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**Perceptions of Adult Jamaican American Children
and Their Aging Parents Regarding Filial Responsibility**

Shari Edwards Randerson

PERCEPTIONS OF ADULT JAMAICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN
AND THEIR AGING PARENTS REGARDING
FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY

DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Sidgismund C. Edwards, whose love, dedication, and sacrifice provided me with the very best education a Jamaican child could have, and made this all possible.

ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF ADULT JAMAICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN
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FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Barry University, 2010

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Purpose

Numerous research studies have examined the adjustments that immigrant groups are forced to make when introduced to life in a new culture. Past and present research suggests that these immigrant groups experience significant stressors and role conflicts in their effort to assimilate into the new culture. This study will help to bridge the gap that exists in the literature regarding immigrant Jamaicans to the United States. It is hoped that this will help to inform theory, educational research, and practice in the field of marriage and family therapy by broadening the multicultural knowledge base regarding Jamaican families that have immigrated to the United States.

Method

The data consisted of six semi-structured interviews conducted with 3 Jamaican American families that included at least one aging male or female parent and an adult child. The interviews which comprised of open-ended questions lasted between 1 to 2 hours, and were transcribed by the researcher. This study is also significant because of the phenomenological method of research that was used to give voice to the participants. In extracting relevant statements, this researcher utilized the process of horizontalizing the data so as to give every

relevant statement equal value (Moustakas, 1994). The resulting clusters were used to create rich, textural and structural descriptions of the experience of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, thereby giving meaning to the phenomenon.

Major Findings

This study informs readers about the conflicts of personal obligation, family values, culture, perception of reality, and race, and how Jamaican American families living in South Florida make decisions regarding filial responsibility. It uncovered the desperate struggle of immigrants attempting to preserve their culture while finding their place in a new country. The dichotomy between what is believed and that which is experienced by these Jamaican American participants is a stark reminder to readers of the importance of respecting individual values and norms.

This study will help shed light on the factors that impact family relationships in immigrant Jamaican American families residing in South Florida and perhaps elsewhere in the United States, and will enhance the knowledge base for marriage and family therapists who work with immigrant Jamaican Americans.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

For as long as I can remember, my maternal grandmother lived with us. She had her own room on the side of the house that was closest to the kitchen. My fondest memories of her were the delectable dishes she whipped up at a moment's notice from whatever scraps she could find in the pantry. On the other hand, the sound of her scolding voice that threatened to tell mom and dad what mischief I had been up to, caused me to both fear and respect her. Consequently, when our family migrated to the United States of America and to Canada, there was an unspoken understanding that grandma would be with us no matter where we went.

With her advancing years came the aches and pains of old age and the family had to decide what was best for her. My grandmother spent her summers in Canada, her winters in South Florida, and died peacefully with her only daughter and youngest grand-daughter at her hospital bedside on January 17, 1996. There were no regrets for her family had loved and cared for her in sickness and in health, and had made her as comfortable as was possible considering the failing health of her heart. Despite the fact that she needed assistance to ambulate and had to be monitored for fall precaution, at no time did we ever have a conversation that she would have been better cared for in a nursing home. She was our responsibility and assigning her care to someone outside of the family unit was not an option.

I never questioned whose responsibility it was to care for one's elderly parents until a few years ago when we celebrated my father's ninetieth birthday. He is nineteen years older than my mother and in reasonably good health. Mom, on the other hand, struggles with hypertension and the uncontrollable urge to eat whatever is in front of her then worries about it later. As a mental health professional working in the South Florida community, I have met many aging individuals

who have been placed in homes for the elderly. They have shared heartbreaking stories of not seeing their families in years or bemoaned the fact that they only see them once a year during the holidays. Growing up in a Third World country where the elderly hold a position of honor, and where grandparents frequently play as integral a role as parents, I found this phenomena startling and began to reflect upon the potential impact of my upbringing and cultural background on my perspective.

