusions and below I summarize the conclusions of the reviews and of some primary research.

In the earliest review of the literature, Hull (1979) discussed the findings of research published from the 1950's

through the 1970's. She concluded that negative mental health effects do correlate with immigrant status, but that those trends are mitigated by some circumstances. Specifically, Hull noted that the research indicates that higher SES immigrants suffer less negative effects from immigration than do lower SES immigrants. In a very recent review of research on immigrant children, Stevens and Vollebergh (2008) confirmed that controlling for SES does reduce some outcome differences between immigrant and native groups, but that it is a minor contributor to that variance.

Hull (1979) also noted that immigrants being received into a well-established, same-ethnicity group in the new country are less at risk for mental health problems than immigrants not having this advantage. Additionally, Hull found that immigrants from rural settings in the home country to rural areas in the receiving country also tended to fare well. This identification of the importance of the contexts of exit and reception for immigrant mental health is seconded by Portes and Rumbaut (1990) in their review of the literature. Regarding contexts of exit, they identified several

variables detrimental to good adjustment including war or social unrest, personal or family violence, imprisonment or other separation from family members. Receiving contexts variables that they noted correlated to good adjustment were the availability of an established like-ethnic community, and the availability of and healthy functioning of family.

In another early review, Aronowitz (1984) noted an historical trend within this research area: earlier studies were more likely than later studies to find negative effects correlating with immigration. In his reading of the research, Aronowitz found no strong overall immigration/mental health effects but rather that there are some specific effects. Compared to non-immigrant individuals, Aronowitz found increased risk for problems in behavior, self-esteem, and anxiety, but only when immigration is accompanied by separation from family and/or family dysfunction. Moreover, Aronowitz believed that this increased risk only occurs for these types of less severe psychological problems but not for “acute psychiatric dysfunction”. Vega and Rumbaut (1991) also found that family dysfunction had the strongest

correlations with mental disorder for both immigrant and non-immigrant children of ethnic and racial minorities. They believed that the research indicated the need for more research on the social and family contexts that promote good adjustment after the stresses of immigration.

The historical development in the research on immigration noted by Aronowitz (1984) is also noted by Portes and Rumbaut (1990) in their review of the literature. They additionally noted that this area of research has frequently had public policy implications and that the researchers were sometimes partisans in the politics of immigration, e.g., some psychologists were involved in the eugenics movement of the early 20th century. Participants in the eugenics movement supported the passing of the National Origins Act of 1924, the law that established quotas for immigrants along racial and ethnic lines. Portes and Rumbaut noted that there were, however, other researchers in that same time period who were beginning to report that stratification by age, social class, and areas of residence reduced or erased

the differences in rates of mental illness between immigrants and native-born Americans.

Munroe-Blum, Boyle, Offord and Kates (1989) reviewed six studies of child immigrant mental health and did an analysis of a large data set of immigrant and non-immigrant children from Canada. Their study used parent, child, and teacher data on about 3000 children and found no correlations between immigrant status and rates of mental health or behavioral problems. Their results conflict with the results of four of the six studies they reviewed and they posit that methodological differences may explain those divergent results. Vega and Rumbaut (1991) also point to methodological differences in accounting for the many contradictory findings in this research area; specifically, the use of a large number of different diagnostic instruments and those instruments rarely being validated for use with various ethnic groups.

There are also a few large studies of immigrant mental health that were not reviewed in any of the literature reviews but that are important to consider because of their size. In one

of those, Rumbaut (1999) analyzed the results of the interviews of over 2000 immigrant adolescents in Southern California. He found that symptoms of depression and low self-esteem were highly correlated with parent-child conflict. Other significant correlates of depressive symptoms were gender, age at immigration, family cohesion, and variables that converged on the theme of lack of control over difficult or threatening circumstances. In the Rumbaut study, all of the identified variables combined explained only 25% of the variance.

Two large studies in the Netherlands both found that, in general, immigrant vs. non-immigrant statuses were not significant variables for differences in psychosocial adjustment. In one study (Harland, Reijneveld, Brugman, Verloove-Vanhorick, & Verhulst, 2002), n=4480, no significant differences were found between Dutch and non-Dutch children regarding psychological adjustment. The variables that did correlate significantly with that were, for both Dutch and non-Dutch children, parental separation, divorce, or unemployment. In the other large Dutch study (n=833), Sowa,

Crijnen, Bengi-Arslan and Verhulst (2000), compared the psychosocial adjustment of Dutch children and children of Turkish immigrants and found no large differences except for subgroups within the Turkish group.

In Sowa et al.'s study (2000) of Turkish children in the Netherlands there were findings that the researchers at first considered contradictory: that children in Turkish families who had little contact with Dutch natives were at increased risk for problems, but that Turkish children who attended Koran classes were at decreased risk. To explain these seemingly contradictory results, they hypothesized that children who can function well in both cultures are least at risk; this concurs with the findings discussed above concerning context of reception. This suggests that a particularly positive context of reception is being in a well-functioning home-country context accompanied by the development of ties to the new country. Sowa et al. also found that several other family variables were risk factors for poor adjustment, including divorce or separation, family

dysfunction, incarceration of a family member, or psychological problems of a parent.

Another review of the literature regarding immigrant children and mental health (Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998) noted the difficulty in research migration and its effects:

No single factor is sufficient for understanding the nature of the stresses created by migration and their consequences ... rather it is dynamic interaction of the circumstances surrounding the migration, the characteristics of the migrant family, and the characteristics of the host community and its service system that produces or prevents [those consequences] (p. 539).

In a very recent review, Stevens and Vollebergh (2008), come to a similar conclusion. They reviewed 24 studies that compared mental health in child immigrants and natives and met strict selection criteria for sample size and methodology. They noted that the research findings often conflict, with differences in rates of mental health problems found in either direction. They sought to explain these disparate results by

noting several points. First, as mentioned, there were several different psychological instruments used and many of those were not cross-culturally validated. Second, the use of various types of informants, parents, teachers, and the children themselves confounds results, because these different groups are known to report psychological problems at different rates from each other. Third, Stevens and Vollebergh noted that different immigrant groups come from and go to very different contexts of exit and reception, and that these contexts play a large role in immigrant adjustment. They conclude that it probably does not make sense to ask whether immigrant children are more prone to mental health problems than native children. Rather, they say, the question should be asked more specifically, about specific immigrant groups in specific situations.

In their review, Guarnaccia and Lopez (1998) point out that despite a usually lower SES among child immigrants than their native-born peers, several studies have failed to find increased negative mental health effects. They opine that it can be argued that there may be some aspects of child

immigrant status that actually promote psychological health. Fuligni (1998), in his review of the literature on the health of immigrant children, concurred and noted that they, in the aggregate compared to native-born American children, have reduced rates of substance abuse, violent behavior, and early sexual behaviors. Breslau et al. (2007), in their analysis of data from a 2004 National Comorbidity Study, found that this prophylactic effect generally decreased with time spent in the U.S., but that the size and rate of change in risk varied for anxiety, mood, and behavioral disorders.

As mentioned above, some of the authors of these reviews of the literature (Aronowitz, 1984; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990) noted the historical trend of decreasing support for the migration-morbidity hypothesis. This same historical trend of decreasing support for that hypothesis can be found amongst the reviews themselves. Only the earliest review (Hull, 1979) supports the migration-morbidity hypothesis with some few caveats. All of the others cited here failed to find general support for that hypothesis while noting that there are some specific circumstances in which immigration is correlated with

increases in risk to mental health. The more recent reviews (Fuligni, 1998; Guarnaccia & Lopex, 1998; Stevens and Vollebergh, 2008) noted that not only is there not much support for the migration-morbidity hypothesis in the body of research findings, but that there is, on the other hand, some evidence to support the hypothesis that child immigrant status may have factors in it which promote psychological health. Perhaps, facing the difficulties inherent in immigration, children are likely to develop resilient responses to those stressors.

The reviews do note some factors which can create difficulties. The circumstances that are identified most frequently as being problematic and likely causative of psychological problems are those of difficult and stressful contexts of exit or reception, both societal and family, and this includes economic deprivation, social isolation and family separation or dysfunction. The immigration research reviewed here concerned both adult and child immigrants. In the next sections I will discuss the research concerning the

implications for child mental health of child separation from occurring both because of and unrelated to immigration.

Family Separations and the Child

There has been a strong theoretical basis for, and a resultant presumption, that significant separations of a child from the primary caretaker results in psychopathology. Attachment theorists and object relations theorists have posited that healthy child development requires the stable, continuous, and attentive care of a parent or parental figure. Indeed, it is difficult in our psychological age to imagine otherwise. The research evidence for this seemingly obvious proposition is not, however, either large or clear.

Rutter (1971) conducted a series of studies of family separations due to divorce or death and child mental health outcomes. He presented these results along with a comprehensive review of the literature regarding family separations and child mental health and argued that long-term separations by themselves do not appear to correlate with long-term behavioral problems for children. Stratifying data from his own and others' studies he concludes that

adverse effects correlate most strongly with family discord and/or lack of affection to the child, and that significant separations within the context of a fair or good marriage and high warmth between parent and child do not have negative impact on the child. It is important to note, however, that the most-studied negative outcome, and the one that Rutter focuses on, is anti-social behavior. Rutter acknowledges that separations and depression have been far less studied, that research has yielded mixed results, and that there are indications from it that child separation from parent may be a predisposing factor for adult depression.

In another review of the research regarding the effects of parental loss during childhood, Tennant (1991) comes to many of the same conclusions as Rutter (1971). Tennant notes that much of the research on parental loss due to marital separation does find that it has negative mental health effects for the child. However, Tennant says, as did Rutter, that most of the studies that found those negative effects did not address the confound of quality of parenting. In examining those studies that did consider parenting style he found that

parental loss due to marital separation had negative mental health effects only when accompanied by poor parenting, and that the most likely negative effect was depression in adulthood.

Research results that could appear to be at variance with these are found in the Busuttil and Busuttil (2001) review of the literature on enforced family separation occurring because of parent occupation. These separations also contained threat to the safety of the absent parent, e.g., military personnel, oil rig workers, and airline pilots. They found that the literature shows increased risk for psychological problems for left-behind family members both during separation and after reunion, with risk increasing as the threat to safety increases. It is clear, however, that this is a special case of family separation, containing a very prominent element of diminished control in moments of high risk and the expected anxiety attendant on that.

The two research reviews of Rutter (1971) and Tennant (1991) reach, then, very similar conclusions: that separation from a parent, which we might imagine as almost unavoidably

traumatic, does not appear, by itself, to be a risk factor for the mental health of a child. Rather, it is when this is paired with the ongoing problem of being raised by a parent with poor parenting skills or one who is poorly emotionally available, that the risk rises for mental health problems such as depression. It is worth noting that there is a similarity here with the research on immigration: it is not the event, but rather the emotional and social context and contingencies of the event, that are more predictive of mental health effects.

Family Separations During Immigration

Although the effects on children of family separation due to immigration was discussed at least as early as 1967 (Graham & Meadows), there was very little published on the subject until the past 10 years. That early article and other more recent ones specifically studied Caribbean families; in fact, when published reports in this area discuss families from only one ethnic group, that group is almost invariably Caribbean (e.g., Arnold, 1997; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese. 1995; Smith, 2004). This may simply be an artifact of where and how the research has occurred or it may reflect the fact that family

separation during immigration appears to occur more frequently among Caribbean families than for other ethnicities. It may also be that the rates of child separation from parents, even when not due to immigration, are higher for Caribbean families because of the cultural norm of child-shifting, a practice that will be discussed below.

Child Separation due to Immigration in Caribbean Families

In an early study, Graham and Meadows (1967), first noted patterns seen in later reports. Working out of a hospital clinic in London, they noticed a high rate of parent-child separation due to immigration in West Indian families. Comparing these children to a control group of children from native-born parents, they confirmed their hypotheses that the West Indian children were more likely to have experienced lengthy separations from their parents and more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior and depression. They believed the separation history and symptoms were etiologically connected, seeing both the initial separation resulting from parental immigration and the subsequent separation from substitute caretakers in the West Indies as traumatic.

Thirty years later Arnold (1997) also noted this common pattern of lengthy family separation of West Indians immigrating to the U.K. and, like Graham and Meadows (1967), believed it frequently resulted, after reunification with the parent, in the child's grieving for the lost substitute caretaker and in poor re-attachment to the parent. Arnold states that the parents typically were unaware of these feelings in their child and the problems those feelings posed for reunification adjustment.

Other researchers have come to similar conclusions. Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese (1995), summarizing their clinical work with Caribbean adolescent immigrants in Canada, agree that re-unification was complicated by the parents' not recognizing that the child could be grieving the loss of the substitute caretaker left behind. They believed that this could cause anger between parent and child, with child depression a frequent result and, less commonly, conduct disorder. Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese state that depressive and conduct symptoms correlated both with length of separation and the child's attributions regarding it, i.e., whether or not the child

experienced the separation as abandonment. For example, according to Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese, continued parental financial support of the child left behind made reunification far less problematic because these re-united teens had not felt abandoned by their parents. Similarly, Arnold (1997) cites an unpublished thesis that found that the careful maintenance of ties during the separation resulted in fewer difficulties when reunion occurred.

Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese (1995) also noted that children re-joining their parents in Canada were often disappointed by the life there, it often being far less financially comfortable than they expected. This resulted in the children feeling cheated and betrayed, which was connected to resentments about abandonment. Along similar lines, the children often reported to Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese that they believed their parents had brought them over only for economic reasons, e.g., to look after younger siblings so that the parent could work more. Circumstances such as these tended to reinforce the sense of abandonment of the

children and resulted in significant problems of adjustment in the new home.

In a recent study of adults of Caribbean origin separated as children from their parents by immigration, Smith, Lalonde, and Johnson (2004) affirm many of the results noted above from other studies: that attachment to the substitute caretaker was usually strong and problematic in reunification, that reunification is frequently difficult for a variety of reasons, that maintenance of parental contact during separation alleviated some of those problems, that lengthy separation correlated with increased mental health problems, and that family context could ease or exacerbate difficulties.

In a study of West Indian youth, Crawford-Brown (1997) looked at conduct disorder among Jamaican male adolescents in Jamaica and found several variables that increased risk. These were separation from or infrequent contact with mother, poor paternal role model, and frequent changes in living arrangements. Crawford-Brown believes that child-shifting, as normative and benign as it may appear to Caribbean parents, carries with it some inherent risk.

Raising concerns regarding some of these conclusions is Lashley (2000) who, while acknowledging that separation and reunification due to immigration or other causes can be fraught with difficulties, contextualizes and normalizes it within Caribbean social and family patterns. Lashley notes that it is very common for Caribbean children to reside with relatives other than their parents even if their parents are still in their home country. This is a practice known as child-shifting and is usually a response to economic and/or family pressures. Lashley argues from his cultural expertise and clinical example that it is important to consider not just the family situation, in which shifting might be relatively benign, but also to consider the specific and larger stresses of immigration and integration into the receiving community. Thus, the absence of the usual extensive family network of support, and the difficulty of attempting to integrate into a white and frequently unsympathetic community, both contribute as significantly to the problems in adjustment of the children as the family separation itself.

The possible effects of Caribbean normative patterns of child residence will be further considered in a section below on Haitian culture, but first we will look at some other research on child separation due to immigration for children from various ethnic groups.

Child Separation due to Immigration in Families of Various Ethnicities

In the largest study to date of the separation and reunification of immigrant children, Suarez-Orozco, Todorova and Louie (2002) interviewed and compiled data on 385 youth who had immigrated to the U.S. from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. They found that family separation is very common during the immigration of families, but that the likelihood and type of separation occurring varied widely between ethnic groups. For example, in the total sample about 50% of children were separated from both parents during immigration, but only 8% of Chinese children had that experience, 40% of the Mexican children, 60% of the Haitian children, and fully 80% of Central American children. Families immigrating intactly also differed

by ethnic group; at the low extreme were Haitian and Central American families, with only 4% immigrating with both parents and children together, ranging up to a high of 37% for intact immigration for Chinese families. These large differences between ethnic groups in patterns of immigration are supported by the results of Rousseau, Drapeau, and Corin (1997), who also found that family separation during migration was usual for Central American families but uncommon for Southeast Asian refugees.

Regarding separation and mental health, the Suarez-Orozco et al. study (2002) has some results that support the correlations found or posited in the literature, but some results that did not. They found that the lowest likelihood of depressive symptoms was in children who had immigrated in intact families, but they did not find any correlation between separation and scores for anxiety, hostility, or interpersonal or cognitive functioning, nor was length of separation from parents a significant variable regarding depression. This lack of correlation differs from results noted above (Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada, & Moreau,

2001; Smith et al., 2004). Although the Suarez-Orozco study has a significantly larger sample size than the other studies and therefore their results could be considered more demonstrative, Smith et al. argue that the different findings may be instrument artifact; Suarez-Orozco used diagnostic measures while Smith et al.'s used instruments measuring psychological adjustment and Smith et al. argue that they were thereby able to pick up more subtle effects.

Indeed, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2002) themselves note that their findings contradict findings from some other smaller studies and, while crediting their own findings, also note that the data collected in semi-structured interviews "illustrate the poignancy of the separations" and they note that the qualitative data are "in keeping with research. . . which confirms that even in cases in which children do not manifest measurable psychological symptoms, most report missing their parents and caretakers" (p. 638). Thus, although the quantitative data failed to confirm many of the findings and impressions of prior writers, the qualitative data did appear to do so. Suarez and Orozco et al. did affirm in the analysis of

their qualitative data that leaving substitute caretakers was very difficult for the children, that reunification was frequently problematic, and that the maintenance of ties during separation attenuated those problems. In the interviews children often noted having a variety of confusing and conflicting feelings about reunification; they were excited about the idea of reunification, but worried about its success, and often felt uncomfortable with a parent who was not well-known to them or was different from how they had remembered that parent. Suarez and Orozco's findings contain parallels to the conclusions of the reviewers of child separation research (Rutter, 1971; Tennant, 1991), i.e., that it is not separation itself but the quality of parenting and the ability to forge a new relationship that is most important in determining whether or not the separation will become a source of problems.

The importance of family support also becomes evident in the research of Rousseau et al. (2001). They found that, while both war-related trauma and family separation were common experiences for refugees from Latin America and

Africa, those experiences did not necessarily predict adverse mental health effects. Some increase in symptom likelihood occurred only if the family separation was lengthy or if there was marital discord. Despite a fairly large sample size, over 100 subjects, they also found that the narrative data were more useful than the questionnaire answers for determining mediating variables; that in the interview data connections between a child's perceptions of family support and the child's adjustment could be seen.

Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam (2001) studied immigrants from Mexico, Central America, Korea, and Yemen, and also found that separation from parents was a common occurrence during family immigration. Immigrant parents interviewed noted that they did not anticipate the attenuation of family bonds that resulted from separation. Orellana et al. opine that the immigrant families had developed long-term immigration strategies that were primarily focused on economic improvement and in these there was little space to consider the more subtle developmental and emotional needs of the child.

In the literature on family separation during immigration reviewed here a number of findings and themes emerge time and again. There is general consensus among these writers that family separation during immigration is common for many child immigrants but that this varies greatly across ethnic groups, that the difficulty of separation for the child can be mitigated if some type of parental contact is maintained during separation, that the child will often experience a profound loss in leaving substitute caretakers, that parents frequently do not appreciate that loss, that reunification with the parent is frequently problematic, and that this is particularly true if family dynamics include marital discord or other dysfunction. Several researchers have found that antisocial and/or depressive symptoms frequently accompany the reunification process, but there is disagreement as to whether the length of separation is a significant variable in the occurrence of symptoms. Many researchers note that all of these effects vary widely between individuals and that this variation is related to the meaning ascribed to the separation by the child. These findings appear

to support what Rutter (1987, 1999) has found in his reviews of the research on resilience, that it is in not specific static factors but rather in how those factors are negotiated and understood that resilience emerges.

Finally, as regarding the present study it should be noted that several of the researchers cited here mention that the effects of family separation are sometimes subtle and can be missed by criterion-based instruments but do become more evident in qualitative data. The present study attempts to utilize the results of this prior work by using an interview methodology that will permit in-depth child narratives about their experiences and their interpretations of those experiences.

Voluntary vs. Involuntary Immigration

It is usually adults, not children, who exercise decision-making power regarding international migration. It is for this reason that Guarnaccia and Lopez (1998) say that almost all children are “involuntary immigrants”, referring to, but applying in a different fashion, a typology developed by Ogbu and Simons (1998). Ogbu has argued that “involuntary

minorities”, i.e., ethnic groups who have been colonized, conquered or enslaved, or groups identified with those groups, fare worse in social adjustment measures than “voluntary minorities”. Gibson (1998) summarizes research on Ogbu’s theory and reports that it receives empirical support regarding immigrants in countries she defines as “new nations, i.e., those where “a colonizing population from Europe conquered or displaced an indigenous group and subsequently has accepted and encouraged immigration [e.g.] the U.S.A.” (p. 431).

The Guarnaccia and Lopez extension of Ogbu's theory, that involuntary immigration resembles, in its effects, belonging to an involuntary minority, finds some support in the research literature. Thus, for example, we note that Rogler (1994) reported that adult females coerced by family into immigration are more likely to suffer from depression than voluntary immigrants. Klimidis et al. (1994) compared rates of psychopathology and self-concept in adolescent immigrants to Australia separating out voluntary immigrants and refugees and found that refugee children scored lower on measures of self-worth than non-refugee immigrant children. Hauff and

Vaglum (1995) studied a cohort of 145 adolescent and young adult Vietnamese refugees in Norway soon after arrival and then three years later. They found a high level of psychological distress at entry that did not decline significantly after three years. Variables that correlated with persistent distress were severe traumatization due to war circumstances, lengthy separation from family during or after migration, lack of a close confidant after resettlement, and additional high impact event after resettlement. Here again, trauma, contexts of exit and reception, and family context stand out as important variables.

There are other studies, however, that find ambiguous or no pathogenic effect for refugee or involuntary immigration status. In one such study Tsoi, Yu & Lieh-Mak (1986) interviewed 200 Vietnamese children residing in a refugee camp in Hong Kong. Although they do not report their method for determining psychological adjustment, Tsoi et al. found that almost all the refugee children seemed “well-adjusted” but that the children who were separated from their families appeared to have made poorer adjustment.

In a series of studies in Quebec, Rousseau and her colleagues have studied African, Central American, Southeast Asian, and native-born youth (1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001). Those studies have found that the status of being a refugee alone does not generally correlate with increased incidence of mental health problems. A number of variables appear to interact to correlate with increased problems; these included family separation, other family problems, cultural beliefs, and exposure to trauma.

In one study that Rousseau, Said, Gagne and Bibeau (1998) say demonstrates the importance of cultural background and beliefs, unaccompanied minor refugees from Somalia were interviewed. Rousseau et al. report that traditional Somalian views of childrearing includes the expectation that adolescents will leave the family in order to prepare for adulthood. As a result, Rousseau et al. say, these displaced Somalia youth were not usually traumatized by the more distant separation occasioned by immigration to Canada and in fact most of them gained in feelings of self-reliance through that experience. Thus, a specific cultural context, in

which early adolescent separation from parents is normative and seen as maturational, appears to turn our expectations on their head. Where we might have expected a traumatic reaction to have occurred, a positive experience resulted from a long and distant separation.

There is then, in the literature on involuntary immigration, a difference in opinions similar to that found in the larger body of research on immigration in general. That is, the hypothesis that the status of being a refugee or involuntary immigrant would, by itself, represent a mental health risk factor is affirmed by some researchers but refuted by others who believe the correlations to be far more complicated. That more complicated relationship appears to be an interaction between a number of variables including not voluntary vs. involuntary immigration, but also, importantly, exposure to trauma, family constellation and context, and cultural beliefs.

Haitian Family Organization and Transnationality

This brings us to the consideration of the specific historical and socio-cultural contexts of the Haitian family and

how those might affect the adjustment in reunification of children who have been separated from their families by an immigration process. Haiti, in the period during which the study's participants and their families immigrated, has been politically and economically instable. Political and street violence, along with searing poverty for many of its people, has been common. This was the larger societal backdrop for the personal and family events that occurred in the lives of the participants (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

There is very little in the psychological literature on Haitian youth, almost all articles on theory and technique for clinical work with Haitian children and their families, written by clinicians with experience in this (e.g., Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002; Giles, 1990; Gopaul-McNicol, Benjamin-Dartigue & Francois 1998; Menos, 2005; Nicolas et al, 2007; Stewart, 1994). Although all of these can be extremely useful for a clinician unused to working with Haitian families, none of them record any systematic collection of data.