Despite the Jamaican American's ability to adapt to the American culture, much of their social norms and cultural identity remain intact, influenced by their African-based customs and heritage (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Lambert, Samms-Vaughan, Lyubansky, Podolski, Hannah, McCaslin, & Rowan, 1999). Many differences exist in the value placed on the family unit, education, child-rearing and disciplining practices, diet, and social activities. Adding to the knowledge base of what is already known about Jamaican Americans will help marriage and family therapists enhance their understanding of what caring for an aging family member means to the immigrant Jamaican American family.

This study seeks to understand how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents give meaning to caring for an aging parent in the cultural environment of the United States of America. Its aim is to specifically add data about adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents' perceptions of filial responsibility to the existing body of multicultural research literature. It is hoped that this study will uncover what values and norms change or remain as a result of the Jamaican American family's integration into mainstream American culture. In so doing, this researcher hopes that this study will add another perspective to the lived experiences of Jamaican American families living in South Florida, and create greater understanding of the phenomena experienced as they assimilate into a different culture.

Origins of the Researcher's Interest in the Topic

I was raised in a culture that values familism which is characterized by a strong sense of loyalty, solidarity among family members, and reciprocity (Marin & Marin, 1991). Magana (1999) identifies two aspects of familism: behavioral and attitudinal. She describes behavioral familism as “the actual behaviors of the family in providing and receiving support and demonstrating loyalty and solidarity” (Magana, 1999, p. 467). Attitudinal familism is concerned with “beliefs and attitudes that family members have about their family” (Magana, 1993, p. 468). In the Jamaican culture, decisions of a personal nature are based largely upon the impact that they may have on the family unit as a whole. This collectivist culture maintains a high level of interdependence, trust of each other, and a willingness to sacrifice one's own desires for the good of the family (Allen, 1988; Brent & Callwood, 1993; Gopaul-McNicol, 1993).

Being a working mother of two young sons, the daughter of elderly parents, and a doctoral student, I began to question what role I would play in the final years of my parents' lives, and secretly wondered what their feelings were regarding the matter. Would I balk at the prospect of having to care for my parents while raising my young sons and working full-time? I wryly acknowledged to myself that my own understanding of the problem had evolved since I had assimilated into the American culture which encourages individualism.

My early childhood environment was one in which the care of our elderly grandmother went unchallenged and was accepted as the norm. I could not help but think whether my own sons would be there for me in my old age. Still, a nagging thought occurred to me: did I want my children to take on the responsibility of caring for me should I become unable to care for myself? I prided myself on being open-minded and flexible but did I secretly expect my children to return the favor as I had made parental sacrifices for them throughout the years? I decided to clarify my feelings regarding whose responsibility it was to care for my parents and to process, as well, my

own expectations of my children. Who introduced the notion that children are expected to care for the elderly? What social implications are there, if any? How do families decide these matters and are they openly discussed?

Nature and Scope of the Problem

Filial responsibility is a term most often used to denote the sense of personal obligation that a child may feel with regard to the care of aging parents (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990). There is a growing body of knowledge regarding filial responsibility and the underlying motivations for care-giving among families. The concept of filial responsibility has been studied extensively within the United States, including related themes of filial maturity, piety, and obligation (Blenkner, 1965; Freeberg & Stein, 1996; Kim, Kim & Hurh, 1991; Matthews, 1995), and intergenerational reciprocity (Sherman, 2000). The literature has expanded over time to reflect the changing demographics in the United States, and studies have been undertaken to include parents (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987), spouses, and adult children (Barnes, Given & Given, 1992). With the growing number of immigrants to the United States, studies began to emerge that addressed filial responsibility among various cultural groups. Filial responsibility among Mexican American college students (Rudolph, Cornelius-White, & Quintana, 2005), expectations among African Americans (Hanson, Sauer, & Seelbach, 1983), Navajo expectations (Barber, Cook, & Ackerman, 1985), Korean Americans' expectations (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994; Lee & Sung, 1998), and filial expectations among older African Americans and Hispanics (Burr & Mutchler, 1999), have all been published. With the ever changing face of the United States, the uncertainty of Social Security, pressures of everyday life, and a rapidly aging population, families are inevitably faced with questions of how to care for and whose job it is to care for an aging family member.

Much of the multicultural literature's focus is on the African American individual and family: a group with whom many Jamaican Americans do not readily identify (McLaughlin, 1981; Thompson & Bauer, 2003). Thompson and Bauer (2003) report that migrants to the United States describe themselves "quite simply as Jamaicans" (p. 90), and reject the notion that they have become Americans, despite their American citizenship. McLaughlin (1981) states that Jamaicans who migrate to the United States still maintain a deeply connected network of family and friends years after their arrival in the United States. McLaughlin found that many reside within walking distance of family and West Indian friends, and have family members who are more likely to assist with child-care and during times of illness. McLaughlin's findings also report little or no reliance on formal organizations, which could be indicative of an increased tendency to be more dependent on the family unit for care-giving support in later life.

Triandis (1995) argues cultures that stress the importance of family, ancestral heritage, and respect for elders, are more likely to influence their members to demonstrate those behaviors denoting filial responsibility than those that embrace individuality and autonomy. Rudolph, Cornelius-White & Quintana (2005) reflect that consistent findings on filial responsibility are often difficult to find, due in part to the fact that ethnic groups are usually collapsed into a single category. What implications are there, if any, regarding the quality of care provided to these individuals who clearly have distinct needs that are separate from African Americans but who are viewed as African Americans simply by nature of their skin color (Thompson & Bauer, 2003)?

With that in mind, it is this researcher's intention to assist marriage and family therapists working with Jamaican American families increase their understanding of the difficulties faced by these families, the intricacies of their family structure, and how best to address the needs of family members. It is essential that marriage and family therapists take into account the

traditional and cultural expectations of Jamaican American families living in South Florida. The current study aims to add to the culture-specific filial responsibility literature by studying a sample of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, a group not previously studied, using a qualitative design.

Purpose of the Study

The progression of the Jamaican family's structure can be followed from the days of slavery on a plantation when the emphasis was on the mother-child relationship, to its evolution as a transnational family structure as proposed by several researchers, where the mother often migrated long before the child (Lambert, Samms-Vaughan, Lyubansky, Podolski, Hannah, McCaslin, & Rowan, 1999; Thompson & Bauer, 2003). These studies highlight the impact of assimilating to a new culture, stressors of racism, and remaining in a foreign country sometimes without proper visa status. In addition, assimilation into a new culture and the modernized cultural environment of the United States further exposes one to the trend of individualism (Lee & Hong-Kin, 2005). Under such conditions, existing family structures would likely be faced with decisions on whether or not to regroup by making adjustments to their cultural values and norms in order to assimilate into the new culture.

While there has been some comparison between children in the United States with children from Jamaica and issues related to treatment referrals (Lambert, Weisz, & Knight, 1989), there is an absence of information in the literature regarding adult Jamaican American children with parents in the later stages of life who are now either losing or limited in their ability to care for themselves. Questions arise as to how this further impacts the structure of the Jamaican family that has now been transplanted in the United States.

In the Caribbean, social norms encourage women to take responsibility for their dependent children and elderly relatives, and women tend to raise their children with the support

of an extended family network (Aymer, 2005). Aymer states that Caribbean women are more inclined to structure their work around the family and extended family, and to share whatever resources are available within the network. It is not unusual for mothers to leave their children in the care of another family member or close friend in their quest for employment and the hope for a better life for their children (Aymer, 2005). This strong emphasis on the family unit could arguably influence the level of obligation that some Jamaican American adult children may experience in later years when faced with the prospect of caring for an aging parent.

The changing national demographic profile of the United States and limitations of earlier research designs, point to the need for more studies that investigate filial responsibility expectations across cultural groups within the United States (Youn, Knight, Jeong, & Benton, 1999). Cowgill (1986) stressed that cultural influences have a direct impact on attitudes toward and the treatment of the elderly. Much of the research is based on survey and interview methods that seek to understand a cross-section of the United States' cultural melting pot; however, this does not specifically address Jamaican families living in the United States.