In the few of the larger, multi-ethnic studies discussed earlier, although much data has been collected on children from various ethnic groups, including Haitian youth, there is not a strong effort to interpret the results with specific regard to Haitian contexts. To gain a good understanding of those contexts it is best to turn to Haitian and Caribbean anthropological and sociological studies. Although Haiti is certainly a distinct country with its own specific cultural forms, the Caribbean is a culture area of its own and this is particularly so as regarding forms of family life (Herskovits, 1990; Kurlansky, 1992; Rooparine & Brown, 1997).

The anthropological literature on Haitian family organization describes several aspects of Haitian culture that will aid in contextualizing the experiences of child immigrants separated from family. Several authors note that it is common for children, for a variety of reasons, to live with families other than their own nuclear family for some period of their upbringing (Comhaire-Sylvain, 1961; Simpson, 1942; Williams, Murthy & Berggren, 1975). The reasons noted for this vary, some of which have to do with the nature of family and

marital relationships in Haiti, some of which have to do with ideas about childrearing. This practice of child-shifting is common to many Caribbean societies (Evans & Davies, 1997; Lashley, 2000).

The traditional Haitian household is organized, spatially and conceptually, around a family compound that is comprised of several small homes for related family members facing onto a central family courtyard; this arrangement is called a *lakou*, from the French for courtyard, *le court*. The patriarch of the family is the head and ruler of the *lakou* but not, of course, without input from adult family members (Bastien, 1961; Comhaire-Sylvain, 1961). This is the traditional arrangement that has become less common in the larger cities but still frequently obtains in the countryside and in smaller towns. Children are raised by all members of the *lakou* and may frequently reside, within the *lakou*, outside the home of their nuclear family.

Another circumstance that leads to children living away from a parent is the instability of some conjugal unions. Common-law marriage is very frequent in Haiti, particularly in

rural areas where priests are less available, and these common-law marriages are not as stable as legal marriages (Williams et al., 1975). Serial monogamy with children resulting from each union is a common pattern (Simpson, 1942; Williams et al., 1975). Social and economic considerations are brought into the decision as to where children will reside and when they will change residence. Also, it is not uncommon for men to father children outside of their primary conjugal relationship and then decisions regarding the placement of these children must be made; sometimes these children stay with their mothers, but they may be shifted into the father's household if the mother is poor and the primary partner of the father assents (Bastien, 1961; Simpson, 1942).

Finally, there is a common practice throughout Haiti known as *restavek*, literally, to stay with, in which a child is sent to live in the city with a relative or non-relative who can send that child to school in exchange for the performance of household chores. Whatever the reason, it is the kindness and resources, or lack thereof, in the new household that will

determine how the child is treated, and it is known that mistreatment is not an uncommon occurrence (Comhaire-Sylvain, 1961).

Thus, there are a variety of common circumstances in which Haitian children may not live with their nuclear family, some of those entirely benign and others not so. For this reason, a full understanding of the circumstances in which separation occurred is important to know. It could be that the child viewed the separation as an entirely normal and positive event, or it could be that it was seen as a rejection and abandonment, and certainly the Haitian cultural context itself allows for a wide range of interpretations.

Indeed, in my clinical experience with Haitian families, separation from a parent can often occur before immigration forced that separation, i.e., one of the other common reasons for a child living away from his/her family had already occurred prior to a parent immigrating. For the adults involved, child-shifting is usually a thought-out, calculated process; the *lakou* is a physical space but it is also a cognitive and affective space and child-shifting, even to a somewhat

distant location, may be within a conceptually expanded *lakou*. That situation can permit frequent contacts between parent and child and can, in the best of circumstances, be rather seamless for both parent and child.

That situation changes when a parent immigrates to another country and visitation becomes difficult and rare. The parent may now be living transnationally (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1990), i.e., in a “transnational social field” (Orellana et al., 2001), perhaps visiting the home country every few years but almost certainly sending money home and maintaining some contact with their family there. The parent can conceptualize a “transnational *lakou*” (Stewart, 1994) and feel a sense of engagement with the child, but that child, with a more concrete cognitive style, may be much less likely to feel that engagement. Thus, the danger of the transnational *lakou* is that it exists for the parent much more than for the child and thereby creates cognitive disjoints between them.

The Haitian cultural and family contexts will be extremely important to consider in understanding the immigration history of the child and the child's response to

that history. It will be important to credit both the ordinariness of child separation from parents in Caribbean settings, while at the same time also crediting that those circumstances may feel and be evaluated very differently by children than by their parents.

Summary

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have discussed several areas of research literature in an attempt to bring forward aspects of each body of research that relate to the questions and design of the present study.

In the discussion of the research on depression and post-traumatic reactions it was seen that attributions are highly significant variables in predicting likelihood of symptoms, and that specific events and circumstances were not usually reliable indicators of whether an individual was likely to be symptomatic. The review of research on adversarial growth and resilience showed some similar findings, that some of the most significant variables in determining adjustment in children who are in difficult or potentially traumatic situations are the children's abilities in cognitive and emotional

adjustment. Specifically, a child's ability to reframe their difficulties in a positive manner, to see those as offering opportunity, and to see him-/herself as an active agent in fashioning that opportunity mitigated the potentially negative effects of those difficult circumstances.

In the discussion of the research on immigration, it appeared that what researchers had once thought, that immigration was itself a risk factor for mental health problems, turns out not likely to be accurate, but rather it the presence of other contextual circumstances accompanying immigrant status that can make it so. Those circumstances included most prominently family dysfunction and contexts of exit and reception, the latter indicating that something about how the change in circumstances is perceived is what is most important.

The importance of context and perception of context was also apparent in the discussion of the research on child separation, either occurring along with immigration or under other circumstances. For the present research, those contexts include important cultural situations, primarily the normality

of child-shifting and substitute caretaking of a child. Historical situations are also an important context, and the prevalence of immigration with transnational residence or visitation can normalize absent or occasional parenting. The problems involved in leaving substitute caretakers and rejoining long-unseen parents may be seen to be related to whether and how the parents maintained contact with the left-behind child. This is likely to be true because it is that contact that affects the cognitions that the child will develop regarding the non-present parent.

The research has yielded various results regarding the question of whether length of separation is a significant variable in predicting difficulty in adjustment after reunification. Here it is useful to ask about the utility of trying to determine this very specifically and our ability to do so. First, from the previous discussions of the research, what seems likely is that the child's perceptions and understandings of that separation are more significant than any concrete time period. Second, there are likely to be so many other contingencies in any separation that length of separation is

simply too crude a measure to be significant. It would seem that we are better advised to focus on the entire constellation of circumstances surrounding the separation and in particular, the child's attributions regarding that separation.

Thus, the present study was intended to study closely the meanings that children separated from their parents by immigration give to that separation and how those meanings interact with their adjustment in reunification. The hope is that greater understanding of how adolescents process these events will assist in greater facility in aiding them when reunification becomes difficult for them and their families.

Chapter III: METHODS

Overview

The study collected the autobiographical narratives of 12 Haitian adolescents who were separated from at least one parent during the process of family chain immigration. The narratives were analyzed qualitatively, using the guidelines of interpretative qualitative analysis (IPA) (Smith, Jarman, & Osburn, 1999).

After the interview, each participant completed a self-report questionnaire regarding psychological problems, the Youth Self Report (YSR) (Achenbach, 1991b). The results of those questionnaires were compared to the results of the qualitative analysis of their narratives.

Participants

The study selected 12 Haitian students, of age 18 to 20 years, from a public high school student body for data collection. The high school is located in a suburban town of a large metropolitan area on the Eastern seaboard of the US. Its specific location is not disclosed so as to protect the identity of

the participants. For the sake of convenience, I will call the town Hereford.

Hereford is a suburb of a city but is also a small semi-urban center in its own right with a population of less than 100,000. The median household income is very near the median household income of its state. The high school has a student body of about 1700, about one-third of whom come from homes where English is not the first language (“Hereford” Public Schools Parent Information Center, 2003). This immigrant or child of immigrant cohort includes students from many countries with no one country constituting a majority. Haitian students comprise about 15% of the cohort of students from homes where English is not the primary language, and about 5% of the total district school population.

For inclusion in the study, participants needed to be at least 18 years old, were separated for at least 3 years from at least one parent due to immigration of the parent(s), and were reunited with a parent(s) or other caretaker at least two years prior to entrance in the study. These periods of separation and reunification were selected in order to interview participants

who had experienced a lengthy separation and who were not just recently reunited with their parents and thus were not likely to be in an initial period of adjustment with family.

There has not been sufficient prior research in this area to be able to operationalize in a precise manner what a “lengthy separation” might be, but three years was taken as fitting that definition. Vega and Rumbaut (1991), drawing evidence from several studies, discuss three phases of post-immigration adjustment. The first phase, about one year, tending to be a period of fewer problems, a sort of honeymoon period; the second phase, another year and sometimes longer, tending to be a period of increased psychological problems; and a final phase in which problems tend to lessen and baseline adjustment is again achieved. It made sense for this study to select as participants adolescents who were not likely to be either in a honeymoon phase nor possibly in the more difficult period of adjustment, but rather emerging from that. Thus, the participants would be most likely to have encountered some difficulties in adjustment, have some experience in

dealing with them, and have some perspective on those experiences.

The period of at least two years in this country was also selected to insure that the participants were at least fully conversant, if not fully fluent, in English. Study participants had to be sufficiently conversant in English such that providing a full narrative in their own words was possible for them. Only one subject who met the other entrance criteria was deemed insufficiently conversant in English to participate in the study. Although I am a competent Haitian Kreyol-speaker, the study interviews were done almost entirely in English, with occasional forays into Kreyol for clarification of certain words or situations.

To avoid possible, but unlikely, risk from study procedures, entrance criteria for participants also specified exclusion for any student who had a history of psychiatric hospitalization. This was done to err on the side of caution regarding the issue of participant safety. It is important to note that there are several research studies demonstrating that helping individuals develop narratives of difficult incidents in

their lives is helpful, not harmful, to them (e.g., Amir et al., 1998; Meichenbaum & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Neuner et al. 2008; Pennebaker, 1993; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000). In any case, no participant who otherwise met entrance criteria had to be excluded for this reason.

The participant recruitment process entailed the following steps. I obtained a list of all students aged 18 or older at the school and examined that list for names that might be Haitian. Haitian names are usually identifiable to persons familiar with the Haitian community. Of the 55 students identified by name as possibly Haitian, 50 of them turned out to be Haitian. Of those 50 students, 2 were registered for school but never attended. The remaining 48 students were screened briefly to determine if they met entrance criteria. Of those 48, 18 were U.S.-born and had never returned to Haiti to live there for a significant period of time. Of the remaining 30, 12 students had never been separated from a parent for as long as three years. Thus, 18 students met the initial entrance criteria. This was 60% of the over-18, Haitian-born students at the school. This percentage

is similar to the likelihood of parental separation for Haitian children found in much larger survey studies by Suarez-Orozco et al. (2001, 2002).

After the initial screening, these 18 students all discussed with the researcher whether they wanted to participate in the study and, if they agreed, were asked to sign the consent form. The consent form is in Appendix A. Of the 18, 3 students declined and 15 agreed to join. Individual interviews were then scheduled, for which 12 of the 15 students showed up. The remaining 3 students no-showed for another scheduled interview and that second no-show was taken as them effectively declining to be in the study. Thus, 12 of the possible 18 students who met entrance criteria joined the study and completed the interview and questionnaire. The 12 included six males and six females. This rate of study participation for eligible subjects, 66%, and the equal balance between males and females, indicates that the study probably included a fair representation of students meeting the entrance criteria.

Procedures and Measures

The basic procedures of the study were collection of an autobiographical immigration narrative through participant interview, analysis of that narrative, and use of a standardized instrument to measure psychological adjustment. The selection of an interview as the primary research tool for the study was based on the idea that an open-ended interview procedure was more likely than a questionnaire or survey to be able to derive "meaning in context", i.e., interviews are preferred for eliciting responses regarding the meaning of events, perceptions of fairness, and other highly subjective matters (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Weiss, 1994).

Interview procedure. The semi-structured interview protocol, in Appendix B, was developed after review of the interview protocols of Suarez-Orozco et al. (2002) from their study of child separations during immigration and of Sack et al. (1996) from their study of refugee resettlement stress. The interview is composed of a series of open-ended questions intended to elicit a full separation/immigration/reunification narrative, including the circumstances of parental leave-

taking, reaction to parental absence and substitute caretakers during separation, and stresses encountered during the child's own immigration and reunification processes.

Following guidelines from writers on qualitative research (e.g., Maxwell, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Somner & Somner, 1997; Warren & Karner, 2005; Weiss, 1994), the interview protocol was used as a general framework to elicit full responses in order to gather sufficient data to answer the research questions. Interviewing involved adjusting the wording and order of questions, and adding in follow up questions.

The interview protocol contained a number of questions designed to elicit the meanings that the participants had ascribed to the events that transpired, e.g., *What did you think about why [your parents] left? How did you feel about it? Did you sometimes have questions in your mind about it that you couldn't ask anyone?* During the interviews, the participants were occasionally asked about their reactions to the interview, and to the feelings and thoughts evoked by recounting their stories. Finally, at the end of the interview the participants

were asked about how the interview had gone for them and if they had any concerns about letting the material be used for research or publication. It is important to remember that the narratives are not to be understood as accurate, objective portrayals of the events that occurred. Rather, as suggested by researchers on narrative, (e.g., McAdams, 2006), they are better understood as retrospective constructions of events that the narrators' are using to make meaning of the events of their lives.

The use of a questionnaire regarding attributions was decided against because of concerns regarding their reliability and validity (Asner-Self & Schreiber, 2004; Higgins, Zumbo, & Hay, 1999; Joiner & Metalsky, 1999). Additionally, several researchers recommend the use of interviews over questionnaires in attempting to elicit the complex material involved in attributions (Fincham, 2002; Joiner & Wagner, 1995; Joseph, 1999).

Psychological problems measure. After the interview was completed, the study participants were asked to complete the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991b). The Youth Self-

Report has problem scales labeled withdrawn, somatic complaints, anxious/depressed, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, delinquent behavior, aggressive behavior, and composite scales for internalizing, externalizing problems, and a total problems score. The Achenbach instruments are empirically-derived, the problem scales developed from principal component analysis. The problem scales' Cronbach's alpha is resultantly high with a mean of 0.82. Test-retest reliability is also acceptable with a mean r of 0.82 for the problem scales for this study's age group.

Regarding validity, the authors report several measures including the odds ratio of referred vs. non-referred youth for scoring in clinical range on the problem scales; those ranged from 3.9 to 6.4 with a mean of referred youth being 4.5 times more likely to score in the clinical range on the problem scales. Although some of the participants were aged 19 and 20, and the Youth Self-Report is designed for use with ages 11 through 18, longitudinal studies have demonstrated the validity of the instrument with these older young adults (T. M. Achenbach, personal communication, October 13, 2008).

The validity of the Achenbach scales has been extensively investigated regarding their cross-cultural validity (Crijnen, Achenbach & Verhulst, 1997; Ivanova & Achenbach et al., 2007; Rescorla et al., 2007; Verhulst et al., 2003; Verhulst & Achenbach, 1995). Verhulst et al. (2003) studied results from the Youth Self-Report for seven countries and found significant but small differences in total problem and specific problem scores across those countries. Even for the countries with the largest differences, the mean scores for any country remained well under the clinical or borderline range for that instrument. Research expanding these comparisons to 24 countries, including one Caribbean nation, Jamaica, was recently published. In those studies, Rescorla et al. (2007), reported that the total problem scales from 17 of the 24 countries fell within one standard deviation of the grand mean of all 24 countries, and that the effect size for country differences ranged between 3% to 9%, with an average effect size of about 6%. In allied research, Ivanova and Achenbach et al. (2007) reported that confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis demonstrated that the 8 problem scales had a good fit

for all 23 countries studied. Thus, there is good research evidence for the cross-cultural validity of the Achenbach scales in general and the Youth Self-Report in particular.

The decision to use the Achenbach scale rather than an instrument designed to diagnose according to DSM categories was made because of concerns of cross-cultural validity of instruments using DSM guidelines. Bird (1996) reviewed several large child mental health epidemiologic studies from several countries and weighed the opposing merits and problems of “diagnostic”, i.e., DSM-based studies, vs. “empirical”, i.e., Achenbach-based studies. Although Bird would prefer to be able to compare rates of diagnoses cross-culturally, he concludes that the empirical method results in far greater knowledge of actual rates of specific types of psychological complaints because of the poor cross-cultural validation for diagnostic instruments.

Analysis

The primary focus of analysis was the participants' narratives of their family separation and subsequent immigration and reunification with family. The participants'

interviews were transcribed and then analyzed. In an inductive and recursive process the interview data were used to generate and refine categories into which the material was sorted and re-sorted.

Mishler (1995) constructs a typology of narrative analyses with three principal types: (a) analysis focusing on how events are presented temporally, (b) those that focus on structural aspects of the text, and (c) those that focus on the function or meaning of the narrative. The analysis of the narratives in this study will belong to this third type.

Smith and his colleagues (Smith, 1996; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osburn, 2003) have developed a specific form of qualitative analysis that they call interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Smith (2004) describes IPA as idiographic, because it starts with the analysis of an individual narrative; inductive, because it uses the elements in the narratives to discover significant themes and variables; and interrogative, because it examines the discovered themes in the light of prior research. The “interpretative” in IPA refers to the researcher’s attempt to discover themes within the

narrative, the “phenomenological” refers to the search for the meanings attributed to events by the narrator of those events. Smith believes that IPA is well-suited to a study, such as the present study, in which “...the researcher is interested in exploring participants’ personal and lived experiences, in looking at how they make sense and meaning from those experiences” (2004, p. 48).

Smith (1996) advises that an individual participant's interview should first be understood within its own context; without this first step, the contextual relationship of narrative elements can be missed. Thus, analysis of the narratives began in an individual, case-focused manner and later, as common themes among narratives began to manifest, the analysis focused on cross-case thematic material. Sorting of thematic material took place both sequentially and simultaneously throughout the research in a recursive manner as the material in the narratives took shape conceptually in the mind of the researcher (Creswell, 1994; Maxwell, 1996; Smith 1999; Weiss, 1994).

After narrative analysis, the Achenbach YSR was scored for each subject and there was an attempt to note any correspondences between elements and processes identified in the narrative analysis and problem scale scores for each individual. Because of the small number of study subjects, there was not any attempt to statistically correlate narratives with problem scale scores in the aggregate, rather a simple descriptive analysis (Maxwell, 1996; Somner & Somner, 1997; Weiss, 1994) of the Achenbach scores was done.

Chapter IV: DEMOGRAPHIC AND INSTRUMENT DATA

Overview

The study collected interviews from 12 students, aged 18 to 20, who were Haitian or Haitian-American, had been separated from at least one parent for at least three years, and had been reunited with that parent or another caretaker for at least two years. Of the 50 Haitian students at the study site, 18 met entrance criteria and 12 of those 18 consented to and completed study participation.

Study participation included an interview and completion of the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991a). The interview time ranged from about 1-2 hours, with questions that focused on the participants' experiences growing up with their parents, the absence of a parent, substitute caretaking, and family reunification. Frequently, other topics came up in the course of the interview and those were also often discussed. All subjects who entered the study completed it, and all said that they found the interview interesting and helpful, despite the fact that during it some difficult experiences were sometimes recalled. This accords with earlier

research findings that the discussion of difficult and even traumatic events is often helpful to individuals (e.g., Amir et al., 1998; Meichenbaum & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Pennebaker, 1993; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000).

This chapter presents a summary of the demographic and instrument data, abstracted from the narratives and compiled from the results of the Youth Self-Report (YSR) protocols. Because of the small number of cases there is no attempt at statistical analysis; rather, there is simply a presentation of the data in narrative and tabular form, with some characterization of that data. Additionally, it is worth remembering that all of the data presented here is by participant report only. There has been no attempt by me in this study to determine the factuality of the participant reports. Thus, the participants' telling of events and their adjustment to those events is precisely that, their version of events, and should not be taken to be a factual account.

Demographic Data Summary

Although some general groupings regarding adjustment to the immigration, separation and reunification experiences can be made, the specifics of the family arrangements and histories in this sample were extremely heterogeneous and it is therefore impossible to describe any typical family situation or arrangement, other than the common fact of the immigration of family members. Tables 1 through 6 present summaries of the participants' family situations. The next chapter presents synopses of the participants' family histories and Appendix C presents those histories in brief tabular form.

Table 1 summarizes participant domicile at birth and the participants' reports of adjustment in that domicile. Almost all of these domiciles lasted for several years and the participants were able to report on their adjustment there.

Table 1

Participant Domicile at Birth and Adjustment in that Domicile

		Both parents	Mother only	Father only	Mat. family	Pat. family
Boys		3	2	0	1	0
	Good adjust.	3/3	2/2	--	0/1	--
Girls		2	2	0	1	1
	Good adjust.	2/2	2/2	--	1/1	1/1
Boys & girls		5	4	0	2	1
	Good adjust.	5/5	4/4	--	1/2	1/1

Note. 3/3 = 3 out of 3 participants reported good adjustment in this domicile. Mat. = maternal; Pat. = paternal

About 1/2 of the participants lived with both parents at birth, about 1/3 with their mother only, a smaller number with maternal relatives, and only one with paternal relatives. That is, the most common living situation was with both parents, but if that situation did not obtain, the child usually lived matrilocally.

All but two of the participants reported good adjustment in their first domicile. Adjustment that was reported as mixed,

i.e., both positive and negative, or uncertain was not tallied as good adjustment. One boy was with his mother only until the age of two and does not recall that time. The other boy not reporting good adjustment was placed, along with his sisters, in the home of a maternal aunt. He describes being poorly treated by that aunt but being well-cared for by his sisters.

Table 2 summarizes the nature of the participants' parental unions, intact or separated, exclusive of separation due solely to immigration. Only 1/4 of the parental unions were intact throughout the lives of the participants. Although the mean participant age at parental separation was 5 years, there was a large difference in the mean age of boys vs. girls at parental separation, with boys' parental unions lasting on average until the boys were 8 years-old, and girls' parental unions dissolving on average during the girls' infancy.

Table 2

Parental Separation Not Due to Immigration

	Parental union intact	Parents separated	Mean participant age @ separation
Boys	1	5	8 years old
Girls	2	4	infant
Boys & girls	3	9	5 years old

Table 3 summarizes parental immigration prior to the participant immigration. As can be seen from that table, fathers and mothers were about equally likely to immigrate, and to do so in the early childhood of the participant.

Table 3

Parental Immigration Prior to Participant Immigration

	Father immigrated	Part. age @ fa. imm.	Mother immigrated	Part. age @ mo. imm.
Boys	4/6	5 yrs. old	5/6	5 yrs. old
Girls	4/6	4 yrs. old	2/6	3 yrs. old
Boys & girls	8/12	4.5 yrs. old	7/12	4 yrs. old

Note. 4/6 = 4 out of 6 fathers immigrated; Part. = Participant; imm. = immigrated; fa. = father; mo. = mother

Table 4 summarizes the participants' separations from their parents, sometimes due to immigration and sometimes to other events. As the table shows, both mothers and fathers tended to separate from the child in pre-adolescence, around the age of 7 to 10, but the range of when this occurred was large, from very early childhood to late adolescence. There was little difference between boys and girls regarding this.

Table 4

Separation from Parent due to Immigration or Other Event

		Separation from mother	Separation from father
Boys	Mean age @ separation	6 yrs. old	10 yrs. old
	Range	4-9 yrs. old	2-18 yrs. old
Girls	Mean age @ separation	9 yrs. old	10 yrs. old
	Range	1-18 yrs. old	0-18 yrs. old
Boys & girls	Mean age @ separation	7.5 yrs. old	10 yrs. old
	Range	1-18 yrs. old	0-18 yrs. old

Table 5 summarizes the number of participant shifts in domicile both pre- and post-immigration, exclusive of the change in domicile due to immigration. Also included in the table are the participants' reports of their adjustment to the domicile in those shifts. Here again, participant reports which described the adjustment as mixed were not tallied as good adjustments.