Three decades after Jamaicans began migrating to the United States of America in large numbers, Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties have become the cornerstones of the Jamaican American migration tale. According to the 2003 Census Bureau, South Florida is now home to approximately one-fifth of the country's estimated 825, 000 Jamaicans. With their rich African heritage, Jamaicans have made significant cultural contributions, particularly through their music, story-telling, poetry, dance, food, and business ventures (Kirkwood, 2002). More precisely, the presence of a growing and significant number of Jamaicans residing in the South Florida community indicates the need for studies reporting filial responsibility expectations among this group. Notably missing is data that informs the attitudes of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regarding filial responsibility that can provide a foundation for

agencies and mental health professionals who provide direct services to this rapidly growing group of aging citizens and their children.

Parents are frequently oblivious to the psychological stressors that the separation-reunification process have on children (Christiansen, Thornley-Brown, & Robinson, 1982). Hence, the parent may feel unappreciated by the child and may view the child as ungrateful of the sacrifices made by the parent in leaving their country of origin for the hope of a better life abroad. Rather than addressing the child's concerns, the parent may be inclined to discourage the child's expression of sadness, resentment, or even hostility following reunification (daCosta, 1976). One area that remains unanswered is what happens to the family dynamics over time if past hurts and disappointments are not sufficiently addressed between the parent and child. Does the family's migratory history and process of acculturation have any impact on the manner in which adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make decisions regarding filial responsibility?

The literature falls silent in following the evolution of the Caribbean/West Indian immigrant family, and the challenges, if any, that they face once the parent gets older and the child becomes an adult. There is an absence of information regarding the impact of the early migratory years on the now aging parent and adult child relationship, and whether or not earlier challenges, sacrifices, and conflicts have been resolved or still haunt the now older parent-adult child interaction. The Caribbean/West Indian family has a tendency to be very private regarding family affairs (Lashley, 2000), and marriage and family clinicians may find it difficult to establish a therapeutic alliance for this reason. As Lashley (2000) further points out, it is more often than not the family that is in dire distress that comes to the attention of the mental health practitioner, and who is often presented in the literature. Consequently, it is imperative that marriage and family therapists possess the knowledge necessary to develop and implement an

individualized course of treatment that is value and culture-specific for adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents. In addition, marriage and family therapists need to be well-informed about the psychological implications, social and cultural factors that impact how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of filial responsibility, and the process by which they make decisions on the subject.

This study will contribute to the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy on several levels: (1) Therapists will be able to gain a better understanding of the cultural and traditional values that come into play when Jamaican American families are faced with life-altering decisions like caring for aging parents; (2) The study may help facilitate scholarly discussion on similarities and variations that emerge between and among ethnic groups, when competing obligations such as personal resources, spouses, children, income, and jobs come into play; (3) it can give birth to questions that can further highlight some of the intricacies of the Jamaican American family structure and the multicultural factors that come into play for adult Jamaican American children and their aging immigrant parents; (4) it can serve as the basis for future studies to be conducted concerning the dynamics found among adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, and how this interplay impacts family relations and the negotiation of care-giving responsibilities; and (5) The study will help to underscore the importance of avoiding the pitfall of lumping various ethnic groups together, and appreciating the intricate variations of culture, tradition, and beliefs. Beyond the practical need for the expansion of research among ethnic minority groups, this study may provide marriage and family therapists with valuable information regarding the Jamaican American family's perception of how the American culture has or has not impacted their own integration into a new culture. This study will further validate the school of thought that immigrants to the United

States have significant differences in their history, culture, race and socioeconomic status (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001).

Significance of the Study

Americans 65 years or older numbered 36.3 million and represented 12.4% of the United States population or one in every eight Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). With an estimated 71.5 million Americans in this age group, the 21st century will bring challenges that are only now being researched and no definitive conclusions have been reached with regard to elder care. The precarious position of Social Security in the United States and the cost of public social services have raised numerous questions about the care of the elderly and whose responsibility it is to provide critical services to this population (Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994; Glazer, 1993; Pyke & Bengtson, 1996). What is the role of society and what implications are there for social programs and policies, including Medicare, income assistance for aging individuals and long-term care (Daniels, 1988; Wicclair, 1990)? Does the onus of responsibility lie with the family? What considerations should be given to the attitude of children regarding the care of their aging parents? Do children have an ethical obligation to help aging parents when it would require significant sacrifices? What psychological implications are there, if any?