Table 5

Domicile Shifts Pre- & Post-Immigration: Adjustment in Shifts

		Pre-immigration	Post-immigration
Boys	mean/participant	1	1.8
	range	0-3	0-3
	good adjustment	3/5	6/10
Girls	mean/participant	1.2	2.0
	range	0-3	1-4
	good adjustment	4/7	6/8
Boys & Girls	mean/participant	1.1	1.8
	range	0-3	0-4
	good adjustment	7/12	12/18

Note. 3/5 = 3 out of 5 shifts resulted in good adjustment.

The table shows that shifts occurred in approximately equal numbers to boys and girls, with a mean occurrence of about once in their pre-immigration lives and about twice in their post-immigration lives. Half of the participants were shifted prior to immigration and 3/4's of them experienced a post-immigration shift. Participant report of their adjustment in those domiciles was that slightly more than 1/2 of those domiciles worked out well for them. Good adjustment after a shift was equally likely to be reported from both pre- and post-immigration shifts. Boys and girls were about equally likely to report good adjustment after a shift, either pre- or post-immigration.

Table 6 summarizes the participants' first place of domicile post-immigration. For many participants shifts occurred post-immigration, but recorded here is the place of first attempted domicile. There was a wide range of circumstances, but participants were most likely to live with either their mother or father but not with both together, as most parental unions were not intact. Adjustment in those

homes was described as good in approximately 1/2 of those placements.

Table 6

1st Participant Domicile at Immigration: Adjustment in that Domicile

	Mother & father	Mother	Father	Maternal family	Paternal family	Siblings
Boys	2	1	2	0	1	0
Good adjust.	1/2	0/1	0/2	--	0/1	--
Girls	0	1	2	1	1	1
Good adjust.	--	1/1	1/2	0/1	1/1	1/1
Boys & girls	2	2	4	1	2	1
Good adjust.	1/2	1/2	1/4	0/1	1/2	1/1

Note. 1/2 = 1 out of 2 participants reporting good adjustment in that domicile.

adjust. = adjustment

The participants' mean age at immigration was 14 with a small range of a few years on either side of that age. There was no difference in mean age of immigration for boys or girls.

Youth Self-Report Results

The results from the participants' Youth Self-Reports (Achenbach, 1991c) indicated a generally low level of psychological problems for the cohort as a whole. Three-quarters of the participants, 4 males and 5 females, had no scores in the borderline or clinical range for any of the individual problem scales or for the internalizing, externalizing, or total problem composites. Achenbach (1991b) defines a borderline score for the individual problem scales as a T score at or above 67, i.e., at or above the 95th percentile, and a clinical score as a T score at or above 70, i.e., at or above the 98th percentile. Because of greater reliability of the internalizing, externalizing, total problem composite scores, the T scores required for designation as borderline or clinical range are lower; 60 or above for borderline, and 64 or above for the clinical range.

For the 3 participants, 2 males and 1 female, that did have borderline or clinical scores in the problem scale and composites, the results were as follows. One male participant had a borderline score in the withdrawn and somatic complaints scales, and this resulted in clinical scores in the internalizing and total problems composites. A second male participant had a clinical score in the somatic complaints scale and this resulted in a clinical score in the internalizing composite, while his total problem score was in the normal range. One female participant had a borderline score in the somatic complaints scale, and this, along with a normal but mildly elevated score in the withdrawn scale, resulted in borderline scores in the internalizing and total problems composites. The results of each participant's YSR are discussed in their individual synopsis.

None of the participants recorded any borderline or clinical score in any the scales that were not in the internalizing composite. That is, all of the scores for all of the participants were in the normal range in the areas of social problems, thought problems, attention problems, delinquent

behavior, aggressive behavior, and the externalizing composite. The only clinical or borderline scores were in the withdrawn and somatic complaints, and it was these that created elevated internalizing composite scores. Table 7 below provides a tabular look at this data. It shows the means and standard deviations for the study cohort, by gender and total, and includes the same data for Jamaica (Lambert et al., 1980) and for a combined seven countries (Verhulst et al., 2003). Jamaica was chosen for comparison purposes as it is culturally more similar to Haiti than the other six countries studied, those being Australia, China, Israel, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the U.S.

In the Verhulst et al. study (2003), the means of the Jamaican cohort were not found to be significantly more statistically different from the other six countries than the other countries were from each other; the correlation coefficient r for Jamaican YSR scores as compared to the seven countries was 0.70, which was only slightly lower than the average r of 0.75 between all countries. Verhulst et al. characterized the effect sizes of differences in means as small.

Table 7

*YSR Means & Standard Deviations: Study & Comparison**Samples*

YSR scale	Jamaica means (& SD) N = 365	7 country means (& SD) N = 7,000	Study male means (& SD) N = 6	Study female means (& SD) N = 6	Study total means (& SD) N = 12
Total	35.1	37.6	45.3	37.3	41.3
Problems	(14.4)	(21.0)	(18.3)	(15.2)	(16.6)
Internalizing	12.5 (6.0)	12.2 (8.1)	15.7 (7.4)	17 (6.8)	16.3 (6.8)
Externalizing	8.0 (5.1)	10.4 (6.9)	9.0 (3.0)	10.5 (4.2)	9.8 (3.6)
Withdrawn	3.9 (1.7)	3.5 (2.4)	5.2 (2.1)	5.8 (1.7)	5.5 (1.9)
Somatic	3.1 (2.3)	2.7 (2.7)	4.0 (3.6)	4.5 (3.3)	4.3 (3.3)
Anxiety/ Depression	5.7 (3.2)	6.4 (4.9)	7.3 (3.6)	8.7 (2.2)	8.0 (3.1)
Social	2.5 (1.7)	2.8 (2.3)	2.0 (0.9)	3.0 (1.7)	2.5 (1.4)
Thought	1.6 (1.6)	2.0 (2.1)	2.8 (0.8)	2.0 (1.1)	2.4 (0.9)
Attention	3.7 (2.3)	4.6 (3.1)	4.7 (3.2)	5.7 (2.4)	5.2 (2.8)
Delinquent	2.4 (1.9)	2.7 (2.4)	2.7 (0.9)	3.2 (1.3)	2.9 (1.1)
Aggressive	5.7 (3.7)	7.7 (5.2)	6.3 (2.3)	6.8 (2.6)	6.6 (2.4)

Because of the small sample size of this study, there is insufficient power to do a t-test or other statistical calculation to determine whether the group means for the study cohort were statistically different from the Jamaican or seven countries cohorts, or whether males or females in the study showed statistical differences. Yet, eyeballing the data, some remarks can be made.

First, and most importantly, the participant cohort mean scores for all of the individual problem scales and the internalizing, externalizing, and total problems composites, were all within the normal range as designated by the YSR. While the internalizing composite mean score, and the withdrawn and somatic complaints problem scale scores within that composite, are all mildly elevated, they also all remain within the normal range for the instrument.

The means for the cohort in this study closely resemble the means of the Jamaican and seven countries cohorts on almost all of the problem scales and the composite scores. The study cohort means for the somatic complaints scale and the internalizing composite were both about half a standard

deviation higher than the Jamaican and seven countries cohort, and the withdrawn scale was about a full standard deviation higher than those cohorts. The means for the study cohort do not appear to be more similar to the Jamaican cohort than to the seven countries means. The mean scores for the study cohort fall about midway between the means for clinically-referred youths and those of non-referred youths in the original, American sample (Achenbach,1991b). That said, these slightly elevated study cohort means on these scales do remain within what is designated as the normal range by this instrument.

The means for the male and female cohorts in this study show only one variation between them that might be of significance. The mean on the thought problems scale for the males is about one standard deviation higher than for the females; the male mean, however, remains well within the normal range. This is reported only for the sake of completeness, without interpretation.

Summary and Discussion

Because this sample was very small, it is not assumed that the data described above are generalizable. Nonetheless, it is useful to summarize and discuss the data, to notice possible patterns and trends.

About 1/2 of the participants lived initially with both parents. Those that did not live with both parents were usually living with their single mother or maternal relatives. Child shifting was common, sometimes as a result of the immigration of a parent and sometimes for other reasons. Thus, this study accords with findings in the literature that describe this as a common practice in Caribbean families (Comhaire-Sylvain, 1961; Simpson, 1942; Williams, Murthy & Berggren, 1975).

Shifting occurred both pre- and post-immigration of the child, and was about twice as common post-immigration as compared to pre-immigration. While almost all of the participants described their home adjustment pre-shift and pre-immigration as good, less than 1/2 of the participants described themselves as being happy in their first post-

immigration domiciles. The increase seen in shifting post-immigration might have resulted from the participants and their families responding to living situations that were not working out well. This idea appears to be supported by the fact that 2/3 of the post-immigration shifts were described as resulting in good adjustment to the home by the participants. That is, shifting appears to have worked, to some extent, as a remedy for difficult home situations.

Additionally, almost all of the participants immigrated in their teens. Smith et al. (2004), in their research on Caribbean children re-united with parents in Canada, hypothesized and found that older age in children re-uniting with their parents correlated with poorer adjustment in that home. They aver that because adolescence is a period in which compliance with parental authority naturally weakens and increased child assertion of independence occurs, that reunification with a parent who has never or not always been the child's caretaker, would create a difficult situation. The demographic data in the present study appear to support that idea, and the narrative data, reported in the next chapters, also does.

Another interesting finding was that the parental unions of the participants lasted for a mean of about 8 years when a male child was born, but only through early infancy when a female child was born. If this finding were to be replicated with a larger sample, an hypothesis for this might be that the birth of a male child increased the interest on the father in maintaining the family unit.

The average period of separation from a parent tended to cluster around a mean of about 9.5 years. This accords with the results of Smith et al. (2004), who found that Caribbean youth who immigrated to Canada had been separated from a parent for a average period of 10 years. Thus, this sample was, at least in this regard, very similar to the their larger sample size of 48 individuals.

Regarding the data from the YSR, the most important finding was that the means for the study cohort approximated the means for a non-clinical sample of youths from a variety of cultures. There were only two problem areas in which the cohort means were mildly elevated, the somatic problems scale and the withdrawn scale. This resulted in mildly elevated

scores in the internalizing composite. That said, all of these mild elevations remained well within the borderline or clinical cut-off points.

These slight elevations on the withdrawn, somatic complaints, and internalizing composite could point to some mild degree of depressive and/or traumatic symptoms in this cohort. As discussed above in chapter II, the combined presence of a number of risk factors, such as lengthy separation from a parent, marital dissolution, disruptions in caretakers, all of which were common in this sample, point to an increased risk for internalizing symptoms (e.g., Rapee, 1997; Rumbaut, 1999; Rutter, 1971). It is also important to note that many researchers studying resilience among traumatized children have noted that higher than normal rates of internalizing symptoms in those children do not preclude these children from demonstrating high rates of resilience (e.g., Janoff-Bulman, 2004; Luthar & Zigler, 1991).

It is also important to note that the means on the YSR for the study cohort were not closer to the Jamaican means than seven countries means. Thus, any differences in the study

cohort from the seven countries means do not appear to be a matter of difference due to Caribbean culture. These differences may be to cultural differences specific to Haitian adolescents, or they might be due to the nature of this particular cohort. I would suggest that the latter is the case: The YSR results from the study cohort accord with the histories of the participants, i.e., there are many reports of potentially traumatizing events accompanied by some sub-clinical degree of traumatization in a larger context of generally positive adjustment.

Chapter V: INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES & THEMES

Overview

In this chapter I will present brief synopses of all of the participants' histories, as given in their narratives, and I will discuss, in those individual accounts, some of the themes present. As will be seen from these histories, each participant's story is highly specific to that individual, both in its details and the meaning ascribed to those details. Appendix C contains tables that highlight and summarize the significant family events of each participant's history. In each synopsis I will also discuss the results of that participant's YSR.

Although the histories of the participants are each quite disparate from each other, some rough groupings are possible. Two participants, Christophe and Lilette, both had the common and significant elements of an untraumatic separation and then successful reunification with both parents in an intact marriage. I will call this group the successful separation-reunification group. Another grouping, containing Amie, Mazalie, Leon, and Victor, had histories that were slightly more problematic, either because of difficult periods

in the separation phase and/or because of difficulties in the reunification phase. I will call this group the partially successful separation-reunification group. A third grouping, containing Josef, Beauline, and Vachel, shares the element that the participants all ended up successfully living with siblings, either because no parent was present or was not available. I will call this group the sibling residence group. Finally, there is a grouping, of Denis, Elsa, and Georges, who did not live with any family members, because a family member was either not present or was not available. I will call this group the independent group.

Successful Separation-Reunification Group

The two histories of Christophe and Lilette are examples of the transnational *lakou* functioning well, in almost precisely the manner that the involved adults envision. The histories are characterized by a minimum of disruption in the children's sense of being family, despite lengthy periods of separation.

Christophe. Christophe was born in a city in Haiti. He lived there with his mother and sister, who was 3 years older than he. His father had immigrated to the U.S. shortly after his

sister's birth. When Christophe was 5, his mother also immigrated to the U.S. and Christophe and his sister went to live with their maternal aunt. Christophe says he has only sketchy memories of his mother before she immigrated to the U.S. He became close to his aunt during this period and says, "I kind of have two moms".

The move to Christophe's aunt house meant moving to a village a bit outside the city which was the home village of both his mother's and his father's families, and there he and his sister became especially close to his mother's family. Christophe and his sister continued to go to school in the city, and despite being chauffeured there, the travel exposed them to political demonstrations and violence in the city, which Christophe remembers.

When Christophe was 8 or 9, his father began visiting him and his sister in Haiti. He describes meeting his father as "weird, because I didn't really know the guy, I'd just heard he was my dad." Christophe's mother would also come to visit him during this period.

When he was 11, Christophe and his sister immigrated to the U.S. to join their parents there. Christophe describes the family reunification in the U.S. as mostly unproblematic, his mother and he “picking up where we left off”. His feeling of strangeness around his dad remained and continues.

Christophe attributes this to his not having known his father when he was a young child.

Christophe said his adjustment to the U.S. and schools here was not without difficulty, but nothing presented problems that felt too difficult to overcome. He has been a successful student here and has received a scholarship to a prestigious college which he was planning to attend.

A few of the more prominent themes that emerged in Christophe’s narrative were the dedication to family, the frequent contact with absent family that helped maintain a sense of family cohesion, the acceptance of life difficulties, viewing those difficulties as opportunities to learn life lessons, and the importance of faith.

All of Christophe's scores on the YSR were well within the normal range. This result accords with the picture of positive adjustment seen in the interview.

Lilette. Lilette was born in a city in Haiti. She lived there with her mother and father, and younger siblings born after her. She was also close to several paternal and maternal relatives. When she was about 6 years old Lilette immigrated to the U.S. with her mother and younger brother, leaving her father in Haiti. When they came here they lived with a maternal uncle and his family who had previously immigrated here.

After about a year in the U.S., Lilette and her brother returned to their home in Haiti to live with their father. This return was arranged to give Lilette's mother a chance to attend college without having to care for the children. Lilette and her brother stayed in Haiti for about 9 months and then returned to the U.S. to live with their mother again. Lilette says that neither separation from her mother or father caused her any distress. She says this was because the absent parent remained in very frequent touch, and because, both in Haiti and in the

U.S., she was surrounded by many members of her extended family whom she knew well and who treated her well.

After Lilette returned to the U.S. when she was about 8, she didn't see her father again until she returned to Haiti for summer vacation when she was 12. On that visit Lilette also met, for the first time, her youngest sister, who had been conceived and born on trips her mother made to Haiti.

When Lilette was 15, her father and her 2 younger sisters immigrated to the U.S. to join Lilette, her mother, and brother here. She says the adjustment was very easy, that it was like they had never been apart. She regards the immigration experience as having been only the slightest bit disruptive and only very fleetingly emotionally difficult, at the moments of leave-taking when she was older. Lilette says she had no problem adjusting to father and sisters when they finally came: "It wasn't like getting used to them...but more like just getting used to having more people around."

Some of the key themes that emerged in Lilette's narrative were the closeness of her family, the absence of feelings of loss or separation when she was younger because of

the ongoing presence of close family members and the frequent contact with absent family members. Also prominent was her growing awareness as she became older of the absence of her sisters, and how that awareness made her value their presence even more when they did arrive. As she says, “Before I wasn’t able to say, ‘I hate my sister, she’s always stealing my clothes’, because she wasn’t here. Now we’re all together and I don’t say that... I realize that if I was to say, ‘I hate them’, that would be kind of ridiculous... People don’t know what it’s like to not have [your sisters] around.”

All of Lilette’s scores on the YSR were well within the normal range. This result accords with the picture of positive adjustment seen in the interview.

Partially Successful Separation-Reunification Group

In this grouping are the children who were separated and then reunited, in some manner, with a parent. In some histories we find difficult, traumatic separations. In others, reunifications were only partially accomplished or partially successful. And in some histories we find both of these circumstances. We can see in these stories the attempt by

some adult players to make the transnational *lakou* operate successfully, and we often see the partial failure of that attempt, i.e., the relationships between child and parent are more or less disrupted and less functional than in the group with successful separation-reunification histories. There were 4 participants, Amie, Mazalie, Leon, and Victor, whose histories fit this pattern.

Amie. Both of Amie's parents immigrated, separately, to the U.S. within the first year of her birth. Amie stayed in Haiti and lived with her paternal relatives, her grandmother, an aunt, and some uncles. She says she was well provided and cared for in the paternal *lakou*, and that she grew very close to them and thought of her grandmother and her aunt as her mother.

When Amie was 2, her mother returned to Haiti and attempted to bring her back to the U.S. with her. Amie's father was afraid of losing her and instructed his family to not permit Amie's mother to take her. They followed his instructions and Amie's mother returned to the U.S. without her and did not re-contact Amie or her family for many years.

When Amie was about 17, her mother's sister located her in Haiti and told Amie's mother about this. Amie's mother then visited her in Haiti in an unsuccessful attempt to establish a relationship with her. It is clear in Amie's telling of her story that she regards her mother as having abandoned her when she was very young and is unforgiving of her for that.

Amie's father maintained contact through frequent telephone calls, gifts, and visits throughout their separation. Amie notes that the separation did not cause any sense of unfamiliarity between them at his first visit when she was 12: "The first time I met him it was like daughter and father. Just, 'Hey, daddy,' and I jumped on him and he carried me. That was good...It didn't feel strange at all." Her father visited her again when she was 14, 16, and 18, at which time she immigrated to the U.S.

The immigration entailed an unanticipated complication. The required paternity test indicated that Amie's father was not her biological father. Her mother denied that this could be a possibility. Her father continued to regard her as his daughter, but because of these test results, it was her mother

and her maternal aunt who arranged the immigration papers and brought her to the U.S. Amie first stayed with her mother for a few weeks but didn't get along with her and, in any case, the plan was for Amie to live with her father in another city.

When she moved, Amie moved in with her paternal grandmother, who had also immigrated to the U.S. at about this same time, and some other paternal relatives. Amie was disappointed that she could not live with her father, who was living with a girlfriend nearby. He told Amie he would eventually buy a house and she would move in with him, but this has not happened to date. Amie's grandmother eventually moved out of the house where Amie was living, because of disagreements with one of Amie's aunts. Amie continues to live there but hopes to be able to move out and live on her own.

Amie particularly wants to live on her own because of recent troubles with many members of her family, including her father. It became known to Amie's family that she is a lesbian and there is much disapproval about that. Amie's grandmother, who raised her, has been the only family

member with whom Amie has not experienced any disjuncture in relationship following this disclosure. Amie particularly worries about the disjuncture that has resulted with her father. She wonders whether he might now be more accepting of this aspect of her if he had known her better by being with her during her upbringing.

Counterposing themes in Amie's story are her closeness to her paternal grandmother, who was her primary caretaker for all of her childhood and a sense of a lost family, of something missing. She is bothered by the fact of her mother's abandonment of her, with the questions regarding her father's paternity of her, and by her father's upset with her sexual orientation. Although the relationship with her paternal grandmother remains close and sustaining, there is a sense of disruption and loss caused by the family immigration and separation. Despite these conflicting themes, there is in her narrative a strong sense of dedication to family by her paternal relatives, including her father. She appreciated his frequent visits and staying in touch while they were separated

and does not believe that the present estrangement will become permanent.

All of Amie's scores on the YSR were well within the normal range, except for her score on the somatic complaints scale, which was in the borderline range. This resulted in a score in the internalizing composite and the total problems composite that were also in the borderline range. Somatic complaints can be an indicator of affective problems and in Amie's story there are several sources of negative affect. One is her sense of abandonment by her mother. Another, that an attempt at marital reconciliation by her parents failed because her mother's motivation for that was primarily financial. Amie's anger at her mother because of both of these is evident in the narrative. Also, at the time of the interview, Amie was in the midst of difficulties in adjustment with her family because of the recent revelation to them that she is lesbian. Her father in particular was very upset by that and only barely in communication with Amie at the time.

Mazalie. Mazalie was born in Haiti and from birth lived with her maternal grandparents. Those grandparents thought

that her mother, at age 16, was too young to care for her properly, and Mazalie's father had immigrated to the U.S. in her infancy. Although Mazalie knew that she had an actual mother and father, she thought of her maternal grandparents as her parents and called them that. They treated her very well and she has fond memories of her time with them.

Mazalie would sometimes see her mother, but that relationship did not develop fully as her mother had married and that marital relationship limited Mazalie's access to her mother.

When she was 7 years old, Mazalie's maternal grandparents immigrated to the U.S. and Mazalie went to live with her paternal grandparents and paternal uncles. Mazalie was also well treated and well provided for in that home. Her father and other siblings sent money from the U.S. to their parents. It was also at about this time that Mazalie's mother and her husband divorced and Mazalie began to visit with her mother more. Mazalie did not go to live with her because her mother was unemployed and the family did not think she could provide for Mazalie properly, but her mother did cook for her and give her money when Mazalie visited her.

Mazalie was about 7 years old when she first met her father, when he came from the U.S. to visit family in Haiti. Subsequently, her father came from the U.S. quite frequently and they developed a close relationship. Mazalie was particularly happy to have him as a father because of his understanding and kind nature, and because he never used any physical or harsh discipline with her, which she saw many of her friends' fathers use.

When Mazalie was 11, her paternal grandmother died and Mazalie went to live with one of her father's sisters. This aunt was concerned that Mazalie would be left too much on her own, because her uncles were often out of the home working, and her grandfather was elderly. Indeed, he died within that year. It was also in this year that Mazalie's mother died.

Shortly after Mazalie moved to her aunt's house, the aunt's husband began to touch her inappropriately and when she reported this to her aunt, her aunt got angry with Mazalie. One day when Mazalie was trying to get her aunt to believe her, the aunt became very angry and hit Mazalie in the head

with a bottle, causing her to bleed and lose consciousness.

That same day, Mazalie decided to move back to her uncles' house and did so on her own initiative. She was 12 at this time.

Mazalie got along well for a while at her uncles' house, but she started having disagreements with one of her uncles. He disapproved of her hanging out with friends and her dating, he fought with her about that, and sometimes would kick her out of the house in anger. On one of those occasions, Mazalie went with a friend to stay at his house and was gang-raped there.

After that incident, Mazalie went to live with a half-brother from her father's side. She was happy to get to know her half-brother and got along with him well. When Mazalie's father found out that one of his brothers had kicked Mazalie out of their house, her father insisted that they take her back, and Mazalie moved back to live with her uncles.

Because of all these difficulties, Mazalie became impatient for her promised immigration to the U.S. to occur. She noticed that things were not proceeding quickly and so

she, at age 14, pushed forward the process herself, going on her own to the embassy. At age 15, she was able to get a visa and immigrate to the U.S.

In the U.S. Mazalie joined the home of her father, his wife and their children. Mazalie says she adjusted to that home without difficulties and enjoyed having new half-siblings. She had some shyness with her father, with whom she had never lived before, but he was sensitive to that and they eventually developed a close relationship. After a couple of years, her father and stepmother separated. Because Mazalie was close to her stepmother and it would keep the children together, Mazalie stayed living with her stepmother. But Mazalie started skipping classes at school and getting low grades and her father had her move in with him. That move improved her school adjustment and she has remained with him with good adjustment in his home.

One of the most prominent themes in Mazalie's narrative is her attachment to her maternal grandmother, her substitute caretaker for Mazalie's first 7 years, and the person Mazalie credits with helping her develop her strong sense of self-

agency. Her grandmother modeled this and taught it explicitly to her:

When I was a child my grandmother used to say to me, “Don’t let anybody ever take advantage of you”... She was the kind of person who will get up and do something. She was the same kind of person that I am right now...She was like, “I’m not going to wait for nobody, I’ll just do it myself.”

It is that strong self-agency, and Mazalie’s attempt to move forward and not dwell on unpleasant memories, to which she attributes her successful adjustment now despite significant difficulties faced when she was younger.

Also evident in Mazalie’s story is her sense that her father and other family members have been strongly dedicated to her. Thus, despite having lived with several different caretakers, she sees clearly which ones were kind, caring, and protective of her, and also identifies, without much anger, those that were not. Her father’s visits and frequent contact with him when he was away from her, and

his caring nature apparently made reunification with him unproblematic despite a separation that lasted 15 years.

All of Mazalie's scores on the YSR were within the normal range. It is significant that, although there occurred events that could have been traumatizing, there are only moderate elevations that do not reach borderline levels in any problem scale score within the internalizing composite. Her score in the internalizing composite scale is just below the borderline range. This seems to correlate well with her ability to see herself as strong and self-agentic despite challenging circumstances.

Leon. Leon was born in a city in Haiti and lived there with his mother, father, and younger sister. He describes his pre-adolescent childhood as a good, basically untroubled time for him. He was aware that his parents felt threatened by the chimers, Haitian political/criminal gangs, but his parents were mostly successful in keeping that knowledge from him and his sister. One day, however, when Leon was 10, his parents came home disheveled after they had been attacked by a gang.

Shortly afterwards, unannounced until that day to the children, Leon's mother immigrated to the U.S.

After his mother's immigration to the U.S., Leon remained in Haiti with his father and sister for 4 years. He describes that time as unpleasant for several reasons: he was missing his mother, not just her caring, but also the modulating presence she had had on his father. Without her there, Leon's father's use of physical discipline became more frequent and more severe, sometimes because of reports from school of Leon's misbehavior, and sometimes because of Leon and his sister fighting. This physical discipline caused Leon to have doubts as to whether his father actually loved him, or indeed hated him.

Leon's mother stayed in frequent and regular touch with the family by telephone during the separation. When Leon was 14, he and his father and sister immigrated to join his mother in the U.S. The family reunification was a happy time for Leon and he felt like he and his mother had never been separated. With his mother's help, Leon adjusted fairly easily to the U.S. His father, however, had a more difficult time with

adjustment. He continued in the sort of role that was more appropriate to a society where women have fewer rights, and a marital separation resulted after about 3 years in this country. Leon alluded to, but did not want to discuss, the occurrence of domestic violence.

Despite Leon's clearly stronger attachment to and sympathy with his mother, he remains sympathetic also to his father. He says he now understands that his father was only trying to help him grow up in a good way and not become a worthless character. Leon also asserts, however, that his father went about this in too strict and severe a manner. Leon also blames his father for the breakup of the marriage, but he also feels badly for him, because Leon sees him suffering as a result of the divorce. At the time of the interview, Leon was continuing to live with his mother and sister and to visit on occasion with his father.

Some of the principal themes in Leon's story are his closer ties to his mother, and how the separation from her was traumatic, despite his having his father with him, his own learning from his mother how to adjust to the U.S., and his

father's inability to make a similar adjustment. It is striking in his narrative that the 4-year separation from his mother caused no emotional rupture in their relationship, and that the problematic relationship with his father is the one in which no separation occurred. It seems that his mother's kindness and understanding of Leon, and her staying in touch with him during the separation, prevented any rupture in their relationship. The relationship with his father, however, was deeply and negatively affected by his father's strictness and his use of apparently severe physical discipline.

Almost all of Leon's scores on the YSR were well within the normal range, except for his score on the somatic complaints scale, which was significantly elevated and in the clinical range. This resulted in a score in the internalizing composite which was also in the clinical range, and a total problems score just shy of the borderline range. This elevated level of somatic complaints might be an indicator of affective problems, and in Leon's story it is clear that he was deeply upset by his treatment by his father during the absence of his mother, and by the fact of his parents' divorce, which

apparently involved some domestic violence that Leon did not want to discuss.

Victor. Before Victor's birth, Victor's mother immigrated to the U.S., visiting Haiti frequently where Victor's father and older sisters remained. Victor was conceived during one of these visits to Haiti, was born in the U.S., and lived here with his mother until he was 2 years old. During this period, Victor's parents' marriage had become unstable because his mother wanted the entire family to immigrate to the U.S., but Victor's father, working as a professional in Haiti, did not want to immigrate. To this day, Victor's mother lives in the U.S. and his father and sisters live in Haiti.

When Victor was 2 years old, his mother, on a visit to Haiti, left him with his father, sisters, and maternal grandmother, who were all living together in Haiti. The maternal grandmother was living with her son-in-law specifically to take care of the children in the mother's absence. Victor doesn't remember his very early childhood in the U.S. with his mother, but he remembers clearly living with

and being well cared for by his grandmother in Haiti from the age of 2 until about the age of 5.

When Victor was 5, his mother returned to live in Haiti in an attempt to reconstruct the marriage and family there. Because his mother was there to take care of him and his sisters, his maternal grandmother returned to live in her own house during this period. Victor missed his grandmother dearly and was angry at his mother for displacing her. Because of that resentment, he refused to call his mother “mama”, despite her request that he do so, because that is what he had called his grandmother. The attempt at marital reconciliation was unsuccessful and Victor’s mother moved back to the U.S. when he was about 9 years old. After her return to the U.S., Victor’s mother continued to visit Haiti every couple of years and the relationship between his mother and him, although not like the close relationship he had had with his grandmother, continued to develop in those years.

After his mother returned to the U.S. when he was 9, Victor became increasingly independent of parental influence. His mother and grandmother were now both absent, and his

father, used to working long hours, had Victor in school and, after school, working at an auto mechanics' garage. Victor ended up spending much of his time in the garage and on the corners, making friends with the neighborhood men. It was these men who advised and protected Victor, and whom he came to regard as mentors, and in some sense, substitute fathers.

As he entered adolescence, Victor understood more fully the dangers around him from political and criminal violence, and the limitations of future opportunities for him in Haiti. He asked his mother to bring him back to the U.S. and she agreed to do so. Victor returned to the U.S. at about age 15, lived with his mother for a few months, then with an uncle for a while, and then with his mother again after that. This moving around in the U.S. upset Victor because he was losing time in school, and Victor insisted to his mother that they find a stable domicile. Once that stability occurred, Victor was able to make a good adjustment to school and more or less, to home. He has done well academically in high school and was planning to attend college the next academic year.

Two parallel principal themes emerge from Victor's story. One is the displacement from the care of the first primary caretaker he remembers, his grandmother, his resentment of that at the time, and the failure to attach strongly to any caretaker after her. The second is his growing independence in adolescence, amidst the mentoring by the neighborhood men. Victor credits that period in his life as teaching him how to get along with all sorts of people, how to get along without too much help from others, and to accept that life can be hard and that one must focus and persevere towards one's goals if one is to achieve anything. He considers these lessons extremely valuable and doesn't regret at all that he was forced by circumstances to grow up more quickly than his peers.

All of Victor's scores on the YSR were within the normal range. Mild to moderate elevations in the scores that comprise the internalizing composite resulted in a internalizing composite score that is just below the borderline range. This result correlates well with Victor's positive view of the outcome of the significant difficulties he encountered in

growing up; there is some evidence of traumatic reaction but problem levels are not high.

Sibling Residence Group

The third grouping contains the 3 participants who reside with siblings. There are differences among these participants as to whether their living situation resulted from an unsuccessful attempt at reunification with a parent or the absence of a parent. Two of them, Josef and Vachel, ended up with a sibling because of the failure of an attempt at reunification with a parent in the US. The third, Beauline, was with a sibling because no parent was present in the U.S. This situation did not represent a failure of family cohesion in the process of immigration, rather it appears that the situation resulted from the uncompleted serial immigration of the family.

Josef. When Josef was born in Haiti he lived with his mother and father. His father immigrated to the U.S. when Josef was very young, about 2-3 years old and Josef has no memory of him from that age. Josef stayed with his mother in Haiti and his father would visit regularly, about every few

years, but he was not able to develop a good relationship with his father, being unfamiliar with him and fearing him for the severe physical discipline that he meted out.

At about age 13, Josef and his brothers and sisters immigrated to join his father in the U.S. Josef's mother stayed behind in Haiti because his father had not filed for a visa for her, having 2 other wives in the U.S. Once here, Josef continued to have problems getting along with his father and missed his mother sorely. Resultantly, after a few months in the U.S., Josef and a brother returned to Haiti to live with their mother. One of Josef's sisters, worried about the dangers of violence in Haiti, was able to convince their father to bring the 2 boys back to the U.S.

When he came back to the U.S., Josef went to live with this sister. She eventually moved to another town and, in order not to have to transfer schools, Josef moved in with an older brother who had also set up a home separate from the father. He describes the time with this sister and brother both as good times and without difficulties between them.

Some of the prominent themes in Josef's story are the closeness of the siblings and their looking out for each other through the difficulties of immigration and adjustment, in contrast to the abusive and negligent behavior of their father. Both the father's absence and his use of physical discipline when he was present, distanced Josef from his father before immigration. Josef contrasted this behavior with that of his mother, who he described as loving and kind. Josef was very open in his discussion of his anger at his father. The harsh physical discipline, his father's being with other women here, his not keeping his first marriage together, and his failure to provide an adequate home for his children, all served as a powerful negative example for Josef.

Josef's scores on the YSR were in the normal range for the problem scales, except for his scores on the withdrawn and somatic complaints scale, which were both in the borderline range. This resulted in a clinical score in the internalizing composite score, and a clinical score in the total problems score. This accords with the interview in which Josef's anger at and resentment towards his father are clearly a source of

ongoing emotional upset for Josef. It is also clear that he does not have anything that has substituted for the love and support that he received from his mother; a natural result from that could be a feeling of loneliness and withdrawing from relationships that might offer support.

Vachel. Vachel was born and lived in Haiti with her mother and older siblings. All of the 4 sisters were half-siblings, each of them having a different father, and she has one twin brother. Vachel says her family was close and got along well with each other. They lived in a family compound with many members of mother's extended family.

Vachel's father was not involved with her mother from the time of Vachel's very early childhood and she had no contact with him from the age of about 2 until about age 12. He had immigrated to the U.S. and his first visit to this family was when she was that age. When Vachel was 13 he arranged for Vachel and her brother to immigrate to the U.S. to live with him here. He made these arrangements without informing Vachel's mother, but when her mother found out she encouraged Vachel to take advantage of this opportunity.

Vachel was reluctant to go, as she did not know her father well and was a little frightened by him, but she was willing to go along with her mother's wishes. She and her brother immigrated to the U.S. to join their father when they were 13.

When Vachel and her brother came here, they went to live with their father, his girlfriend, and her children. Vachel says this was a very difficult time, because of the physical and emotional neglect of her and her brother by both her father and her father's girlfriend. Vachel particularly resented the preferential treatment, extending even to food, that her father gave to the children of his girlfriend. She also thought his girlfriend's daughters were spoiled and disrespectful. Vachel fought with her half-sister and this, together with Vachel's poor performance at school, made Vachel's father decide to send her back to Haiti after about 10 months in the U.S.

Vachel's mother encouraged Vachel and her father to try again and, after 3 months in Haiti, Vachel returned to live with her father in the U.S. The situation did not improve. Conflict with her father continued and, after an incident of physical discipline by her father, Vachel's school filed a report of abuse

with the state's children protection agency. Vachel said that because she was unwilling to live with a foster family, and because the state protection agency was unwilling to return her to her father's house, the agency and her father arranged for her to return to Haiti again.

Vachel's mother was glad to see her but still wanted her to try to immigrate to the U.S. because of limited opportunities in Haiti. Another of Vachel's half-sisters, who had herself immigrated to the U.S., arranged for Vachel to return to the U.S. to live with her. This occurred after Vachel had been in Haiti for about 9 months, and Vachel came to the U.S. for the third and final time when she was 15.

Vachel's adjustment to her half-sister's house was somewhat problematic for a while, but she eventually adjusted well to that home. In her first few years of school in the U.S., Vachel says she failed many classes each year due to time out of school because of her multiple comings and goings, and her difficulty in learning English. In the school year that she was interviewed she was 18 years old and in the 10th grade and for the first time passing most of her classes. She says her intent is

to finish high school and college and then return to live in Haiti with her mother and other half-sisters.

The prominent themes in Vachel's story are the close bonds with her mother and her sisters, and her difficulty in adjusting to a father she had never lived with and who treated her poorly. Even more than the physical discipline, what she resented was his neglect of her and the favoritism he showed his other children. This lack of kindness, contrasted with the caring mother and sisters she lived with in Haiti, made adjustment to her father's home impossible for her. She describes her immigration here as mostly unsuccessful and she, alone among all the participants, does not anticipate remaining in the U.S. after finishing college here. She would like to return to her family in Haiti with the hope that with her American education she could help bring them out of their difficult circumstances there.

All of Vachel's scores on the YSR were within the normal range. Because her story contained many elements that could have been very upsetting, it would not have been surprising to find some elevated scores in the YSR, but none were present.

Perhaps Vachel's negative affect towards her father is felt by her to be justified in a manner that does not result in any affective disturbance. This hypothesis is given some support by a somewhat elevated score, just below borderline, in Vachel's externalizing composite.

Beauline. Beauline was born in a small town in Haiti and lived there with her mother, father, and five older and younger siblings. Her father owned and operated a grain mill when she was young, but he eventually became blind from glaucoma and was unable to continue working. Her mother had a small dry goods store. Her mother's store, along with remittances from France from a relative, kept the family from being poor, and Beauline says they never lacked for food.

It was at that store, when Beauline was 2 years old, that a bottle of bleach left in the sun exploded and burnt her. Because of this incident Beauline's face remains seriously and very noticeably scarred. Beauline has no recollection of the accident.

Beauline's first memories of childhood come from the time when, at age 5, she went to live with 2 of her sisters in

the capitol to go to school there. She remembers her oldest sister being like a mother to her and calling her mom. Another sister took care of her when this oldest sister immigrated when Beauline was about 6 years old. The feelings of closeness she developed with these sisters has remained to this day.

When Beauline was 8, her father brought her back to their town, his explanation for that being that he did not want to burden Beauline's older sister with her while she was starting her own family. Beauline credits this explanation, but also says that her mother and father simply missed her and wanted her back with them. During the time that she was in her town with her parents, Beauline's sisters visited with the family very frequently and Beauline never felt out of touch with her sisters because of this.

Beauline stayed with her parents and the younger of her siblings in her town until she was 14, at which time she again went to the capitol to live with her sister. It was also at this time that the sister who had immigrated to the U.S. arranged a medical visa for Beauline to come here for surgery. Beauline came here at age 16 for that surgery, but the doctors, seeing

the extent of her scarring, scheduled the surgery for a later date, after the expiration date of her medical visa. Her sister told her to stay in the U.S. and Beauline did so, overstaying the visa and becoming an illegal resident with no access to medical insurance. This aspect of her immigration here is a source of great pain for Beauline, because her dream of coming to the U.S. to repair her scars now seems unattainable. Nonetheless, she says she is happy to be in school here, which she enjoys and values, and she enjoys living with her sister and helping to take care of her sister's young children.

Beauline's parents remain in Haiti and her hope is to bring them here. She says her mother is willing to come, if they can find a way, but that her father is reluctant to, not wanting to burden his family with having to care for him in a new setting where his blindness would be a more severe handicap. Although she talks to her parents frequently by telephone, Beauline says it isn't like having them here.

In her narrative the presence of a *lakou* that was emotionally close-knit yet nationally and transnationally dispersed, is clear and evident. Beauline rejects the idea that

this type of virtual *lakou* can take the place of an actual *lakou*, where you see your family every day. The physical presence of family, not just memories or telephone contact, are what Beauline wants. Her sadness at this loss, and the loss of the hope of surgery to change her face, are prominent themes in her story. Another clear theme is the parenting done by her older sisters, and the resultant closeness to them from that. Beauline mentions no disruption in the relationships in her family, except those caused by physical distance.

All of Beauline's scores on the YSR were well within the normal range. This result correlates well with the sense from Beauline's narrative that she has adjusted well despite the difficulty of her facial scarring and illegal status.

Independent Group

The three participants in this group, Elsa, Denis, and Georges, all live without any family in the household. Elsa and Denis live independently because no immediate family is present, and attempts to live with more distant relatives were unsuccessful. Georges lives with a girlfriend, having no immediate family in this area. Their stories are quite

dissimilar from each other and their being placed in this independent group does not indicate for all of them that there has been significant family disintegration.

Elsa. Elsa was born in a city in Haiti and lived with her mother and father there. Although they themselves were not well situated economically, they did not lack for food or other necessities because of remittances sent from Europe by her maternal grandmother and aunt. These remittances continued even after her grandmother's death, because the grandmother appeared to her aunt in a dream and said that the remittances must continue.

Elsa's father died when she was 5, and her brother died when she was 10. Elsa and her mother attributed both of these deaths to magic done by jealous, hateful neighbors. Elsa says it was these deaths that contributed strongly to her desire to leave Haiti. Indeed, it was after her brother's death that she made up her mind that she was absolutely going to leave Haiti. The immediate result of her brother's death was that Elsa went to live with her paternal grandfather in a small town about an hour outside the city. This move was done to protect her from

the magic of the neighbors who might try to kill her in the same manner they had killed her brother.

Elsa's life with her grandfather was not as comfortable as it was with her mother. Although her grandfather was a farmer and to Elsa did not appear poor, he often denied her things she asked for, including food, and Elsa remembers going hungry at times. Her mother, although not more than an hour away, rarely visited. It was during this period of her life that she made some more decisions: that she would look out for herself, that she would use her suffering to always remember the suffering of others, and that when she was more fortunate, she would do what she could to help others.

When Elsa was 17, her grandfather agreed to help her get out of Haiti. He bought an airplane ticket for her to a nearby Caribbean island. From there she boarded a refugee boat headed for another Caribbean island. The boat was intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard. Elsa says that she, because she was a minor, was the only passenger who was not imprisoned. When interviewed by immigration authorities, she told them that her father was dead, which was true, and that

she did not know the whereabouts of her mother. She was deemed an unaccompanied minor refugee and was given temporary permission to enter the U.S. and placed in a child facility in the U.S.

At the facility in the U.S., Elsa gave the social workers there the phone number of a maternal uncle in the U.S. whose phone number she had memorized when he had visited her in Haiti. She also gave them the phone number of her mother. The workers arranged for her mother to give guardianship to her uncle. Those workers also helped her file a petition for asylum. When she knew she was going to have to go to the asylum hearing, Elsa sat and prayed for a story that would help her be able to stay here: “God gave me story that would help me. It didn’t happen to me, but it was a true story that I heard. It happened to someone else, not to me or to anybody I knew.” The story she told the hearing board was of an abduction and attempt at gang rape by a criminal gang. In her story, she was held for 3 days by a gang of young men who attempted to rape her but could not because of her constant prayer. Then, when she was able to seize an opportunity to

escape, she made her way to the coast and got on a refugee boat. After the hearing Elsa was granted asylum.

Thus, at age 17, Elsa came to live with her maternal uncle and his family. Things started out okay, but soon her uncle's wife, not wanting this additional responsibility, began to insist that Elsa leave the house. Elsa was working at the time and saving her money, and when she had sufficient funds saved up, she moved out to live on her own. She has been living on her own since, attending high school and supporting herself.

One of the striking things about Elsa's story is the absence of her speaking of any strong attachments, coupled with a strong sense of her own independence and ability to survive. Her mother's failure to maintain contact after the move to the grandfather's house is not explained by Elsa, nor does she find it particularly noteworthy. It appears that family has offered her little and she does not count on them for much. When asked about this she says that life is hard in Haiti, and that people do not have much to give. Replacing family,

her faith and developed values of altruism have become the touchstones of her life:

I want to be good and have respect for everybody. All the time I ask God, I don't want to ask you to make me rich, I want to ask you, can I get something to survive?...So if somebody needs something... if I can, I'm going to say, "I'm going to help you." I ask God for that all the time.

These are the things she speaks of with conviction; in a manner similar to which other participants spoke of the sustaining power of family, Elsa spoke of her faith in God and in her own ability to succeed.

All of Elsa's scores on the YSR were well within the normal range. It is significant that, despite difficult and undoubtedly frightening events, there is only a slight elevation, below borderline levels, in any of her scores in the internalizing problem scales. This accords with the sense derived from the interview that Elsa sees herself as having emerged with a positive sense of herself despite the difficulties she has faced.

Denis. Denis was born in Haiti and lived there with his mother and father until his father immigrated to the U.S. when Denis was 4 years old. Denis remembers his father's departure well, and how distressed he was by it, because he spent so much time with his father daily and felt very close to him. Denis's mother, with whom he was less close, immigrated to the U.S.A. next, when he was 10 years old, but she did not join his father there.

Denis remembers that time as painful because, despite living with his paternal aunt and grandmother, whom he knew well and with whom he was very comfortable, he felt abandoned after that second leaving. Some of that feeling, he says, came from his knowledge that the family was breaking up, that his mother was not going to join his father in the U.S. He also heard rumors that his father had had an affair with another woman and had a child by her. Denis did not want to believe this because, if true, it meant to him that his father had not simply left but had abandoned his family.

Denis remained in Haiti for 8 more years and during that time became very close to a boy who was 7 years older than

himself and who became a mentor and substitute father to him. When Denis was 18 years old he immigrated to the U.S. and joined his father here. When he arrived he learned that the rumors of his father's second family were true, and worse, that the mother of his father's second child had already died of AIDS and that his father was also sick with that disease.

Denis's father moved him to a cousin's house in a different state, ostensibly to get Denis into a better area and better school. But Denis also realized that his father's illness limited what he could do for him. Denis lived with his cousin for 2 years, but he did not get along with her well, and he eventually moved out to live on his own. At the time of the interview he was living independently, working, finishing his senior year at high school, and anticipating going to college the next academic year.

One of the most striking moments in Denis's story is his telling of the painful separation from his father at age 4. When he later spoke of his mother leaving when he was 10, his deepened sense of abandonment and family dissolution is very evident. Denis tries to understand and forgive his father

for his actions, but ultimately believes that his father showed insufficient dedication to family and blames him for that.

Rather than anger however, the story is dominated by a sense of the tragic nature of these circumstances. Denis's sense of himself as able to survive, and even gain strength from these difficulties, is also very clear in his telling of his story.

Denis's scores on the YSR were all well within the normal range in individual and composite scores. This result accords well with the sense derived from the interview that Denis has processed the difficult events in his life in a way that has enabled him to take a positive attitude towards them. His intelligent and reflective nature has likely helped him in that.

Georges. Georges was born in a city in Haiti. His mother immigrated to the other Caribbean island when he was still in his infancy and he was left, along with his two older sisters, in the care of a maternal aunt. His mother sent remittances to this aunt, but those remittances were not mainly used for the care of him and his sisters, and he recalls times of their going hungry when others in the home were being fed. The home was crowded with the aunt's family and several of Georges'

cousins, children of his mother's brothers who had immigrated to the U.S. and left them in the care of their sister. Georges' oldest sister, seven years older than he, was his primary caretaker during this time and he remembers thinking of her as his mother.

During this time, Georges had some occasional contact with his father. His father was poor and unable to provide much support to him and his sisters, and was no longer involved with Georges' mother. Georges does not blame his father for his limited support because Georges' sister told him that his father did what he could.

When Georges was 6, he and his sisters immigrated to the Antilles to join his mother there. She had married a man there, set up a store and bought a home, and now sufficiently established, brought her children over. Although Georges had no memory of his mother and had had no contact with her, he was excited to immigrate with his sisters to join her and says the reunion was "like heaven."

Georges and his sisters and mother lived well in the Antilles, but after about 9 years, when Georges was 14 years

old, he immigrated to the U.S. at the urging of his mother. She believed he would have greater opportunities there for education and employment. His sisters stayed in the Antilles because they had already established themselves there.