There is a wealth of information regarding studies conducted on filial responsibility among Euro Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. Numerous studies have addressed the concerns that arise out of the filial responsibility debate but none have focused specifically on the immigrant Jamaican population (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Brody, 1990; Brody, Johnsen, Fulcomer, & Lang, 1983; Cicirelli, 1981; Hamon & Blieszner, 1990; Hanson, Sauer, & Seelbach, 1983; Lee, Dwyer, & Coward, 1993; Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994; Lee & Shehan, 1989; Rolf & Klemmack, 1986; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Wood, 1994; Seelbach, 1978). With the values and cultural beliefs of the Jamaican family unit embedded in the immigrant family, previous studies

conducted on nuclear families of other immigrant populations may not necessarily apply to the experience of the immigrant Jamaican American family living in South Florida. The lived experiences of the immigrant Jamaican American family regarding filial responsibility is likely to differ from other ethnic groups residing in the South Florida area.

This researcher's intent is to give voice to the immigrant Jamaican American family, thereby highlighting this group's unique qualities, and is not simply a replication of previous studies. This study aims to add to the literature of culture-specific filial responsibility by studying a sample of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, a group not previously studied. In addition to the practical need to add to the existing body of literature on filial responsibility, it is also important to study this population from the perspective of change and the stability of their values. This study will be an invaluable resource for counselors and marriage and family therapists in understanding the acculturation process, as well as the social forces and cultural issues that affect a family's decision-making process regarding filial responsibility. It is hoped that this study will lead to a more informed understanding of the potential clash and conflict between the strong support for family values in the Jamaican culture and the equally compelling value placed on being autonomous and individualistic that is stressed in the American culture.

This inquiry will be useful to: (a) healthcare providers; (b) marriage and family therapists and counselors who work with older Jamaican individuals and their families; (c) the general public in understanding the nature of family relationships among this group of individuals; (d) advocates who deal with issues concerning the growing older Jamaican immigrant population; and (e) educators in academia who develop curricula for healthcare professionals.

Theoretical Framework: Social Constructivism

The theoretical lens and guiding perspective that will provide the structure for this study is the Constructivist paradigm. Constructivism “assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 27). It is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own rules and mental models, which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences. The importance of Constructivism is best understood by comparing it with the opposite, more traditional approach in epistemology which sees knowledge as a passive reflection of the external, objective reality. This Positivist paradigm implies a process of “instruction”. That is to say, in order for one to get an image of reality, the subject must somehow receive the information from the environment: be “instructed”.

Constructivism proposes that there is much more complexity in the world, not just one reality. Hence, individuals generate a myriad of potential models, and that the role of the outside world is merely limited to reinforcing some of these models while eliminating others. Constructivists view knowledge as a constructed entity made by each person through a learning process. Therefore, knowledge cannot be transmitted from one person to the other but must be reconstructed by each person. Knowledge is relativistic (nothing is absolute, but varies according to time and space), and nothing can be taken for granted, as Positivism would suggest. Consequently, the thoughts, feelings and expressed experiences of the participants in this study are subject to these changes in reality. In Constructivism, the aim of inquiry is to understand and

reconstruct the constructions that people initially hold while remaining open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve.

In keeping with the Constructivist framework, this research will be used to expand the knowledge base of the adult Jamaican American child and his/her aging parent's reflections on filial responsibility, using a qualitative phenomenological approach. The methodological position in phenomenology, or one's view of the nature of reality, explores a world where meaning is constructed intersubjectively.