Georges came to live with an uncle in the U.S., but that situation did not turn out well. Again, remittances sent by his mother were appropriated by his uncle for his own use and Georges recalls being poorly clothed in winter and never given any money. When Georges told his mother about this, she began sending the remittances directly to Georges. This angered the uncle who began beating Georges. Georges reported this to the school counselor and state child protective services became involved. Georges' uncle had neglected to file any papers for permanent residency, and because of this and the unsuitableness of the uncle's home, Georges was sent back to his mother in the Antilles after having been in the U.S. about one year.

After about a 1/2 year with his mother, Georges returned to the U.S. again at her urging. He went to live with another paternal uncle and this situation also went poorly.

The uncle physically abused Georges, child protective services again became involved, and, after only a few months in the U.S., Georges was again sent back to his mother.

Georges stayed with his mother for a few months and, again at her urging, returned to the U.S. for a third time. This time, however, instead of going to live with family, he went to live with the family of his girlfriend in the U.S. He was 16 years old at the time. His mother had talked to the family, liked them, and thought they would care well for her son. This final attempt at immigration succeeded because the parents of his girlfriend were indeed good caretakers of him. His mother sent remittances to Georges and he saved those and his paychecks so that he and his girlfriend could move out on their own. This they did when Georges was 17. They still live together, both of them working and Georges finishing up high school at the time of the interview. His plans were to continue working and to go to college.

In Georges' story there are two recurring themes; one of the failure of extended family to live up to the expectations of his mother for the care of her child, and the other in the

dedication of his mother and sisters to him. Georges sees clearly the failure of the members of the transnational *lakou* to care for him and he blames them for that, but his story is more focused upon the strength and support he found from his mother and sisters, in their unwavering commitment to him. He particularly admires the lessons from his mother on the importance of persevering in the midst of difficulty and adversity, and now sees himself as having made that sort of strength an aspect of his own personality.

Georges' scores on the all of the problem scales and composite scores on the YSR were well within the normal range. This accords with the picture of Georges that emerges from his interview, as thoughtful and having processed events in a manner that has minimalized his emotional upset from some difficult events.

Chapter VI: CROSS-CASE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I offer an examination of the themes that emerge from a cross-case analysis of the transcripts. Thematic material emerging from this analysis will be discussed in this chapter and then will be further distilled in the conclusions in the following chapter.

Throughout this section the reader might notice that some participants are quoted more often than others. This should not indicate to the reader that the themes illustrated occurred only in the quoted participants. Rather, some participants were simply more articulate about their experience than others. In some of the transcripts, thematic material was more implicit than explicit, and quotes from that material, without extensive context, would not make the meaning clear. Thus, quotations from the more loquacious and articulate participants occurs somewhat more frequently in this analysis.

Mothers and Fathers

As family and separation were the focus of the interviews, all of the participants naturally spoke about their

mothers and fathers, and, just as naturally, their appraisals and attitudes towards them varied widely. I summarize those here, but more detail will be given farther on in the discussion of relationships in general.

Overall, mothers were usually seen as kind and caring. All of the boys portrayed their mothers in this fashion and most, 4 out of 6, of the girls did also. It is notable that the boys descriptions of their mothers was usually somewhat more positive than the girls' descriptions. Only one girl, Vachel, gave a very positive description of her mother, and only one participant, Amie, gave a truly negative description of her mother; this was a mother who had effectively abandoned her, having no contact with Amie from the age of 2 until the age of 17.

Symmetrically and oppositely, the girls tended to portray their fathers in a generally positive manner, as kind and caring, but the boys' portrayals of their fathers were more mixed. Some of the boys portrayed their fathers in a positive manner, some in a rather neutral manner, and some strongly negatively. The negative portrayals were associated with a

fathers' severe use of physical discipline, or his neglect. It was much rarer for a girl to complain of physical discipline, even when it occurred, than for a boy to do so.

Several participants mentioned their parents' use of physical discipline. It was more common for boys to mention this and when they did so, it was usually in the context of resenting the severe physical discipline of a father or father-substitute. These boys' mothers also frequently used physical discipline, but that discipline was far less resented by the boys, usually being seen as necessary for their instruction, and in any case, not very severe nor effective. Josef discusses this interestingly: "[When my mom beat me] I knew she was doing it for my own good. But when my dad beat I didn't know if he was doing it for my own good, or if he hated me or not." Leon, who also resented his father's use of severe physical discipline, now reflects upon that differently from when he was younger:

I used to think that he hated me... Well, you know, when you're growing up, you're starting to understand things, so now I understand that he was trying to make me a man, trying to make me a good person. Like, not a

vagabon [irresponsible person]. Now I think he was trying to make me become right.

It is interesting that these attempts to understand a father's use of severe physical discipline only came up with in boys' discussions of their fathers. Although many participants noted that either or both of their mothers and fathers used physical discipline, that discipline was rarely noted as a significant or jarring part of their upbringing. Rather, it was treated mostly in a matter-of-fact manner, i.e., this was how my parents made sure I behaved properly.

The participants also always described their parents' relationships with each other, sometimes in more detail, sometimes in less. There were only three intact marriages in the parents of the participants, and in all three of those the post-immigration adjustment of the participant was essentially unproblematic. Two of those three were in the successful reunification group described above, and the third was Beauline, who lives with her sister here while her parents remain in Haiti. Three other of the participants were issue from relationships which appear to have never been

established, and those participants did not discuss that minimal relationship. The couple relationship of the parents of the remaining five participants dissolved sometime in the lifetime of the participant, and three of those five discussed that breakup in some detail and were clearly distressed by that. Denis, for example, was very fond of his father and talked about how he came to understand that his father's immigration and resultant physical separation from his mother had contributed to the marital breakup. Although he was sympathetic to his father, he nonetheless blamed him for that breakup: "I changed my idea about my father, but that doesn't make me forgive him...He let us down, me and my mother. He promised he would bring happiness to the family, but he didn't do that." More than being simply distressed, some participants indicated that they wanted to take a lesson from their parents failed union. As Victor put it:

The... thing I learned from all that, I have to get married with someone I really like and not make my child suffer for not being there. I'll make sure I have time for my

children so they won't suffer the way I suffered...That's why I have to find the right person to marry.

That lesson, that an intact family is preferable to one broken apart, is an ideal with which all of the participants would most likely agree.

Substitute Relationships, Quotidian Contact, and Physical Contact

In addition to the relationships with their parents, the participants spoke of a number of other relationships and the significance of those relationships. Indeed, sustaining and damaging relationships were two of the largest organizing themes within the narratives. Relationships that substituted for parental caring came from a variety of sources.

The source closest at hand was frequently siblings, who often became the closest confidants of participants. The reason for this was not only the siblings' availability, but also the fact that a sibling was sometimes the only constant companion throughout childhood. Georges, who was separated from his mother from infancy to age six, and eventually

formed a very close and positive relationship to her, speaks of this:

[My older sister] was like a mother to us, to both me and my other sister... When I first met my mom, I was closer to my sister. Every time my mom would come around I'd be with my sister and my mom would say, "Come to me, it's OK, I'm your mom." Still to this day, I'm really cool with my mom, but I'm closer to my sister, I still always talk to her.

Christophe, who was separated from his mother for six years and from his father for 11, also speaks of the importance of his relationship with his sister, and explicitly makes the point about the importance of quotidian contact and the knowledge acquired through that:

Through all the difficulties, coming here, the waiting, being impatient, all that, my sister's been there...She knows the story, she knows everything... If I have a problem, the first one I tell is my sister, because I've known her all my life. After that, maybe my mom and

eventually my dad. It's who you're more used to, who's been around you the longest, that's who you can talk to. Lilette, who also rejoined an intact family and has unproblematic relations with them, also notes the specialness of the least-separated relationship: "I'm closest with my brother, because he was the one who always there. Growing up, he was my only friend."

Although that nurturing relationship is reported more frequently as coming from an older sister than an older brother, the attachment to a brother can be equally strong. Vachel, who grew up with her mother and siblings until age 13 while her father was in the U.S., talks about this attachment when the question of separation from her brother arose:

My father didn't want me to be here and [child protective services] said if your father doesn't want you and you don't want us to take you, then you have to go back to Haiti. So I went back to Haiti... I didn't want anybody to take me away from my family, especially from my brother.

This was the brother she had been raised with her whole life, the only tangible connection between her life in Haiti and her life in the U.S. Maintaining that relationship and that continuity was paramount to her.

The importance of quotidian contact emerged time and again. The participants consistently portrayed quotidian contact as creating and cementing relationships. They spoke of getting to know well that other person through quotidian contact that permitted them to be comfortable with and trust that person and for that other person to know and trust them. Beauline, who moved to live with her sister at about age 5, remembers her as the first person she called mother:

When I was with my mom and dad, I was like three or four, I don't remember anything [from then]... With my sister, because then I was five, I remember everything. She was like a mother to me. She studied with me, she woke me up in the mornings, brought me to school, picked me up from school. So I remember her... So that's why I wanted to go back [to live with her when I was older.]

Amie also made the point about quotidian contact, getting to know someone well, in her discussion of her family's response to discovering that she is gay. She believes that part of the reason that her father cannot accept that is because he had not known her when she was growing up. Amie contrasts this with her grandmother, who raised her and is able to accept it:

If I had grown up with [my father], this wouldn't be happening like this. It would happen, but not like this. Because he didn't expect that from me, he didn't know who I was. [But] my grandmother, she's always really happy to talk to me ... she said everybody blames her, because I grew up with her...I told her, "Grandma, it's not you. It's my life and that's me"...She accepts that. She always says, "You are my baby. Come over to my house, have some food, come every day."

A lengthy separation and lack of ongoing quotidian contact did not, however, necessarily predict a poor outcome for a relationship developed later in childhood. Mazalie immigrated to live with her father and stepmother at age 15,

and before that had only known her father after the age of seven. She remembers his first visit, and to taking to him quickly: “He would come [to Haiti] and visit often...He would take me out and we would spend time together, like going to the beach. It was great getting to know him.” When she eventually joined him at age 15, there was some initial distance but that was overcome:

The first time I was living with him I was a bit shy. If I needed to ask him something, I wanted to but I didn't want to...That took about a year to change...He probably saw that, and one day he told me, “You don't have to be afraid to tell me everything or ask me for anything.”

Mazalie described her father as sensitive to her and it was apparently this sensitivity that helped overcome the lack of familiarity that resulted from the separation.

In addition to siblings, the other common substitute relationships were the adults to whom the child had been entrusted, usually grandparents, aunts, or uncles. These family members often turned out to be very caring and became substitute parents. Mazalie lived with her

grandparents in Haiti: “They treated me really good, gave me what I wanted... I knew them as my mother and father. I called them mom and dad.” Christophe was also very well-cared for by his maternal aunt after his parents had immigrated to the U.S.

Frequently, the sense of being cared for comes in a description of some concrete act of caring. Victor, for example, had fond memories of his grandmother, who served as a substitute parent: “I remember I used to go sit on her lap and she would comb my hair.” When Victor visited her after several years here and was now grown up, he permitted that same caring to occur again: “I went to Haiti last summer and visited my grandmother. She still tells me I’m her child. I kind of like that, her still combing my hair and all that.”

Because having enough food is not a given for most families in Haiti, demonstration of caring is very strongly tied to the provision of food. Sometimes the substitute parents filled the role fully and well. As Christophe put it:

When I was with [my maternal relatives] I felt really protected. They won’t leave you hungry, they will give

you money, they will do everything, everything for you.

It is like you are living with your own mother...

Sometimes we were hungry but my aunt always came through.

With some participants these arrangements did not work out as well, because the selected adults neglected or mistreated them. In their recounting of events, the participants clearly distinguished between people who cared for them and those who did not. Georges, for example, remembers that his maternal aunt did not always provide enough food, but that his sister did what she could to make up for that:

I remember being hungry, staying home and my sister holding me and telling me she was trying the best she could to get us food...I don't remember lots of stuff from Haiti, but I can still remember the difficult times we went through, those times that we would stay hungry. Those memories, they never got lost, they stayed with me.

Georges also talked about the concrete demonstration of caring that accompanied his memory of his mother, when he

meets her at age six upon his immigration to the Antilles: “I remember coming there. My mom cooked us a big meal and we were really happy. It was like heaven.” And he remembers that his mom always was able to provide food despite difficulties: “Even though with my mom it was really tight, it just felt different from living with my aunt in Haiti...My mom was working as maid in a hotel but she always made sure we had food.”

A failure to be provided for could serve as a lesson for life. For Elsa, whose grandfather did not always provide enough food, although it appeared to her that he was able to do so, these traumatic memories became a lesson to guide her actions in later life:

When I was little, I was suffering... When you're hungry and you need food and you can't get it... that's bad. You don't have anybody that can give it you, I think that's bad. So I put it in my mind that if I'm rich or I have enough money to survive, I'm supposed to share with people who don't have anything... If somebody's hungry, she doesn't have anything, and I have food and I have

money, what am I supposed to do? Let me just give her money or food. So I think if I do that, God is going to give me more and more.

One of the things interesting in Elsa's remarks is how God comes to be seen as a provider in the absence of adults who are able or willing to do that. He appears to become the guiding and providing parent who is not present.

The substitute relationships are often described as parental relationships. Christophe, who we saw credited his aunt with getting food for him despite difficulties, says of her: "She kind of replaced my mom. I knew she was my aunt, but I thought of myself as having two moms." Georges compares his mom, from whom he was separated until age six, with his sister: "My mom, she's my mom, but my sister, she's kind of my mom." Victor, who was raised by his maternal grandmother until age five, resented the return of his mother because that displaced his grandmother:

I missed my grandmother when she stopped coming around because my mom was there. So I had kind of a problem with my mom because not seeing my grandma

was a big problem for me...I didn't fight with my mother but I didn't call her mom. I used to call her by her name. That was my idea...She used to say, "Why don't you call me mom?" But I still called her by her first name.

Substitute relationships did not have to be with relatives. When both of his parents had immigrated leaving him in Haiti, Denis developed a close relationship with a boy who was seven years older than him, and that older teen became a confidant and a mentor. Denis credits this boy with having helped him understand what was happening between his parents and himself, and says of his relationship with him: "He kind of replaced my father...He really cared. It's hard to find someone like that." It is clear here how much these caring relationships are valued and not taken for granted.

The roles filled are sometimes not precisely parental roles, but do serve a socializing and providing function. Victor told of the men and older boys in his neighborhood who, after his mother had returned to the U.S. and his father was not around much, mentored him and bought him food when he was hungry:

I used to hang out with people that were really older than me, like 20 years older...We had a corner where everyone comes to hang out and chill...I learned from their experience...They gave me good advice and if I had something to say they listened to me... There were two brothers, they were my sisters' age, so I was closer to them, they were like my brothers...They would give me advice and if I was hungry they would buy me food.

With Josef, whose father left when he was three, an older cousin in his home became “a father to me” and replaced his father in his affections. Josef remembers specifically a time when he was very ill:

I had yellow fever, I was really sick for a long time...I never saw [my father]... He should have been there for me...My mom was there for me, [my cousin] was there for me...My dad was sending money, but that didn't help...Money cannot replace love. Money can't make somebody change the way they feel about you.

In Josef's statement shows one of the outcomes of the difference in how the child and parent are able to maintain or

form relationships: his father believes he can maintain the relationship through the relatively abstract sending of money, for the more concrete child, money is far too abstract. Josef sums it up: “The way you show love is by being there for someone when they need you.” He is not using “being there” in the abstract sense we now sometimes use it; Josef means it precisely, actually being there, in the flesh.

This importance of physical contact is also seen in the dissatisfaction expressed by some participants at having to maintain long distance relationships because of immigration. When I asked Beauline if the transnational *lakou* was as good as an actual *lakou* she was emphatic:

When someone lives in Haiti [and you’re here], it’s too far. You can’t visit them...My mother lives in one place, one sister lives in another place, I live in another place...We’re all living in different places. I don’t like it...When you have family, you always want all your family together. I always had that in my mind, even when I was little, that we should all live together.

Beauline's statements underscore how deeply felt the separations that result from the creations of the national and transnational *lakou* can be. The village *lakou* can be expanded conceptually, but the physical space and the physical contact that happens in that space, are lost.

Some of the participants, however, felt the absence of family members much less strongly than others. Lilette, who had a complicated history of separations and rejoinings, now lives with her reunited intact family. She was separated from her mother for one year when she was seven, and from her father for one year when she was six and again for seven years between the ages of eight and 15. Of this Lilette says: "I feel like we were never separated...[The only difference] is it made us closer... All of us are very close."

Lilette's case is interesting because there seem to be a number of reasons why a sense of separation and loss were minimal. One of these was her confidence in the fact that the family would rejoin: "I missed them, but I didn't really mind...I just knew they were always going to be there." Lilette

also had the presence of many extended family members familiar to her in both Haiti and the U.S.:

It was like I never really left. All the family I grew up with in Haiti, most of them, my uncle, my cousins, we all, they all, were with us...So we always had family around, we would always call them, we always had pictures, back and forth.

This was one of the rarer instances in which the transnational *lakou* really worked as designed. Contributing strongly to this was the continuous presence, despite relocations, of many family members. This gave Lilette a sense of continuity that overcame most of the difficulties of separation. Even so, on a visit to Haiti when she was a young teenager, Lilette started to feel the separation from her father and sisters more:

Before I knew they were my family, but I wasn't as close to them because I didn't see them as much. When I went back, that's when I actually spent time with them. That made us closer, we talked more. [When I came back] I was sending stuff to them, like everything I had... I had two sisters I didn't know,...that was kind of hard...I had

never even seen my younger sister, only in pictures. I'd never hugged her or kissed her.

Thus, even in the circumstances of the least traumatic of separations, a sense of longing and loss was not entirely avoided.

Another reason that Lilette did not feel the absence of her father too much was the very frequent telephone contact between the family and her father: "I remember him not being around but we would call him...We would call him all the time and talk to him." Mazalie had also noted that the frequent visits of her father helped her develop a strong relationship with him despite a lengthy separation. Leon's mother maintained regular telephone contact with him and that helped maintain their strong relationship despite a lengthy separation.

The negative corollary to this is that absence without contact usually meant some degree of estrangement. The absence of quotidian presence or frequent contact usually created a gap that could not be bridged. When the critical mass for establishing a relationship was lacking, the

relationship that formed had some deficit in it. Christophe, who was 11 before he spent any significant amount of time with his father, put it this way: “[My father] missed a big part of my life. The relationship was never created.” Christophe was one of the few participants living with both of his parents in a fully reunited family, he enjoyed unproblematic relations with both parents, yet he felt this distance between his father and himself, not out of any dislike or fear of his father, but just from the lack of familiarity with him as a young child. This is similar to what Georges noted of the sister who raised him until age six as compared to his mom whom he first remembers from after that age: “To this day I’m closer to my sister than my mom.”

As noted above, however, this sense of critical mass was far from universally expressed by the participants. For example, both Mazalie and Lilette both seemed to regard the lengthy separations from their fathers as relatively unimportant. So, time and presence are only one aspect of critical mass, and sometimes the lesser aspect. At age five, Beauline moved from her parents’ house to live with her

sisters in the capitol. Although she lived with the eldest sister only one year, something in that relationship developed strongly: “My brother and I lived with three sisters in Port-au-Prince...The oldest sister left after we were there only one year. But I was so close to her, I called her mom.” This is the same sister who she now lives in the U.S.; apparently something between them was right, and that rightness, despite only one year of living together, created a very strong relationship. This also seems to have been the case between Mazalie and her father; something about them clicked, and the long time of separation became less important than the bond they were able to create.

As is evident from all of this, it is difficult indeed to narrow down to a few variables how and with whom the child develops relationships in the absence of a parent. The children were well aware of their needs for presence and caring and noted when those were met and when they were not. When they were able to, they moved towards good caretakers and away from bad ones. Blood relationship appears to have been unimportant when not accompanied by the requisite caring.

This sense and capacity for agency that the children developed will be discussed further in “Lessons Learned” section below.

The Pain of Separation: Anger and Blame

The pain resulting from parents immigrating was apparent in many of the interviews. Sometimes that pain was caused by the departure or absence of the parent, and it could be searing or a quieter sense of longing, of something missing. Sometimes the pain was caused by being cared for by abusive or neglectful parental substitutes. These sufferings were sometimes accompanied by anger and blaming, but surprisingly, as often not so.

The average age of the participants when a parent immigrated was about three to four years old, and thus we would not necessarily expect that event to have been remembered or, if remembered, not to have been terribly traumatic. In fact, only one participant whose parent immigrated in his early childhood remembers the event clearly and traumatically. This was Denis, who spent a lot of time with his father daily and was very close to him when his

father left. Denis, who was four when his father left, described the scene:

I remember it. I said, “Can I go with you?” and he said, “No, you can’t go”, and he brought me to his cousin’s house... and everyone was trying to put me in a room to close the door so he could go... I understood their movements so I said. “He’s not leaving. If he’s leaving I’m going with him.” And he said, “No, you cannot go.” So I started crying and everything. I cried for like three days... I just thought that I’m going to miss him. I just thought that he was not going to come back. That’s what I thought.

Of course we cannot know to what extent the passage of time and reflection upon this event have enhanced Denis’s memory of this parting, which seems extraordinarily vivid and precise for a child of four. Yet we do hear from Denis a similar expression of devastating loss when his mother immigrates when he is 10, “It was even worse [than when my father left] because then I didn’t have anybody. I cried, I cried everywhere, in church, in school.” Denis says this despite the

fact that he was left with his maternal aunt whom he knew well, was very fond of, and who took good care of him.

Leon also talked about a particularly difficult separation. When he was 10, Leon's mother immigrated to the U.S. and he was left with his father in Haiti:

One morning me and my sister saw my mom all dressed up, she had her bag and all, and she said she was leaving for the U.S. And we said, "Can we come with you?" and my mom said, "No, it's only me that's going and you will stay with your dad"... My sister and me both got really upset... I remember when she left, we had school the next week. I couldn't talk, I was so sad I couldn't talk. You know how people say hi to their friends, I couldn't say hi to anyone. I was just sad, upset... I kept thinking we were going to visit her in the summer. That's what I kept telling everyone...to make myself feel better...But then [when we didn't go] I was disappointed because I really thought I was going to see her.

This separation is made even worse by the specific loss of the moderating influence that Leon's mother had on his father,

with the result that his father's physical discipline became more severe after her departure. As noted above, Leon eventually comes to interpret that discipline as his father's efforts to bring him up correctly.

Josef was another participant who remembers a difficult separation from his mother. He left her in Haiti at age 13, immigrating with his siblings to join his father in the U.S. "That was kind of hard, to leave my mom. I lived with her my whole life and I was going to come here and start a new life with someone I didn't even know...[I worried about that] all the time." His worries were confirmed when he came here and felt that his father wasn't treating him as well as the children from his father's second marriage:

He treated me like I wasn't his son. He treated me different from the other kids...I don't know, maybe he didn't like me... Me and my brother went back to Haiti because of my dad....When I was sleeping I was always crying because I missed my mom. So I had to go back.

This combination of missing his mother together with his distress at how his father was treating him made the

reunification with his father unsuccessful and when Josef eventually returns to the U.S., it is to live with his sister.

Leon and Josef were the two participants with clinical scores in the internalizing composite of the YSR. While it is, of course, impossible to designate a one-to-one correspondence between those scores and their difficult experiences with their fathers, it is likely that there is some relationship between these two findings.

It is also worth noting that the manner in which they describe the pain of separation from their mothers and maladjustment to their fathers' homes, is quite different from that described by Denis. Although Denis also experienced a very painful separation, there is the sense that he overcame that through compensatory caring relationships. For Leon and Josef, that does not seem to have occurred and their sense of loss and their anger are clearly still active and operating within them.

For several of the participants, the pain of separation was not quite as intense as it was for these three. Amie's mother immigrated to the U.S. shortly after Amie's birth, and

left her in the care of her paternal relatives. Amie's mother returned to Haiti when Amie was three in an attempt to bring her to the U.S., but those relatives refused to let her go and Amie's mother returned to the U.S. and made no further contact until Amie was 17. This amazes and angers Amie:

My mom, I never heard from her, I never talked to her, I never saw her. It was like she was dead to me... That's the first time I heard that a mom brings a child into this world and doesn't care for it...I couldn't understand how she is a mother and she lived so long without seeing me, hearing about me. Even now, she doesn't care. I don't think she cares.