Through careful questioning, describing and interpreting (Slife & Williams, 1995), the researcher will be able to present the experiences of the participants in a manner that is more reflective of their own understanding. A study of how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents give meaning to filial responsibility and the process that their families embark upon with regard to care-giving, will not only broaden the existing knowledge base but will also serve as an information tool in the field of marriage and family therapy, for the experiences of this particular population. A qualitative study of this nature will allow the participants to have a voice: an act of emancipation, if you will.

The assumption is that there is no one true reality. Rather, there exist many realities garnered from the experiences of many individuals, which are captured through thick, rich descriptions of the participants' stories. Consequently, a formal literature review of the topic will be used to: (a) demonstrate what studies have already been done; (b) support the need for this study; and (c) demonstrate how a qualitative study of this nature will serve to expand the existing knowledge base.

It is anticipated that by studying how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of filial responsibility, a body of knowledge will emerge that will increase the understanding of the perceptions and attitudes toward support of the elderly in migrant

settings. Burr (1992) explores the possibility that contrary to past patterns of support, individuals are less inclined to depend on their families for support in later years. If this pattern persists, social services providers including family counselors and therapists, as well as institutions at large will be compelled to reevaluate how they provide services to this increasingly growing aging population.

Questions Guiding the Inquiry

The proposed questions guiding the inquiry will study the experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regarding filial responsibility. This researcher's primary concern is to identify a methodological approach that will support the cultural tendency of Jamaicans to relate their experiences through story-telling. The available information identified in previous studies that pertain to the concept of filial responsibility cannot be generalized to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, due to varying factors, including but not limited to the cultural and socioeconomic components. In addition, this researcher did not locate any information specific to the experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regarding filial responsibility. In order to contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of this group of individuals, and to develop a basis for further research in this area, a qualitative phenomenological method was chosen. A detailed description of the qualitative phenomenological approach, as well as the steps to be conducted in this inquiry is provided in Chapter III, as presented by Moustakas (1994).

The questions guiding the inquiry in this study are as follows:

1. How do adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?

2. What themes can be derived from these stories and how might they inform the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy as it relates to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents?

As mentioned before, this inquiry will be useful to healthcare providers, family, marriage and couples therapists and counselors who serve these clients, the general public, and policymakers. It will also be a source of information to educators in academia who develop curricula for healthcare professionals, as it will highlight the importance of broadening the knowledge base for adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents.

Definition of Terms

Adult child: This term will refer to a person who has reached the age of majority, generally accepted as 18 years and older (Retrieved February 22, 2009, from <http://www.yourdictionary.com/adult>).

Aging: For the purpose of this study, aging Jamaicans will refer to those who are 65 years and more. While acknowledging that this definition is somewhat arbitrary, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that most developed countries "...have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of 'elderly' or older person..." (Retrieved September 26, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/ageingdefnolder/en/print.html>). The WHO further states that there has been no numerical criterion assigned by the United Nations but adds that the United Nations confer that the line of demarcation for those considered to be the older population is 60+ years of age.

Immigration: the process of entering from one country to another to take up semi-permanent or permanent residence (Finlay, 2003; United States Census, 2000).

Integration: incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups (as races) (Retrieved November 25, 2008, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integration>).

Family: A fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children (Retrieved November 25, 2008, from <http://www.answers.com/topic/family>).

Jamaican: An individual born on the island of Jamaica located in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba (*World Factbook*, 2008).

Jamaican American: This term is used to describe an American of Jamaican heritage or Jamaican-born people residing in the United States of America (Retrieved December 5, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaican_American).

Overview

This chapter began with an introduction of the problem against the backdrop of the researcher's cultural upbringing. This was followed by the origins of this researcher's interest in the concept of filial responsibility. Literature that reflected the absence of studies regarding filial responsibility specific to the older Jamaican American population was introduced, and gaps in the literature were identified, thereby providing the justification for this study. The intended audience was identified and a brief overview of the theoretical framework that will serve as the foundation for this study was presented. The chapter ended with the research questions.

The subsequent chapters of this proposal are arranged as follows: Chapter II consists of a detailed review of literature specific to the concept of filial responsibility. It identifies the gaps in the literature as it pertains to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, which necessitate the rationale for this inquiry. Chapter III addresses the methodology to be used in this study, including a description of the phenomenological research, potential participant recruitment, data sources via interviews, data analysis, and general procedural steps to be used.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter introduces literature that has focused on the concept of filial responsibility among various demographic and ethnic groups, and underscores the lack of attention regarding how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of and experience filial responsibility. Societal and familial perspectives regarding the concept of filial responsibility are explored in order to provide a base for introducing the socio-cultural and familial structure of the Jamaican family. Empirical studies that include a review of both qualitative and quantitative research relevant to the topic of filial responsibility are also examined. A brief history of Jamaica is presented that includes the island's political and economic structure, as well as the religious, social and cultural values that help to form the Jamaican belief and value system. The chapter ends with the migration of the Jamaican individual to the United States, and factors that influence Jamaicans to leave their homeland.

Filial responsibility

Filial responsibility is multidimensional in nature and is comprised of psychological, societal, attitudinal, and familial dimensions (Donorfio & Sheehan, 2001). As a social norm, filial responsibility may be defined as the widely held expectation that adult children should support their elderly parents when the need arises (Cicirelli, 1988). It surpasses the expectation of one's behavior and focuses more on the duties and obligations that socially define the role of adult children in relation to their aging parents. There is a co-occurring sense of personal responsibility, attitude or belief, that the adult child is responsible for attending to the needs of the aging parent (Donorfio, 1996). The root meanings of filial piety can be traced back to Chinese literature where children are taught to care and provide for their parents with reverence

and respect (Sung, 1998). Filial maturity as discussed by Blenkner (1965) refers to an adult child's ability to accept one's aging parents as individuals and includes relating to and supporting one's elderly parents in an adult way. It requires self-acceptance, patience, and understanding, and exemplifies a relationship in which neither parent nor child is dependent on the other. Filial obligation can be defined in a relational sense where there is an expectation of what is considered to be appropriate behavior within the context of specific personal relationships with family across the life span (Stein, Wemmerus, Ward, Gaines, Freeberg, & Jewell, 1998). Cicirelli (1988) expanded upon the concept of filial obligation to highlight the presence of filial anxiety among children who worry well in advance about how they may or may not be able to care for aging parents.

Farran (2001) and Hunt (2003) recommend that more investigative research be conducted with regard to culture and gender differences in elder care. Matthews (1994) stresses the importance of incorporating the family and social context to better understand gender roles and filial responsibility. In addition, much of the literature has examined gendered family responsibilities, largely due to the fact that for many centuries, women have been viewed as the primary care-giving and support system within the family unit (Brody, et al., 1983; Cicirelli, 1981; Wood, 1994). In the late 1980s, a body of literature emerged that focused on male caregivers of elderly family members (Harris, 1993; Hirsch, 1996; Horowitz, 1985). What is absent from the literature, however, is information that will serve to expand culture specific knowledge regarding adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, and their respective expectations regarding late-in-life care-giving roles.

Filial responsibility to older parents is part of the broader concept of familism (Silverstein, Gans & Yang, 2006) in which the family takes precedence over individual interests. The concept of filial responsibility will be examined from several perspectives by discussing

previous literature that examines various aspects of this phenomenon. Studies that discuss the societal, familial, psychological, and attitudinal perspectives related to filial responsibility will be examined to underscore its multidimensional nature. These studies have highlighted other aspects of filial responsibility such as ambivalence toward care-giving, gender and culture-specific differences and similarities regarding care-giving, care-giving in multigenerational families, and the impact of care-giving for an elderly parent on the family. Gaps and inconsistencies within the literature on filial responsibility, particularly with regard to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents will be discussed. Studying filial responsibility attitudes of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents may help inform agencies about how these families make decisions regarding their loved ones. A study of this nature will also add to the culture-specific filial responsibility literature database.