Amie's father was also in the U.S. while she was growing up, and despite his visits and feeling loved and well cared for by his family, Amie says his absence affected her: "To be honest with you, it was a big deal [that my father wasn't there]. When I think about it I don't know why it was a big deal, but I can feel it." Perhaps part of this results from Amie's sense that she doesn't have an intact family, which she hoped would occur when her mother reappeared:

I was angry at my dad [for not getting back with my mom] because I thought he should. But it was good that he didn't go with her...She thinks too much about money. My dad made a lot of money after he came to America...I think my mom wanted to get together with my dad just for money.

So for Amie, there is no wrenching scene of separation, nor even an acute longing for a presence formerly known, rather what hurts is the unfulfilled dream of a unified family. For Amie that dream died a slow death, despite much evidence that its accomplishment was very unlikely. This gives us a measure of the strength of that wish.

We can see another example of this longing for an intact family in the story of Beauline, who immigrated to the U.S. at age 16 to live with her sisters. Before leaving Haiti she had lived with her parents sometimes and her sisters sometimes. After immigrating, she had left her parents in Haiti, but continued to hold onto her dream of the family being together:

When you have family, you always want all your family together. I always had that in my mind, even when I was little, that we should all live together, because we always lived between two places, never all together... When someone lives in Haiti and you're here, it's too far. You can't visit them...I don't like it. I miss them.

As with Amie, we see here a sense of longing, rather than the more acute pain we saw in the stories of the boys.

With some participants, the longing is even quieter.

Lilette, Christophe, and Georges mention that they thought about the absent parent, but they describe neither the wrenching experiences of Denis, Leon, or Josef nor the longing of Amie and Beauline. These three all say that they “always knew” that reunification would, as it did, eventually occur. Perhaps this certainty, and the accompanying lack of any question of the absent parent's dedication to them, made the absence much easier to bear.

It is important to note that we cannot consign this easy acceptance simply to the presence of good substitute caretakers. With Denis, for example, the presence of good

substitute caretakers did not prevent the feelings of loss of the parent. The absence of good substitute caretakers also did not necessarily predict when the parent would not be terribly missed. While Christophe and Lilette both always lived with a parent or caretaker who treated them well, the same was not true for Georges, who lived with an aunt that neglected him. He remembers bitterly his suffering hunger in her home. Yet he never blames his mother for leaving him there:

We never really asked my mother why she did leave for all of that time period. It never comes up. She always says, when she left, that was for us. She was trying to do the best that she could to come and get us. I take her word for it.

Perhaps it is something in his worldview, or character, that brings Georges to say this. He similarly holds no resentment towards his father, who was there in Haiti yet was not able to provide much:

I don't blame my father for that... because it's Haiti... he was poor, he was a carpenter, he didn't have any money...If he came back now, I wouldn't say, "You never

took care of us” because I understand that...He helped out how he could, but there was just not enough, there was just not enough.

This is similar to the sense of understanding that Lilette and Christophe both show. Lilette had immigrated to the U.S. with her brother and been there for a year when her mother decided to go to college and returned Lilette and her brother to their father in Haiti for a year. Of this, Lilette says:

It was something she had to do, to try to get a better job. [That way] she could go to school, without concentrating too much on us, without worrying too much about us... So she sent us back to try to get everything together first.

While these participants play down any suffering involved in these family separations, they are willing to acknowledge them, as Lilette remarks:

I guess I was nine or ten when I was realizing what was going on, that I wasn't really with my family...It seemed like my friends, or other people, or even on TV,

everyone was together, and I wasn't really always with my family...It was kind of hard.

Lilette's expression of the difficulty of the separation is much lower-key. Perhaps some of this is related to what Lilette says about herself and her family, that they don't tend to worry too much about things.

One of the things that becomes apparent as we listen to these stories, is that there is a connection between a sense of loss and the presence of anger and assigning blame in the narratives. Amie, for example, is quite angry at her mother for abandoning her, and blames her for scuttling an attempted reconciliation with Amie's father by being too concerned about money. Josef is very angry at his father for believing the false stories about Josef's mother, and for then abandoning her and starting a new family in the U.S. Vachel is very angry at her father for not treating her and her brother right when they came here, for the loss of the imagined reconstituted family: "I blame my father and his girlfriend...[I didn't know why] my father hated me, and why me, my brother, and my father couldn't just live together and have a good family."

Victor was angry at his mother for the loss involved when she displaced his grandmother as his primary caretaker. Denis is angry at his father and blames him for starting a second family in the U.S. leading to the breakup of his marriage to Denis's mother. All of these, and others not cited here, show that these children clearly noticed and were hurt, to a greater or lesser extent, by the losses involved in the chain immigration process.

Reunification

Reunification of a child with a parent or other family member who had formerly been custodial for a significant amount of time occurred with half of the participants. There were other types of reunifications: with a parent who had not been custodial but had been well known to the child, with a parent who had not been neither custodial nor known by the child, or with elder siblings or other family who had not been custodial. Although it is difficult to typify how the reunifications went, it seems, unsurprisingly, that the best adjustments were achieved when a child was reunited with a parent or other family member who had formerly been

custodial. Indeed, some variation on the statement by one of the participants, “it was like we’d never been apart”, was made by several participants who experienced this type of reunification. Other reunification situations tended to produce less satisfactory adjustments.

Some examples can illustrate this. Christophe, Lilette, and Leon all made good adjustments to parents who had been custodial but from whom they had been separated for several years. Mazalie made a good adjustment to a father who had not been custodial but who had visited Mazalie frequently and had established a good relationship with her during those visits. Beauline made a good adjustment to the sister who had raised her for a year and whom she had called “mom” during that time. Amie’s reunification with her grandmother, who had been her primary custodian in Haiti, presented no problem for either of them, but Amie’s reunification with her father, who was known to Amie from visits but had never been custodial, has been problematic.

Vachel and Josef both had a very difficult time getting along with fathers who had never been custodial. Both, in fact,

had to return to Haiti because the adjustment was so poor. Their stories bear similarities to that of Georges, who came to live with his uncles in the U.S. and had to return to the Antilles because of abuse and neglect by those uncles. Those narratives are so similar in this regard, that there seems to be hardly any difference between living with a formerly non-custodial father and a formerly non-custodial uncle. The one difference which is quite noticeable, is that the father is more resented for the neglect than the uncle is for his. Josef says of his father:

He didn't take good care of us...We were all sleeping in the living room, six of us, on the floor. It was really messed up. I'm not going to let my family down like that, the way that he did... I'm going to provide for them, give them what they need.

It seems very likely that this resentment became a factor in the failure of the reunification.

There were situations that were more complicated. Denis has a very brief reunion with the father he had been very fond of when he was very little. After the reunion, Denis is quickly

sent off to live with other relatives in another state. This was apparently because his father was sick, but also perhaps because of Denis's anger at his father for the breakup of his parents' marriage. As Denis puts it: "I still feel close [to my father] but still, still with anger. I look at him like my father but I feel that he made a mistake." Here too, it seems likely that the anger Denis felt towards his father contributed to his being shifted to the home of another family member. Victor joined his mother who had been custodial for a period in his young years, but in becoming custodial she had displaced the grandmother whom Victor regarded as a mom. He also became angry at his mother after their reunification when she changed residences a few times, forcing him to change schools. His adjustment to his mother remained somewhat problematic, but appeared to have stabilized.

Then there is Georges, who adjusts without any difficulty at age six to the mom he has never known and with whom he has had no prior contact. There are several factors here that probably contributed to this very positive adjustment, including his young age at the time of the reunification. All of

the other participants immigrated and reunited as adolescents. A second contributing factor could have been that he was moving from the home of an aunt where he had been poorly cared for, to the home of his mother, who made her caring immediately apparent. A third contributing factor was that he was accompanied throughout the transition by his older sisters; they had had caretaking responsibilities for him in Haiti and again in the Antilles. Finally, the fact that he had always expected that he would live with his mom contributed to his sense that a bad situation had finally been righted. As he said, “We always thought she would come and get us.”

This expectation of reunification appears to hold an important place in the mind of the separated child. Lilette and Christophe, who also both had easy adjustments, said similar things about expecting eventual reunification. “I always knew it was temporary” said Christophe, “that the ultimate goal was for us to be together.” Lilette said, “I wasn’t really thinking [about when they would come]. I knew they would come sooner or later...I missed them, but I didn’t really mind...I just knew they were always going to be there.” There is more than

simple expectation here, these children absolutely knew that reunification would occur and counted on it. This counting on being back together is very different from the sense of those participants whose family was not as cohesive, and it seems likely that the anticipation of positive adjustment helped to create that positive adjustment.

Lessons Learned

Developing self-competency and self-reliance. A strong theme present in the narratives, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, is the children's emerging sense of their own ability to act for themselves and the need for them to do so. One of the ways in which emerging self-agency is seen, usually implicitly, is around the issue of placements with substitute caretakers, particularly when an inappropriate placement occurs. Because they were children they rarely had much input, at least before the fact, in these placement decisions. Errors in assignment of caretaker occurred and those errors were not trivial.

In Mazalie's case, for example, her aunt moved Mazalie to her house after the death of Mazalie's grandmother. The

aunt thought that Mazalie's uncles would not be good caretakers without the presence of their mother. But this move resulted in the molestation of Mazalie by her aunt's husband. When Mazalie told her aunt about this, her aunt accused Mazalie of lying and assaulted Mazalie. After the assault by her aunt, Mazalie decamped to her uncles' house. She was only about 12 at that time, and already beginning to develop and act upon the strong self of self-agency that would guide her in future encounters. Upon her return to her uncles' house, she encounters troubles there also and, seeing difficulties on all sides, ceases waiting for her relatives to forward her immigration application and takes on this task herself:

One day I just got up and I told my uncle. "I'm going to the embassy by myself." And he said, "Are you serious?" And I said, "Don't worry, I'll be okay"... I had to go twice that day, but that day I got my visa.

Mazalie succeeds in getting herself to the U.S., where she is again in the care of adults who can properly fulfill a caretaking role.

Mazalie was strong and also fortunate, but for some of the participants poor placements were not easily remedied. Vachel had to twice return to Haiti to escape from the abuse and neglect of her father, and only on her third time in the U.S., when she moved in with her sister, was she able to find a proper home here. Her sense of agency about this is less explicit than in Mazalie's narrative, but it is certainly there. She tells child protective services that she would prefer to return to Haiti than to live in foster care away from her brother, and she does so knowing her mother will be distressed to have her return to Haiti. After she returns to Haiti, her mother encourages Vachel to return to the U.S. Vachel tries again, and once more again, and finally succeeds in establishing herself here. In the end, however, after finally making a satisfactory adjustment here with her sister, Vachel has decided that when she has finished college, she will return to live in Haiti. Her sense of agency, strengthening over the course of this immigration process throughout her teen years, has now brought her to envision a different future for herself than the one her mother foresaw for her.

There is some similarity between Vachel's story and Georges' story of mistreatment by his uncles in the U.S. Again, because of being abused in his uncle's home, Georges is required by child protective services to return to his mother's home in the Antilles. It is through the encouragement of his mother that Georges returns to the U.S., despite his reluctance to do so. He comes to internalize more and more her message to him, to just keep trying:

My mom would always give me words to be strong, "Just go through it, just go through it." She would say, "We don't have that much, so you have to go do this"...I don't think she's telling me that just so I would stay here, I think she's telling me that for my good. She's trying to make it better for me, to make a better life for me.

Georges also talks about his mother encouraging him to learn about how things are done in the U.S.:

When I first came here I would just stay home, but my mom said, "Don't stay in the house. Go outside, start figuring out what's going on in the world." So I could do

for myself. She always told me, if I just sit there and let my uncle do everything for me, he's going to step on me. This is very similar to the active encouragement towards self-assertion and self-agency that Mazalie received from her grandmother:

When I was a child my grandmother used to say to me, "Don't let anybody ever take advantage of you." She said, "If there is somebody who wants you to do something you don't want to do, don't do it. Don't do it just to make them happy." She said that about sexual stuff and things in general.

Allied with developing self-agency and self-reliance is the valuing of the experiences that help to develop those attributes. Victor, at age nine, with his mother back in the U.S. and his father occupied with work, was forced to fend for himself:

There weren't people to take care of me... so I had to do everything on my own. I couldn't be childish... it was just right there in front of me, if I didn't take care of myself, no one else was going to take care of me.

Victor explicitly values how these experiences pushed him to maturation: “It was kind of good for me, because now I don’t do stupid stuff like other teenagers my age, things that aren’t good to do. So there are some mistakes that I’m not going to make.” Thus, experiences that could be seen simply as difficulties become also opportunities.

Elsa went through some very difficult times. Her brother died when she was five, her father when she was 10. She was then sent to live with a grandfather who sometimes left her hungry. She decided to leave Haiti, and managed to get to the U.S. on her own, on a refugee boat. When she sums up her experiences, she sees her development of self-reliance as a gift from God:

That idea [of relying on myself], I think God just put that in my mind, in my spirit. I still have that in my mind today... I care about myself... about what I’m going to do tomorrow... Yeah, all the time I always thought about what I am going to do about tomorrow... I said to myself, I don’t like to live in Haiti, so let me make a choice what I’m supposed to do.

Along with self-reliance, there is the corollary idea of keeping one's own counsel, and several participants noted that, because they were forced onto their own devices, they were careful about with whom they discussed their situation and their thoughts. As Georges puts it:

Even now, I'm not that open with people because of all the stuff that happened to me...I talk to people, I see you and I say hi, but no one really knows my personal business, other than my girl...I never really trust anyone except for her.

Victor thinks his experiences led him to a similar way of relating to people:

I'm not the kind of person who likes to talk about my personal life to other people. I don't do it on purpose, that's just me...Everyone knows a quarter of my life...because if people know too much they can get you in trouble.

Thus, some participants saw themselves as having become secretive, because they were forced to rely on themselves so heavily.

Reliance on others. Self-agency and self-reliance are only one thread of the survival techniques of these children, another is identifying and accessing good caretaking resources. Time and again in the narratives one sees the participants locating and utilizing positive social resources. An interesting aspect of this is that the participants do not usually describe themselves as consciously doing this, but it is clear from their actions that they are doing so.

There are several examples of this in the narratives. When Mazalie moves from her aunt's house after being molested by her uncle and assaulted by her aunt for speaking of that, Mazalie does not say anything like, "I knew I would be better off at my uncles", but it is clear from her actions that she took this decision and acted upon it for that reason. Along the same lines, it is clear from their narratives that both Vachel and Josef were active participants in arranging to live with a sibling in the U.S. after unsuccessful attempts to live here with a parent.

There are times when the participants did talk about using people as resources, and this more commonly occurred

when they were speaking of peers, sometimes their age, sometimes older. One of the most striking examples of this is Denis, who describes his relationship with an older friend as life-changing:

I really grew when I met Paul. We talked about everything... I got to understand everything better... If I had something bothering me I could go to him and he's going to explain everything and tell me, "This is the way you should go, this is not the way you should go."

Similarly, as mentioned above, Victor, left largely to his own devices by absence of mother and virtual absence of father, develops friendships with peers and older men in his neighborhood, those relationships helped both with concrete needs and companionship. These and other examples throughout the narratives make clear that these children were active seekers of resources.

Dealing with memories. One way the participants used their friends as resources was to help them in dealing with unpleasant memories. Mazalie, for example, said that one of

her friends counsels her on dwelling on unpleasant memories from the past:

My friends really support me... One of my friends, we talk about everything... Every time some bad thing comes in my mind, she tells me, "Don't think about that stuff, just let it go. That's all in the past, you can't do anything about that."

Amie also mentions the importance of not letting herself dwell on unpleasant thoughts, "If something happens I'm going to worry about it, cry about it, but after two, three days, it's gone. I'm not going to think about it. I like to laugh, to enjoy myself, to be with people."

There is a tension here, between the utility of talking about difficult memories and problems, and the attempt to avoid thinking or talking about them too much. We see this in Mazalie's statement and in something Georges said, "The bad experiences come back to my mind sometimes, but I try not to think about them too much. I try to shut it down."

It was apparent to me during the interviews that the interview process itself was frequently bringing up those

difficult memories, and when this occurred I would check out with the participant whether they were comfortable continuing to talk about the subject. Only twice, during any of the interviews, did a participant indicate that he or she did not want to go further into a specific topic. The much more common occurrence was for a participant to hesitate slightly upon entering a difficult topic, but then quickly affirm that he or she did want to go forward. Here we see both the reluctance to just dive into a discussion of unpleasant memories, coupled with a recognition that total avoidance would also not be a good idea.

Indeed, it was evident during the interviews that the participants enjoyed telling their stories and gained something from that. Many of them explicitly said this, asserting that the telling had helped them develop their thinking about their experiences. At the end of my interview with Elsa, who had told of some very painful experiences, when I asked how the interview was for her, she acknowledged that it had been upsetting at moments but asserted:

It made me feel good to talk about all this... When I talk about that, I have more plans in my mind... Because, when I was little, I was suffering... [So] I put it in my mind, that if I come to the United States, I'm not supposed to waste my time,... I'm coming here to get a better life.

For Elsa, and for many of the participants, talking about their experiences reinforced that their suffering had not been for nothing, and this reinforced their resolve and the lessons they had learned.

Existential lessons. There were a variety of existential lessons that the participants said they had learned as a result of their experiences. These lessons tended to coalesce around the ideas of the unpredictability of life and the importance of being flexible in adapting to those changes. This attitude of trying to take life as it comes has several other attitudes associated with it: trying to practice acceptance, practicing patience and perseverance, and regarding difficulties as opportunities to learn life lessons and life skills. There is also a strong present and future orientation, and along with this, the

attempt to avoid letting the unpleasant memories of the past intrude upon the present and to avoid dwelling on the blame others might bear for those unfortunate circumstances.

Several of the participants commented upon how events had not turned out as designed. They usually referred to the immigration plans in this regard, stating that the plan in the chain immigration was to eventually reunite the whole family, but as their stories illustrate, this rarely occurred. Although they usually expressed regret for this, they also mostly seemed to take the attitude exemplified by Denis, “Things can happen in life, that’s life, you’ve got to live it.”

There is an implicit optimism in Denis’s statement, that one has to live life. For several of the participants that optimism is explicit. Elsa, in talking about the hardships she suffered says, “I thought, that’s okay, that’s life. Let me get through this. I thought that tomorrow everything is going to be changed for me... that my life is bad now but it will get better.” Lilette also spoke of acceptance of difficulties, the importance of an optimistic approach to them, and how benefit can even come out of them

I know I have to adapt, realize things are a part of life.

This is what has to be done to get something, to get what you really, really want. Like getting separated is what we had to do to get all of us to America.

Two of the participants, Christophe and Elsa, talked about their religious faith helping them in the difficulties they faced. Embedded in their expression of faith is the acceptance of difficulty, as Christophe puts it: “What got me through was fate and faith. I believe in prayer, it has proven itself to me many times... It’s one of the ways I still get through stuff, until today.” Elsa faced life-threatening difficulties, yet expressed a similar faith: “When you have problems and you pray to Jesus and you have faith, if someone wants to hate you or whip, when you pray all the time and have faith, nothing can happen to you.” There is here again, a balancing of acceptance and of seeking a better life.

Along with a sense of optimism amid difficulty, came a sense of a present and future orientation, an attempt to let the past fade away. Amie expresses this well: “You know today, you don’t know tomorrow... What happened today is today

and tomorrow is the next thing. I'm not going to think about what happened yesterday, thinking every day about that, no.” Leon spoke similarly of the pain of his separation: “When my mom and I were separated, I was sad all those 4 years. But it didn't change me, change my life. I got over that... after a while, after I came here, I got over it.” Georges comments similarly: “Some of those experiences definitely did hurt me, it definitely did... I use to cry all the time... Now I got past that... I don't have a grudge against [the people that mistreated me], I just don't care about them.”

One of the things that is striking in Georges' comments, and this was evident in other interviews, was the willingness to acknowledge past hurt. The attempt is not to bury the hurt, but to move beyond it. Georges wants to live without being held back by those memories, but he sees no need to re-associate with family caretakers who treated him badly. We can see in these comments that the participants have both the desire and, by their description, the ability, to leave the hurt of the past behind, but do not feel it is necessary to deny that past hurt.

Even for those participants who did not suffer abuse or neglect, the separation was painful and they want to leave that time behind, but at the same time take lessons from the hardships associated with it. Christophe learned the lessons of endurance, patience, and of future orientation:

The separation taught me patience... I wanted to come soon [to the US.], but knew I had to wait, that it wasn't going to happen quick... Once we were united, it was like, okay, we're done with that, now with the next part, onto the future.

Christophe also reflected on the difficulty of adjustment here, and how he used that difficulty to motivate himself:

School was hard, not knowing English and getting teased because I dressed differently. But you just had to learn to get over that. I guess I used that as a motivation to work hard in school. And then here I am.

Christophe is proud that he learned the lesson of perseverance well and proud of what using that lesson has enabled him to do.

That final statement of Christophe's, "and then here I am", contains much of what many of the participants kept saying to me in a variety of ways. "And then here I am", here, moving on, not forgetting the past, but living in the present, moving into the future. This was certainly was an underlying theme in the narratives of these values: perseverance, not surrendering to difficulties, moving forward, and striving to not let past problems determine the future.

Attributions and Storylines

Certain circumstances in which a number of participants found themselves were very variously understood and interpreted by those different participants. For example, a parent's absence was felt as disjuncture by some participants and by other participants what not felt so. Looking at some participants' histories closely, the complex and diverse nature of the varying attributions can be seen.

Georges always believed that his mother had gone to the Antilles in order to eventually find a better life for the whole family. The fact that he and his sisters were left in the care of an aunt who took very poor care of them did not alter his

belief. He believed that his mother would do what she could to make his life better. He believed similarly about his father, who remained in Haiti, but married another woman and provided little for his sisters and him. Georges says he believed what his sisters told him, that their father provided what he could, and that their mother would eventually bring them to join her, which she did indeed do. Georges was not similarly generous in his opinion of the aunt, nor of the uncles who treated him poorly after his immigration to the U.S. There seems to have been here a protective aura, promoted by the sisters, that surrounded only the parents. He says clearly, "We always thought she would come and get us." His sisters, with whom he was closer than anyone else, assured him of that and he fully accepted that. Trust in his sisters and his mother was his emotional guide. The way events turned out, that their mother was able to effect a reunion between her children and herself, permitted the trust to be deemed justified. Resultantly, the meaning of the separation became simply a difficulty that had to be endured by mother and children, for the betterment of the family, until eventual reunion.

Amie provides an example of a very different meaning ascribed to a separation. Her mother left her in the care of her father's family who provided well for her. Growing up, Amie heard the story of her mother coming back for her when Amie was two years old, to try to bring her to the U.S., and that her father's family did not permit her mother to take her because of her father's concern that Amie would be lost to him if she went with her mother. Her mother did not contact Amie again for 15 years. Then, when Amie was 17, her mother reappeared and tried to re-establish a relationship with her and her father. Amie hoped for a reunion of her mother and father, but that attempt failed because, as Amie tells it, her mother was only interested in her father's money. We can see that there was a period in which Amie had hoped for the return of her mother, and of her parents and her all living together happily. But by the time of the interview, Amie had given up those hopes and saw her mother as a selfish woman, disinterested in her child, in her husband, and caring really only about money. As I listened to this story, I wondered about the disappointment her mother may have suffered in being

denied her child, about how her mother weathered that disappointment, about whether the father's family not only didn't permit her to take Amie, but may also have perhaps discouraged or even barred further contact. These are, of course, unknowns; they are only possibilities, but they are not possibilities that Amie any longer entertains. That is, Amie has settled on a specific storyline, a specific meaning to the separation congruent with how events played out. The failed reconciliation between her parents, her failed attempt in developing a relationship with her mother, her perception of her mother as overly concerned with money, these all recast her earlier hopes as unjustified, and the separation from her mother is understood as abandonment by her mother, and nothing else.

Josef provides a somewhat similar example. His father leaves for the U.S., sending remittances to help support his family during the separation, and eventually makes good on his promise to bring the children to the U.S. But these acts buy him no sympathy from Josef. "Money cannot replace love," he says, and then clarifies what love really is, "I knew my mom

loved me because I saw her every day of my life for 13 years... [The way you show love] is by being there for someone when they need you.” But is it really that simple? Let us reflect back to Georges, who says he knew, even when he was hungry and crying in his sisters arms, that his mother loved him and wanted him with her. How did he know that? Perhaps only because subsequent events ended up justifying those earlier hopes. As Georges says about his mother, “We took her at her word” and it ended up as she had said, a happy reunion with a sumptuous meal prepared right at the first meeting; the “heaven” that had been promised was delivered. But with Josef an opposite history develops. He joins his father in the U.S. and there is neglected in favor of his stepsiblings. The absence of the father, despite the promise of eventual reunion and the sending of money, was demonstrated to be neglect by what happened at the reunion. The yearning for his father during the father’s absence, which is apparent in Josef’s telling of his disappointment at his father for not being there when he was sick, this yearning is later determined to have been a vain hope. The disappointment in his father felt at those moments

of yearning, that is what is confirmed by his father's treatment at their eventual reunion. The separation was then determined to have been only the behavior of a neglectful father, who cared little for the children from his first wife.

Storylines with highly nuanced, even conflicting meanings, were much less commonly constructed. Denis' story provides an example of one of these. He is waiting with his mother in Haiti for the time that they can both immigrate and join his father in the U.S. Word comes to them that the father has a new child in the U.S. and that the father is sick with AIDS. Denis said he and his mother did not believe this at first, but later she immigrates and doesn't join his father. Denis feels doubly abandoned, angry, and confused. He makes a close friend in Haiti, a boy some years older than himself, and through discussion with that friend and cogitations on his own.

The meanings Denis constructs are nuanced. His father has not abandoned his mother and himself out of disloyalty, but only out of weakness. For this, his father does not need to be rejected and despised, yet also not forgiven for the damage

that his weakness has brought upon his family and himself. His mother's behavior is also interpreted in a subtle fashion. Denis does not see her, as he once did, as abandoning him in Haiti, but rather, as fleeing her situation because of extreme distress and inability to bear the emotional toll of events. This fits with Denis's description of his mother's high degree of emotionality. He does not blame her for this, neither does he find it admirable. And, when Denis comes to the U.S., he sees the reason for his not living with his father as only partially because of his father's inability to care for him. He sees it also as his father's efforts to place him in a good community with good schools. These could seem like excuses made, but Denis does not leave out his anger with his father nor his disappointment with his mother. Anger and blame are present, but they are balanced by a compassionate understanding of the other actors in the story.

This sort of complexity can also be seen in a few other of the narratives. Leon's parents' marriage breaks up not long after he and his father immigrate to join his mother in the U.S. Here his father behaves as if he were still in Haiti, unwilling or

unable to change his attitude towards his wife, not understanding that she will not accept his domineering and violent behavior here as if she had no choice. Leon balanced both sides in his appraisal of the situation:

I see [my dad] once in a while. But it's his fault he's in this situation. He gets mad that I agree with my mom, that I'm not mad at my mom for giving him a restraining order...I feel bad for him, he's in misery right now. I'm sympathetic, but I'm not mad with my mom, because she should have done that a long time ago.

Leon, like Denis, accommodates multiple viewpoints in his narrative and views his father with compassion at the same time as he sees him in error. Leon has come to terms with this history.

Thus, it seems that when we look at these various examples of how the participants constructed meaning from the lives they lived, that there were multiple possible meanings, and possible storylines, that could have been assigned and that specific understandings and stories were chosen and others not chosen.

Chapter VII: CONCLUSION

I began this research with the question of what contributed most strongly to these children's adjustment to family separation and reunification. Was it the child's cognitions and attributions surrounding those circumstances or was it the facts of their actual circumstances? My belief was that the former would be most influential. There is much evidence from this study pointing towards that being so, but there is also some evidence that specific circumstances lead to better outcomes in adjustment than others. These findings will be reviewed below, as well as some other findings not predicted at the beginning of the study.

Situational Influences

The intact family and the functional lakou. In this sample, the separations and reunifications that occasioned the least disruption for the children and promoted easy adjustment were those that occurred within the families that remained intact throughout the entire chain immigration process. Among the 12 participants, Christophe and Lilette

were the only two examples of families remaining intact, and both of them described relatively unproblematic experiences, at least in comparison to the other participants. Beauline, who lives with her sister here while her parents remain together in Haiti, can also be classed, for this purpose, with them.

Certainly, there were some difficulties caused by the separations. Christophe, who was eight before he met his father and 11 before he lived with him, was clear that this lengthy separation resulted in his feeling distant in some way from his father, but he was also clear that there was not a negative adjustment between them. Lilette talked about how, when she was a young teen and visited Haiti and got to know her sisters left behind, that she missed them intensely upon her return to the U.S. Beauline misses her parents and wished the family could all live together here in the U.S.

These emotional difficulties, however, simply did not have the level of intensity described by the emotional difficulties encountered by the other participants. If we think about the level of commitment to family required to sustain the family intact over years of separation, sometimes with only

occasional visits, a likely explanation for the ease of adjustment in the intact families emerges. It is not simply that the children do not suffer from the disruption of marital separation, but even more than that, they are ensconced in families that have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to family cohesion. It seems likely that a child would feel very secure in being raised in a family able to do this. The children's confident expectations of reunification were well justified in these cases, as the level of family commitment insured that reunification would eventually occur.

In the other families, all of whom suffered marital breakup or for which marriage or union had never been established, the difficulties described were more intense. These difficulties, detailed in the previous chapter, frequently revolved around the children coming to terms with the breakup of their parents marriage and/or the children's feelings of abandonment and having to fend for themselves. In the supposedly non-normative situation of family breakup, the child was forced to create an understanding of that situation, and that understanding frequently involved blaming one of

the marriage partners. It is interesting that it is a marital breakup, rather than parental absence per se, which seemed to require explanation.

The absence of a parent due to immigration was regarded as normal and that sort of absence did not require the child to assign blame. Here we can see cultural norms and expectations playing an important role. Being well-cared in the *lakou*, even the transnational *lakou*, by family other than one's parents, was regarded as normal and was not psychically painful except, sometimes, for the missing of the absent family member. This was Lashley's (2000) caution regarding the assessment of Caribbean families, that it is important to understand the normality of child-shifting in those families, and to not expect pathological response to that practice by itself. Some of the participants present good examples of this. Christophe was well-cared in the absence of both parents in a well-functioning *lakou*, and the time spent with substitute caretakers was regarded by him as more or less normal and appears to have created no emotional problems for him. Similarly, Mazalie was well-cared for in two well-functioning

lakou, successively by two sets of grandparents, and it was only after the immigration or death of both sets of grandparents, that those *lakou* started to become poorly functioning and that Mazalie's troubles began. Amie, who lived with her grandparents in the absence of both parents, felt loved and well cared for. More than the absence of her parents, it appears to have been their marital separation, with the result of estrangement from her mother, which was the primary source of her difficulties with family.

Thus, it seems that for many of the participants, it was not the separation from parents per se, but the accompaniment of separation by estrangement of the parents and/or breakdown in the functioning of the extended family, that created situational and emotional difficulties for the children. Participants from an intact marriage cared for by a loving and well-functioning extended family, did not appear to suffer any or much ill-effects from a separation, even if lengthy, from a parent.

All of this accords well with much of the research discussed above in chapter II. Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, and

Louie (2002) found in their survey of child immigrants from several countries that it was the ones who immigrated in intact families who had the fewest adjustment problems. Those researchers also found no correlation between length of separation from parents and adjustment problems. However, Smith et al. (2004) did find length of separation and adjustment to be correlated. In general, the research on the effect of parent-child separation and adjustment has yielded equivocal results. Some researchers have found those correlated (e.g., Busittil & Busuttill, 2001; Crawford-Brown, 1997) and others have found that it is quality of family functioning, much more than separation per se, that correlates with child adjustment (e.g., Rutter, 1971, 1999; Tennant, 1991). The present study appears to affirm the findings of this latter viewpoint.

The findings from this study are also in accord with much of the research on depression and PTSD discussed above. Family discord and dysfunction are variables that are frequently mentioned in that research as increasing the risk for internalizing symptoms (e.g., Brent et al., 1995; Fleming &

Offord, 1990; Goenjian et al., 1995; Rumbaut, 1999). In the reviews of the research regarding the relationship between immigration and mental health, several researchers (e.g., Aronowitz, 1984; Fuligni, 1998; Sowa et al., 2000; Vega & Rumbaut, 1991) found that family dysfunction accompanying immigrant status can present an increased risk for mental health problems. In this study also, it was those participants who had suffered from family discord that led to marital separation, or from dysfunction in the care by the extended family, who struggled most with the results of and meaning of the separation.

Prior custodial care, contact, and constancy. Another situation that appeared to predict positive adjustment was when reunification was with a parent or other family member who had been custodial at some time in the child's younger years and had participated in quotidian care for the child. That is, as we would expect, when a child is returned to the care of a parent or other caretaker with whom the child had a prior positive adjustment, then the subsequent adjustment will also be positive. We saw this, for example, with Christophe

reuniting with his mother, with Lilette, reuniting with her father, with Amie reuniting with her grandmother, and Beauline reuniting with a sister. Adjustment to a parent or caretaker who had not formerly been custodial was rarely described in a similarly positive fashion, except in the case of Georges. Georges' case is unique, however, in that he was reunited with his mother when he was six years old, i.e., at a much younger age than the other participants, who were united with a parent or caretaker when they were adolescents.

It is interesting that the participants in the study also assumed that adjustment to a new caretaker would prove problematic. Several of them, as plans were made for them to join parents or other caretakers they did not know well, said they were worried and reluctant to go ahead with the plans. But, being children still, and desiring to follow the other parent's wishes, they went along with the move. It appears that considerations of which parent or household might be a more caring environment were trumped by the parents' motivations to get their child to a place of greater safety and better educational and economic opportunity. This does not

appear to have been due to callousness on the part of parents, but rather because of the desperateness of the situation in Haiti.

Related to the importance of prior custodial care, we can note the importance of frequent contact for establishment or maintenance of the parent-child relationship. For all of the participants, a good adjustment to the home of a parent after separation was preceded either by prior custody or frequent contact, with that contact or custody occurring before the child's pre-adolescence. Reunifications that happened without one of those conditions were all unsuccessful, e.g., Vachel and Josef with their fathers, and Amie with her mother.

Reunifications that occurred with little or no prior custody, but before which the parent had been well known to the child, tended to be more successful, e.g., Mazalie with her father, Victor with his mother. Although my sample size is very small and these findings would have to be confirmed in a larger sample, they do make intuitive sense. It is likely that an adolescent, more than a younger child, would question the

sudden appearance in their life of a parent not previously known.

This finding, that maintenance of ties promotes successful reunification, is in accord with the writings of clinicians who worked with Caribbean families in England (e.g., Arnold, 1997; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995). Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese further state that continued parental financial support of the child left behind makes reunification less problematic. But I would suggest, as Josef so eloquently put it (“My dad was sending money, but that didn’t help...money cannot replace love”), that financial support alone, without some sort of additional contact, would be unlikely to have much effect on creating a relationship with the separated child.

Finally, regarding contact and constancy, it is important to note the role played by siblings in the lives of the participants. For several of them their siblings were the only persons who had been with them their entire lives and thus the persons they felt closest to and trusted the most. As Christophe put it:

My sister's been there since day one. And she's still there, until today... If she was here, she could tell you some parts that I missed and I would be like, yeah, yeah, that happened. She knows the story, she knows everything.

It was important to the participants to have someone like this in their lives, someone who had known them all along and had been through what they had been through.

The effect of severe physical discipline. Another circumstance that appeared to precipitate difficulty was the use of severe physical discipline, or abuse, by a parent or caretaker. Severe physical discipline was not reported by most of the participants but when it was reported, it was usually reported as coming from a father, and was more commonly complained of by boys against their fathers. Also, complaints of abuse only occurred when one parent was absent. Leon is a good example of all of this. He said that his father and mother both used physical discipline, but that when his mother immigrated and he was left with his father alone, the beatings became much worse because of the lack of the moderating

presence of his mother. Similarly, Josef and Vachel complained of suffering severe physical discipline or abuse by their fathers when their mothers were absent.

The fact that severe physical discipline was not discussed much when participants were living with both parents does not mean that it never occurred in those circumstances. The use of mild physical discipline occurred with many of the participants and was regarded as normative and of no particular significance. Some researchers who have compared the psychological results of the use of physical discipline with African-American and European-American children (Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996; Gunroe & Mariner, 1997) have found that the negative psychological results found in the latter are not found in the former, probably because of cultural context. Thus, the result from the present study is not unanticipated. Perhaps, when moderate physical discipline occurred in a situation in which the child felt more protected, with both parents present, the discipline was regarded as normative and not significant. What clearly made a difference in the child's regarding physical discipline as

abuse, was the combination of the severity of the abuse in the absence of the other parent. That is, the child believed that the abuse would not have occurred if the other parent was present. Thus, the abusing parent was resented not just for being cruel, but also for abusing the absence of the other parent.

Male and female. As noted above, the criticism of the use of severe physical discipline came up more often in boys' discussions of their fathers. Perhaps these Haitian boys were more likely to resent the physical discipline meted out by their fathers, or the girls were more reluctant to criticize that discipline. Or, it could be that the fathers of these boys were more severe with their sons. This latter possibility recalls an observation made earlier, that fathers seemed to stay around for many more years after the birth of a male child than of a female one. Perhaps, Haitian fathers may be valuing their male offspring more and/or differently from their female offspring. There may be, in the fathers' minds, more riding on the success of the boys, and it may therefore be more important to maintain a presence, and one that guides very firmly.

The participants' portrayals of their parents also appeared to indicate that the cross-gender child-parent relationship offered some protection against criticism of the parent. Corresponding to that, same-gender child-parent relationships were open to more criticism, particularly boys towards their fathers. But, it was also evident that the nature of the parent-child relationship, though perhaps affected by gender, was not determined by such. Rather, it was the quality of the relationship itself, the time spent, the care offered, the subjective sense of the child that he or she was being cared for and loved by the parent, that most influenced the portrayal of that parent.

Adversarial Growth and Resilience

As I listened to their stories, one of the things that kept impressing me was the ability of the children to continue to live and thrive under very difficult circumstances. In addition to the separation from parents and shifts in caretakers, many of these children experienced poverty and hunger, abuse and neglect, and were exposed to violence because of chaotic political and social conditions. Yet their psychological

adjustment seemed to be quite sound both to me as a clinician and as measured by the Youth Self-Report. In comparison to group means for seven countries, the participants mean YSR scores were well within the normal range for all of the individual problem scales and the composite scores. These children had somehow learned how not to be overwhelmed by their difficult situations, and indeed, to grow and mature in spite of them. This accords with research on resilient processes in children, in which researchers have noted that children in challenging situations must develop belief in their self-competency and correspondingly develop self-agency and self-reliance (e.g., Masten, 2001).

Although it is important to examine the participants' resilient responses to their circumstances, it is also important not to obscure the fact that many of the participants did, as we saw, bear some scars from their experiences. The children clearly were hurt, to a greater or lesser extent, by the losses involved in the chain immigration process. This co-occurrence of resilience and hurt is not surprising. Many researchers (e.g., Barakat, Alderfer, & Kazak, 2006; Laufer & Solomon, 2006),

have found correlations between adversarial growth and some traumatization from difficult experiences. Janoff-Bulman (2004) asserts that positive posttraumatic coping entails both some suffering from posttraumatic wounds and growth through that suffering.

In the literature on adversarial growth, some of the personality and mental processing characteristics mentioned as associated with that are openness to experience, seeking of social support, positive affect, problem-focused coping styles, self-competency beliefs, and acceptance and positive re-framing of events (Cryder et al., 2006; Linley & Joseph, 2004). This list of attributes parallels those noted in the analyses of our participants' narratives. In Calhoun and Tedeschi's formulation of the requisites for posttraumatic growth (2004), religious belief is also an important component, but Linley and Joseph's (2004) review of the literature on the subject found religious faith as less significant. This also parallels the results in this study, in which religious faith was clearly very significant and a benefit for two of the participants, but was not mentioned by any of the others.

A specific example will help in examining some of personality attributes associated with adversarial growth in the participants. When he was nine, Victor's mother returned to the U.S. leaving him in the care of his father, who was not generally available to him. Victor was not intimidated by this new situation. Instead, he went out and utilized the resources in the community, working in a garage and making friends with the men of his neighborhood:

It was just right there in front of me, if I didn't take care of myself, no one else was going to take care of me... I didn't mind. It was just a way of life, a way of living. I just took it the way it was. It was kind of good for me.

Here are the attributes of resilience: openness to new experience, seeking social support, belief in self-competency, and developing self-agency. Victor accepts this situation and reframes it positively, seeing it as an opportunity for development of maturity. His situation becomes an opportunity for him because he believes that it represents an opportunity. It is not tautological to say this. It was Victor's self-competency beliefs and positive outlook that permitted

him to see and utilize the opportunity presented by his difficult circumstances. Rutter (1999) emphasizes this point in his discussion of resilience, that children demonstrate resiliency when they believe they can influence their lives, and then act on those beliefs. This creates a cycle of increasing self-competent and self-agentic beliefs and abilities.

Resilient attributes are also evident in Georges' willingness to travel to the U.S. on his own and live with relatives he had never met and then, when that did not work out, to try again and again to settle successfully in the U.S. This was true for Vachel also, who returned three times to the U.S., and who, like Georges, only found a decent home on the third try. Certainly these experiences were trying for these children, and they do not hesitate to identify them as such, but what stands out is that they did not react by drawing inside themselves and refusing to try again. Their orientation was outward and forward-moving, their belief was in the possibility of their succeeding in these endeavors. Importantly also, they did not deny the negative aspects of their situations, but rather accepted their situations and tried to create from

themselves something positive. This sort of active acceptance of difficult life circumstances, coupled with a striving for the positive, was expressed well by Denis, “Things can happen in life, that’s life, you’ve got to live it.” When Denis said this, there was no tone or feeling of resignation in that acceptance, rather he said it with a positive tone, emphasizing the forward motion of “living it”.

Importantly, the participants actively searched for relational resources and became adept at recognizing them. I began to see these children as resource-seeking missiles, weaving a path to avoid those relationships that were not their targets, and honing in on those that were. The children, over time, became increasingly active agents in their relational development with assigned and potential caretakers. Researchers on resilience (e.g., Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999) have noted that resilient children seek out social resources when those resources are not readily provided and this study seems to affirm that observation.

As the children were learning how to identify social resources and gravitate to them, they were also learning how

to accept and accommodate to their circumstances. In research regarding life disappointments, King and Hicks (2007) make this connection to ego development: “Accommodating life’s previously incomprehensible events may be painful and difficult, yet it may be a necessary component of development” (p.627). They have found that the processing of disappointment leads to maturity and greater complexity of personality. This is seen in several of the narratives. The participants spoke of coming to terms with difficult events, e.g., a beloved parent or caretaker no longer available, or their parents’ marriage dissolving. The dream of the happy, reunited family was very rarely fulfilled, and even when it was, there was acknowledgement of some loss that occurred because of the separation. King and Hicks suggest that this process of accommodation is a personal choice, and requires “the courage to face life’s remaining possibilities” (p.632). Certainly, this courage was evident in many of the narratives.

Another attribute of resilience that the children displayed was their ability to stay focused on the larger picture, i.e., that the difficulties they were suffering were for

the larger goal of betterment of the family and themselves. Although there may be some retrospective rewriting at work here, it does seem that the children maintained their patience and tolerance of events through maintaining a focus broader than on their daily problems. As Christophe puts it: “The whole plan was for everyone to come here... to get a better life...Over that whole period of separation they were working to get us here... we had to make the best of it.” Here is stated clearly what was apparent in many of the participants’ stories: keeping a future orientation, seeing the difficult situation as a problem the family was working to solve, and accepting the circumstances for the present.

Along with the recognition of the need to focus on the bigger picture, the participants also recognized the need to avoid dwelling on the unpleasant memories of the past, while still being able to process and use their memories. Researchers (e.g, Himelein & McElrath, 1996; Spaccarelli & Fuchs, 1997) have described this tension, finding that children most successfully processed traumatic events when they neither dwelled upon, nor completely avoided, thoughts about those

experiences. Meiser-Stedman (2002) noted that both thought suppression and rumination, i.e., cognitive attempts to undo the event, have been demonstrated to increase likelihood of PTSD symptoms. The participants in the study very rarely spoke of using these sorts of counterproductive cognitive strategies. Rather, they tended to use their memories as tools for learning.

The attributes cited in the research on adversarial growth are clearly evident in the narratives of the participants. The question arises: Why did so many of the participants appear to have the attributes associated with adversarial growth and resilience? The sample size is small and may have been skewed. The 12 students in the study were 12 out of 18 who met the entrance criteria. Thus, this was a self-selected group. Perhaps with the other six students who met the entrance criteria but who did not enter the study, these positive attributes would be less widely distributed. Two other possibilities should be considered. First, that the attributes required for adversarial growth are in general widely distributed in children, and second, that the exposure

to difficulties summons and develops those characteristics.

The first answer, that the ability of people to respond resiliently to difficult circumstances is common and widespread, is supported by some researchers on the topic (e.g, Bonanno, 2004; Masten, 2002).

The second possibility recalls the work of Viktor Frankl (1963), who believed that it was not simply that those people who can find meaning in adversary are most likely to survive and thrive, but more than that, that it is the adverse circumstances that summon and energize the sometimes dormant capability for meaning-making in people. Frankl believed that we are pushed to make meaning in trying circumstances, and that this making of meaning is what then enables us to bear those circumstances. The experiences and thoughts related by the children in this study appear to support this idea.

Developing and Using a Storyline

In the last chapter, the narratives of a few participants were examined for evidence of how the narrator developed the storyline of the narrative. I noted that often when listening to

the narratives, I could hear possibilities for interpretations of events other than those to which the participants subscribed.

It appeared to me that the narratives had undercurrents, various streams in the stories, that had at one time existed alongside one another. Then, after some decisive events, a particular stream is chosen and a particular storyline is created. Past events are then interpreted in the light of this chosen storyline. This is not to dispute the accuracy of the chosen storyline, rather only to assert that we can see in the narratives that another storyline could have existed, at least for some time.

In a few narratives, storylines with a high level of emotional complexity were constructed. The emotional complexity resulted from the narrator's attempts to bring in the perspectives of all of the major actors. This made the story not only compelling to the listener, but it also appeared to bring a particular comfort to the teller. Negative emotions were present, but they were leavened by the participant's compassion for the actors and by a sense of the loss and tragedy for all involved. This sort of complex storyline

provides, according to some research (King & Hicks, 2007), the substrate for mature ego development.

What all the storylines had in common was the narrators' regard for themselves as having successfully survived difficult circumstances, their apparent lack of deep regret about those circumstances, and a willingness to see those specific difficulties as over and done with. In their research on narratives of misfortune, McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten and Bowman (2001) found that individuals who find and portray benefit in those difficulties show improved recovery from and adjustment to those events. Similarly, Meichenbaum and Fitzpatrick (1993) identify narratives that provide coherent and positive meanings to difficult events as the sort of narratives that permit individuals to cope well with those difficult experiences. Coherence and meaning, accompanied by a sense of survivorship and success, was evident in all of the participants' narratives.

Choosing a positive meaning for events assisted the participants in their adjustment to new realities and positioned them towards positive relationships with significant

others. For example, Denis' rapprochement with his father is predicated on Denis compassion for him, despite the pain the father caused. Oppositely, it is unlikely that Amie would reconcile with her mother, whom Amie resented for what she perceived as abandoning her. The pain of difficulties did not disappear for participants because of how they interpreted events, but it was mitigated by that understanding.

The children were taking in and evaluating all of what was happening to them. They listened to what people were saying, watched their actions, how things played out, and made determinations of their own regarding the people in their lives. The relationships that persist did so because they were the ones which were construed to have been the ones that provided care and sustenance.

Implications for Treatment

Eliciting a full immigration history. As I noted in the introduction, when I first did my training in family therapy in the early 1990's, we were taught to take a family history, but there was no mention of taking an immigration history. Immigration had not yet come onto the radar screen of

majority America, nor of most majority American mental health clinicians. At that time, the U.S. was just coming out of an historical period of very low immigration to this country. During the 1860's through the 1920's, the numbers of foreign-born persons residing in the U.S. hovered around 12-14% of the entire population. Those percentages fell for most of 20th century, reaching a low of just 4% in the 1970's. Since then, those numbers have risen gradually and, at the turn of the 21st century, have again reached the levels of the late 1800's (Migration Policy Institute, 2007). As immigration has grown to be a far larger and more noticeable phenomenon, interest in the psychological aspects of it has also grown. A PsycInfo search crossing "immigration" and "child" for the 30 years from 1966 through 1995 yielded 69 references. The same search for the 13 years 1996 through 2008 yielded 237 references.

Because immigration to this country is once again more common, and because it can have significant psychological effects, it is time to make sure that clinical training reflects these advances. As the present study and related works (e.g.,

Orellana et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2004; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002) have demonstrated, there is much to be gained in clinical practice from spending the time to get a full immigration history, with details regarding separations, substitute caretakers, and reunifications. In addition to providing information about caretakers and attachments, a full immigration history will also provide the clinician with the family, social, and historical contexts that will aid in fuller understanding of the child.

Considering familial and cultural contexts. One of the findings of this study is that the separations from parents per se do not appear to be necessarily psychologically damaging for the children. There were several examples of children in the study who experienced lengthy separations from parents without ill effects that were apparent. Rather, it was family dysfunction, caused by marital dissolution or poor substitute caretaking, that was most problematic for the participants.

Anthropological and sociological literature indicate the normative nature in Haiti of child-shifting and serial immigration. Perhaps because of this, the participants'

separations from their parents were well tolerated, as long as there as there was good substitute caretaking and a sense of family unity. This is a result anticipated by other writers (e.g., Lashley, 2000; Rutter, 1971; Tennant, 1991), who all stress that the context of events, rather than the concrete nature of events, is highly significant in predicting response to those events.

Thus, when considering placements away from parents in Haitian families, it is important for a clinician to understand fully the context of that separation and not assume that the separation was traumatic for the child. This advice may also hold for other familial, cultural, or historical contexts in which family separations are normative and in which child-rearing is not considered the sole responsibility of the nuclear family.

Bearing and being witness to a life story. Comments by several participants spoke clearly of the importance of a having someone in their life who knew their whole story. This was most often a sibling who had lived with them their entire lives. These sibling were described as “the only one who knew the whole story”, “the one I went through it all with”, and “the

one I am still closest to”. It was important to be the participants to have someone in their life who shared their history and who knew about all the difficulties they have suffered. Perhaps one of the comforts in having someone like that in one’s life is that there is no need to hide unpleasant aspects of that history; secrecy and shame need not overburden that relationship.

Along similar lines, it was clear that the participants felt good telling their story to an interested listener, one who was there to hear the whole history, and would listen sympathetically to it. Many of the participants spoke of this without elicitation, and the others, when asked, stated clearly they had enjoyed the experience, even though it contained some moments of emotional difficulty. This was expected; several researchers have spoken of the positive effects of an individual being able to speak openly about difficulties in their life histories, to construct a narrative of how they survived those difficulties (e.g., Amir et al., 1998; Meichenbaum & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Pennebaker, 1993; Neuner et al., 2008; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000).

In discussing together these two seemingly disparate set of statements, those about siblings and those about telling a life history, I am trying to underscore the importance of the idea of bearing and being witness to a life story. It was stated at the beginning of this study that one of the goals was simply to collect and document the life histories of Haitian adolescents who had suffered family separation during immigration. There were a couple of reasons for that. One was simply because there are hardly any such first-hand reports in the research literature. Another, only vaguely understood by me at the time, was my sense that these were stories that needed to be told and be heard. I did not have a clear sense of what I meant by that, but it is now clearer to me. Secret histories are likely to engender shame, but shared histories are likely to engender compassion, both in the teller and in the listener. Helping immigrant children to tell their stories appears likely to help them feel compassion for themselves as actors in that story and can help those working with these children understand them more deeply and feel greater compassion for them.

Assisting in the development of resilience. The participants demonstrated great resilience in dealing with difficult circumstances and it seems that this resilience developed as they confronted those circumstances. Thus, there is a lesson in their stories for clinicians who are helping a child in a difficult situation. While it is important to have compassion and sympathy for the suffering of the child, it seems equally important to aid in the development of self-competency beliefs, and self-reliant and self-agentic skills.

Those skills, openness to experience, seeking social support, positive affect, problem-focused coping styles, acceptance of difficulties, focusing on long-term goals, and positive re-framing of events, are all skills which are naturally-occurring in children, but can likely be enhanced and nurtured with the assistance of caretakers and care providers. It is our responsibility as care providers to do that.

Directions for Future Research

1) Because the sample size for this study was small, there is need for replication of these findings with a larger sample. This study indicates a high level of resilient processes in

children who faced lengthy parental separations and other difficult circumstances. It would be useful for future research to continue to explore how typical this is for Haitian children and children in general.

2) Noticing that only boys, and not girls, complained of the physical discipline meted out by their fathers, but not their mothers, even though the mothers also frequently used physical discipline, several questions arise. Are Haitian fathers simply more likely than Haitian mothers to use severe physical discipline? Are Haitian fathers more likely to be more severe with their sons? If this is so, is it because they regard their sons as requiring greater discipline than their daughters, or because the proper behavior of the sons is more important to them?

Also, when is physical discipline regarded by the child as justified and normative, and when not? Is the discipline, when regarded as justified and normative, without deleterious effects on the child, as indicated by some research (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996; Gunroe & Mariner, 1997)? And when is

the discipline likely to be regarded as non-normative and not justified?

3) Allied with this set of questions is a set of questions regarding same- and cross-gender parent-child relationships. If Haitian fathers are more likely to use severe physical discipline with their sons, is that the result not simply of the boys being less compliant than girls, but also because the fathers are more committed to their boys having good behavior? Is that related to their higher valuing of male children? Is the trend that we notice in the quantitative data, that fathers tended to stay in the couple relationship longer after the birth of a male child than a female child, also a result of that higher valuation of male children?

Limitations

The present study collected the immigration narratives of 12 Haitian adolescents. Because this is a very small sample, it cannot be asserted that these 12 are necessarily representative of immigrant children in general nor even of Haitian immigrant children. Additionally, these 12 were 2/3's of the students who met the entrance criteria for the study,

the remaining 1/3 declining or effectively declining to be in the study. It could be that the group that agreed to be in the study had certain attributes of openness that did not obtain with those who did not participate, and thus this self-selection process ended up including in the study students who were more likely to demonstrate the qualities associated with resiliency than those who declined. Third, this was not a longitudinal study, and thus adjustment over time, which may have presented a different picture, was not analyzed. Fourth, the data gathered was by self-report only. There was no effort to confirm the accuracy of the circumstances the participants described, nor of the level of adjustment they ascribed to themselves, except for use of the YSR. Finally, because the practice of child-shifting is common and normal in Haitian and other Caribbean societies, but perhaps less so in other cultures, the participants reactions to having substitute caretakers and separations from parents might not be representative of children in cultures where these situations are less common.

That said, it can be asserted that the data collected were rich data, which appeared to me, and I hope to the reader, to be honest portrayals of the experiences of these adolescents. I believe that these accounts can be taken at face value as the descriptions of the internal experiences of the participants. The participants frequently asserted to me that they were being honest with me, and that they appreciated and enjoyed what was for them a rare opportunity to talk about their experiences in a private and unguarded manner.

Summary

The study collected narratives from 12 Haitian adolescents who had been separated from at least one parent for a period of several years by circumstances of immigration. The participants were all between the ages of 18 and 20, six females and six males. They were recruited at a public high school near a major U.S. city with a large number of children from various immigrant groups. The participants were interviewed regarding their lives in Haiti, their separation from their parents, their reunion, how they adjusted to that, and how they saw all of that affecting their lives. The

interviews were about 1-2 hours in length, and were recorded and transcribed. The participants also completed a psychological problems questionnaire, the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991b).

The interview transcriptions were analyzed first individually and then through cross-case analysis following the procedures of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative analytic technique. In using IPA, analysis begins with the identification of thematic material in individual cases and then proceeds to cross-case analysis to further identify and refine thematic material first through an iterative analytic process (Smith, 1996; Smith & Osburn, 2003).

Because of the small sample size, there was insufficient power for a statistical analysis of the Youth Self-Report (YSR) results. However, means for the male, female, and total sample cohorts were calculated and compared to a Jamaican cohort and a combined cohort from seven countries. All of the means for the study cohorts fell within the normal range for the instrument for all of the individual problem scores and the

composite scores of the YSR. Some of the mean scores showed some mild elevations that were within the normal range but were in the direction towards the means of clinically-referred youth. Those mildly elevated mean scores were in the withdrawn and somatic problems scales, and resultantly, in the internalizing composite. These score elevations could indicate some mild degree of traumatic and affective reaction, which would be expected in a group that had experienced the wide variety of potentially traumatic experiences reported by the participants.

Those experiences included lengthy separations from parents, the average length of separation from a parent being about nine years. The participants immigrated to the U.S. at an average age of about 14. Immigration to the U.S. sometimes included more than one attempt at immigration and/or immigration through another country. Separations from parents were sometimes accompanied by neglect or physical abuse, either by a substitute caretaker or a single father, and several participants experienced being shifted between caretakers before reunion with a parent. Dissolution of the

parents' union was very common; only three of the 12 participants came from intact marriages. Reunification sometimes meant joining a parent who had not formerly been custodial, and most of those attempts at reunification were not successful. Some of the participants suffered from hunger in Haiti while a parent was absent, and some of them were witnesses to criminal and political violence because of the chaotic state of the Haitian government over the past several years. The participants talked about all of these experiences with apparent openness and were ready to acknowledge the difficulty that some of these experiences presented for them.

Participants spoke in detail about the relationships with their parents, their siblings, other relatives, and mentors. Their stories demonstrated an adeptness at recognizing and securing nurturing relationships, and a striving to avoid destructive relationships whenever possible. The children spoke of their relational attachments and losses with great poignancy, how significant those losses sometimes were and their concurrent ability to accommodate to those losses. One of the stronger themes emerging in the participants' narratives

was the participants' sense of how their experiences had helped them to develop self-competency and self-agency. They described their acceptance of difficult circumstances, positive cognitive reframing of those, and their efforts to maintain a problem-solving and future-oriented focus. All of these attributes are those often discussed in the research literature on resilience in children. The participants' presented themselves as successful survivors of difficult circumstances.

The principal question of the study was whether the participants' psychosocial adjustment would be more influenced by the manner in which they made sense of their circumstances, or by the specific nature of the events of their lives. Both results were found. That is, certain circumstances, e.g., dissolution of parental marriage, the use of severe physical discipline, placement with a parent not formerly custodial, were all circumstances that appeared to create added difficulties in adjustment. On the other hand, it was also found that the participants had striven to create positive meaning from their difficulties, were most often able to do so, and then were able to credit the difficulties suffered with

having promoted their maturation. This strategy appears to be associated with the participants having avoided large traumatic results from their circumstances, although some evidence of traumatization was present in several of the participants.

The participants expressed that they had enjoyed being in the study and talking about their histories, even though they acknowledged that there was some pain involved in the telling of some events. They found that the telling provided them with an opportunity to think about the events again, and to appreciate how well they had survived the difficulties. None of the participants expressed any regret for entering the study, nor did any withdraw from the study before finishing all study procedures.

One of the motivations for doing this study was to assist in the compiling of the developing body of research regarding immigrant children. The results of the present study support the idea that in clinical engagement with immigrant children, it will usually be important and helpful to provide them the opportunity to tell their immigration history. This will be

useful to the child and clinician in several ways. It will give the clinician an understanding of the often complicated interplay of the primary relationships in the child's life. Additionally, the child's strengths, developed in the weathering of difficult circumstances, will be laid out for the child and clinician to see. Treatment can then proceed in a strength-based therapeutic model. Finally, the child will have an opportunity to tell the story, and the clinician to hear it, a bearing and hearing witness event that has its own intrinsic therapeutic value.

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Appendix A:

Informed Consent Form

Adolescents Speak about their Immigration History and How it Affected Them

You are invited to be part of this research study. The following information will help you decide if you want to participate. You are being asked to participate because you are a teenager who has immigrated to this country after being separated from a parent.

The purpose of this study is to hear the immigration histories of children who were separated from a parent because of the family's immigration to this country, and to understand how that immigration and separation from their parent(s) affected them. I am doing this research as part of my studies for my doctorate degree at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Being in this study will mean being interviewed by me, the researcher, about your life in your home country, how you came here and what it was like to come here and live with your parents. You will also be asked to fill out a form about yourself, with questions about your psychological adjustment. There will be about 1-2 interviews, each taking about 1 hour. The interviews will be audio-taped so that I can analyze them after the interviews.

Everything you say in the interviews and on the forms will be kept private. You will never be identified by name or in any other way that someone could know that you were the person interviewed for the study. After I analyze the tapes they will be erased and no copies will be kept by anyone. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings but your identity will always be kept strictly confidential.

You may enjoy the chance to talk about your immigration history. I have done this before with many students and they usually find it interesting and helpful to them. It may happen that talking about these things could be a bit upsetting to you and if that happens we can spend more time talking together to help you with those feelings.

Your being part of this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in it. If you decide to be in it and later change your mind you just have to tell me that and you will be out of the study. If you decide to leave the study, I will destroy all the notes and tapes of your interviews as soon as you leave.

For more information about the study you can ask me, Mark Stewart. You can always leave a message on my voice mail at 617-575-5625.

You can also contact my faculty supervisor:

Dr. Mary Ann Rafoth
Chairperson, Department of School Psychology
242A Stouffer Hall
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA 15705-1087
Phone: 724-357-3784

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____
Signature _____
Date _____
Phone number where you can be reached _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature, purpose, and potential benefits and risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's signature

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Child Immigration Study:

Separation and Reunification with Parent(s)

[Using this protocol the interviewer elicits an immigration history from the study participant. The protocol is to be used as a general outline, i.e., the interviewer can alter the order and phrasing of the questions so as to collect all the required information.]

[At some point in the interview the participant may begin a self-generated narrative of their life in their home country and their immigration. That narrative should be permitted to develop on its own as much as possible. The questions below should be asked when the information required has been omitted by the participant or the flow of their narrative has halted.]

Introduction:

Today I want to start talking to you about your life history, about your life in the country you were born in, who you lived with, about you staying behind when your mother (or father,

or parents) came to this country, about your coming here, and how you felt about all of those things.

Life Before Parents' Immigration:

So let's start with where you were born and your life there.

What country were you born in?

And who did you live with there?

Did you always live with them or with other people sometimes? Who were you closest with?

And tell me about your life there? What were the things you liked about it and what things didn't you like?

Parents' Immigration and Separation from them:

Then, at some time, your parent(s) immigrated and you stayed behind. How old were you when that happened? Who did you live with? Did you feel close to them? How was living with that person/family different from living with your parents? Was it hard for you?

Did you always stay with them? Did you move someplace else or to a few different places?

Was there someone around after your parent(s) left that really helped you out a lot? Where is that person now? Do you still think about them or stay in touch with them?

Were there things that happened to you after your parents left that you don't think would have happened if your parents were there?

Did you get upset at being without your parents? Was there someone who helped you with that? Where there things you could do for yourself to feel better if you got upset?

Did you stay in touch with your parent(s) at all? What was that like?

Did you think about your parent(s) a lot? Did people tell you anything about why they left? What did you think about why they left? How did you feel about it? Did you sometimes have questions in your mind that you couldn't ask anyone?

For how long did you stay in your country without your parent(s)?

Subject's Immigration Here and Re-joining Parents:

Before you came here did anyone tell you that was going to happen? What did you think it would be like coming to live

with your parents again? Were you excited, scared, worried?

About what specifically?

And then when you came here was this country like you expected it to be? Were you surprised by some things when you came here? Which ones?

And what was it like to see your parents again? To live with them again? Was it like you expected it to be? Were you surprised by some things? Was it better than you expected in some ways? Worse in some ways? Were there things that really upset you?

Were there other people you came to live with that you didn't know or live with when you lived in your home county? How did you get along with them?

Present Adjustment and Reflections on Their History:

How long have you been in this country now? Have you always lived with the same people since you came or with different people?

And how do you feel about living here now, is it better than when you first came or worse?

What's good about your life now and what don't you like? How would you compare it to your life in your home country?"

Do you think a lot about your home country? About the people that took care of you while you were there without your parent(s)?

Do you get along with your parents better now than when you first came or worse? Is living with them now like it was when you were all together before they came here? Is it different?

You're older now than when you first came here, do you think about all of what happened to you in the same way as you did when you were younger? What do you understand differently now from when you were in your home country or from when you first came here? Does it upset you to think about all of this or do you feel fine about what happened?

Finally, I wanted to ask you, we talked about a lot of things today and I wanted to know how it felt to talk about all this.

Did it feel good to tell the whole story to someone? Were there parts of it that were upsetting to talk about? Are there parts you want to talk about more now?

OK. Thanks, that really helped me a lot with the study I'm doing. But I want you to know that if you want to talk about this again or if talking about this gets you thinking or makes you upset you should just leave a note for me and I'll come and find you so we can talk more.

Appendix C

Participant Histories in Tabular Form

Tables C1-C12 below present the principal family situations of each subject in individual timelines. Reading across the rows provides a timeline with important events in the history of each participant. Also included are notes on whether and when the parental union dissolved and the periods of participant separation from parents.

Table C1

Individual Timeline: Christophe

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Father immigrates 3 years prior to Christophe's birth	Lives with mother and sister - good adjustment				Mother immigrates to join father; shifted to maternal aunt - good adjustment	Frequent telephone contact with parents
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		1 st visit with father in Haiti		Immigrates with sister to join parents - good adjustment		

Parental union intact

Separation from father from birth until age 11

Separation from mother from age 5-11

Table C2

Individual Timeline: Denis

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
	Lives with mother and father - good adjustment			Father immigrates; Denis stays with mother - good adjustment		Frequent telephone contact with father
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Denis mentored by adolescent boy		Parental union dissolves	Mother immigrates Denis shifted to paternal aunt - good adjustment			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Frequent telephone contact with both parents			Immigrates to father - mixed adjustment shifted to cousin -poor adjustment		Moves out to live on his own

Parental union dissolves at Denis' age 9

Separation from father from age 4 until age 18

Separation from mother from age 10 on

Table C3

Individual Timeline: Josef

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
	Lives with mother and father - good adjustment		Father immigrates; Josef stays with mother - good adjustment	Parental union dissolves	Older cousin becomes father substitute - good adjustment	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Infrequent telephone contact from father					Immigrates with siblings to father - poor adjustment
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Returns to mother in Haiti - good adjustment; re-immigrates to sister - good adjustment	Little contact with father; telephone contact with mother			Sister moves; shift to brother's home - good adjustment		

Parental union dissolves at Josef's age 4

Separation from father from age 3 to 13 and from age 14 on

Separation from mother from age 13 to 14; brief return to her and

separated again from age 14 on

Table C4

Individual Timeline: Georges

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Mother immigrates to Antilles leaving Georges and his sisters with maternal aunt	Lives with aunt – poor adjustment but good adjustment with older sisters who cared for him			Infrequent contact with father in Haiti; no contact with mother in Antilles		Immigrates with sisters to mother in Antilles – good adjustment
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Immigrates alone to paternal uncle in U.S. – physical abuse/poor adjustment	Returns to mother briefly – good adjustment; re-immigrates to 2 nd uncle in U.S. – physical abuse/poor adjustment	Returns to mother again – good adjustment; re-immigrates to girlfriend’s family in U.S. – good adjustment	Moves out with girlfriend to live on their own – good adjustment			

Parental union dissolves before Georges’ birth

Never lived with father.

Separation from mother from infancy until age 6 and again from age 14 on except for two brief returns to her.

Table C5

Individual Timeline: Leon

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Lives with mother, father and sister - good adjustment						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			Mother immigrates alone; Leon and sister stay with father - physical abuse/poor adjustment	Frequent telephone contact with mother		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Immigrates with father and sister to join mother	Good adjustment with mother/poor adjustment with father	Parental violence; parental union dissolves; father moves out		Stays in contact with father		

Parental union dissolves at Leon's age 17

Separation from father from age 17 on.

Separation from mother from age 10 to 14.

Table C6

Individual Timeline: Victor

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Mother immigrates just prior to Victor's birth	Born in U.S.; lives w/ mother - doesn't remember this time	Returns to Haiti to live with father & mat. grnd-mother - good adjustment		Grndmother is primary caretaker	Mother returns to Haiti to live with Victor & father; grndmother moves out	Fair adjustment to mother's return
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		Parents divorce; mother returns to U.S.; Victor with father only - fair adjustment		Mentored by men in neighborhood		Frequent telephone contact with mother
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Immigrates alone to mother - fair adjustment	Shifted to uncle - fair adjustment; returns to mother - fair adjustment				

Parental union dissolves at Victor's age 9.

Separation from father from birth until age 2 and again from age 15 on.

Separation from mother from age 2 to 5 and again from age 9 to 15

Table C7

Individual Timeline: Amie

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Parental union dissolves	Parents immigrate separately; Amie lives with paternal family - good adjustment		Mother attempts to bring Amie to the U.S.; paternal family denies request	Paternal grandmother Amie's primary caretaker	Father visits Haiti regularly maintaining relationship with Amie	Mother has no contact at all with Amie throughout her childhood
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Father attempts to bring Amie to U.S., fails paternity test; Amie's mother assists	Amie immigrates to U.S. with paternal grandmother; lives with her here - good adjustment		Amie's homosexuality outed to family causing estrangement from father; relations with grandmother remain good

Parental union dissolves before Amie's birth

Separation from father from infancy until age 18; after immigration at 18 lives near him but never domiciled with him.

Separation from mother from infancy on; never domiciled with her.

Table C8

Individual Timeline: Elsa

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Parental union dissolves	Lives with mother and brother - good adjustment				Father dies	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
			Brother dies; Elsa shifted to maternal grandfather - poor adjustment		Little contact with mother	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Leaves Haiti alone, admitted to U.S. as unaccompanied minor asylee; lives in refugee center	Released to maternal uncle and family - poor adjustment; moves out on her own		

Parental union dissolved before Amie’s birth

Separation from father from infancy until his death at her age 5

Separation from mother from age 10 on

Table C9

Individual Timeline: Lilette

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
	Lives with mother & father - good adjustment		Younger brother born	Frequent telephone contact with father throughout childhood	Younger sister born	Immigrates with mother and brother - good adjustment
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Lilette and brother return to Haiti to live with father - good adjustment	Lilette and brother return to U.S. to live with mother - good adjustment	Mother visits Haiti frequently	Youngest sister born on mother's visits & stays with father		Lilette visits father in Haiti; meets youngest sister	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Father and children join rest of family in U.S. - good adjustment					

Parental union intact

Separation from father from age 6 to 7, and again from 8 to 15

Separation from mother from age 7 to 8

Table C10

Individual Timeline: Mazalie

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Parental union dissolves	Father immigrates; Mazalie lives with maternal grndparents - good adjustment		Maternal grndprents primary caregivers			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Maternal grndparents immigrate; shift to paternal grndparents - good adjustment	Starts to see her mother more; meets father for 1 st time when he visits Haiti			Paternal grndparents die; shift to pat. aunt; sexual abuse by aunt's husband	Self-initiated shift to maternal uncles - mixed adjustment	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Immigrates to father and stepmother - good adjustment		Father and stepmother separate; Stays with stepmother - good adjustment	Shift to father's home - good adjustment		

Parental union dissolved before birth

Separation from father from infancy to age 15

Separation from mother from infancy on

Table C11

Individual Timeline: Beauline

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
	Lives with mother, father and siblings - good adjustment	Burn accident; severe scarring on face and arms			Shift to older sisters' home in capitol - good adjustment	Very frequent visits with parents
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Oldest sister immigrates	Returns to parents - good adjustment		Very frequent visits by remaining sisters			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Shift back to sisters in capitol - good adjustment		Immigrates to oldest sister - good adjustment	Overstays medical visa becoming illegal			

Parental union intact

Separation from father and mother from age 5 to 8 & again from age 14 on

Table C12

Individual Timeline: Vachel

Before birth	age 1	2	3	4	5	6
Parental union dissolves	Lives with mother and siblings - good adjustment		Father immigrates			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Infrequent telephone contact with father				1 st visit with father	Immigrates with brother to father - poor adjustment
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Physical abuse by father; removed; returns to mother in Haiti - good adjustment	Re-immigrates to father; physical abuse recurs; removed and returned to mother again - good adjustment	Re-immigrates again, but to sister - mixed adjustment				

Parental union dissolved before birth

Separation from father from infancy to age 13 and again from age 16 on

Separation from mother from age 13 on, with some brief returns to her at ages 14 and 15