Attitudes toward Aging, the Elderly, and Care-giving

Studies indicate that the proportion of African Americans who take advantage of formal care services such as hospice and nursing homes is much smaller in proportion to that of Euro Americans who use those services (Cagney & Agree, 1999; Wallace, Levy-Storms, Kington, & Anderson, 1998). In recent years, racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care, including mental health, have been brought to the attention of the research community. For example, several studies indicate treatment disparities in cardiovascular procedures (Chen, Rathore, Radford, Wang, & Krumholz, 2001), bone marrow and kidney transplants (Epstein, Ayanian, & Keogh, 2000), antiretroviral treatments for the human immunodeficiency virus (Moore, Stanton, Gopalan, & Chaisson, 1994), and aggressive cancer treatments (Bach, Cramer, Warren, & Begg, 1999). Disparities have also been identified in the provision of psychological and counseling services that help families and individuals with life-threatening or terminal illnesses to cope (Crawley, Payne, Bolden, Payne, Washington, & Williams, 2000). While old age is not

necessarily glorified in less developed countries like Jamaica, the older individual enjoys greater social status, due in part to traditional attitudes handed down from generation to generation in the form of story-telling. Much emphasis is placed on respect for aging individuals and Jamaican children learn at an early age that this is a natural part of one's moral education and socialization.

Some researchers have reported gender differences in filial behaviors (Horowitz, 1985; Matthews & Rosner, 1988; Stoller, 1990), highlighting the fact that adult daughters generally provide more assistance in the way of "...direct hands-on, intensive, instrumental, and emotional support tasks" (Blieszner & Hamon, 1988, p. 114) than adult sons. Sons were found to give service in the form of financial support, advice, and more physically demanding chores.

Societal Perspective

There appears to be a general consensus among Americans that there is some degree of filial norms and expectations within the family unit (Donorfio & Sheehan, 2001). Furthermore, the responsibility of caring for one's aging parents is significantly influenced by cultural expectations and values. This consensus, however, only serves to highlight the ambivalence that is intricately entwined with caring for elderly parents. Luescher and Pillemer (1998) discuss intergenerational relations and more specifically, define the ambivalence that frequently accompanies the relationship between parent and child in later life. They define intergenerational ambivalence as opposing forces within the parent-child relationship that cannot be reconciled. This ambivalence is believed to occur on two levels: the sociological level and the individual or psychological level. The first level encompasses those social expectations and norms that are inherent in one's culture. The second level takes into account emotions, motivations and thoughts at the subjective level. Studies conducted on intergenerational family relationships are an important component of the research literature (e.g. Allen, Blieszner, & Roberto, 2000; Baldock, 2000; Cantor, 1992; Luescher & Pillemer, 1998; Silverstein, et al. 2006). Litwak's

research in 1960 described the family relationship as “a significant form of social behavior,” (p. 394), and introduced the concept of a modified extended family that maintained familial cohesiveness regardless of geographical proximity.

With the advent of the Internet and other high technological means of communication, family members living at a distance from one another are better able to maintain and enhance contact with each other (Litwak & Kulis, 1987). In an effort to keep up with the communications revolution, the Jamaican government announced a plan in August 2004 that would provide free Internet access to poor communities across the island by the year 2010, by establishing 60 Internet centers across the country (Roach, 2004). Jamaican families once separated by migration and constrained due to limited economic resources are increasingly able to maintain family ties despite the geographic distance.

Bengtson’s theory of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) classifies filial responsibility norms as a dimension of normative solidarity. The theory suggests that social norms emphasize the importance of family relations, which serve to influence adult children to provide assistance to parents: it is an exchange of helping between generations (Lee, et al., 1994). Bengtson (2001) further proposes that the family unit is a richly laden latent resource that can be utilized during times of duress. Luscher and Pillemer (1998) report that the solidarity perspective of the family has come under much scrutiny and criticism as it assumes that an individual feels warmth, affection and attraction within the family, and tends to emphasize normative obligation and shared values across the generations. Hence, the authors opine that negative aspects of family life are more often than not interpreted as an absence of solidarity within the family, which does not take into account other circumstances that may hinder an adult child from providing care. Peek, Coward, Peek, & Lee (1998) describe this further when discussing circumstances such as child-rearing, marital conflict, and unemployment that

potentially limit the ability of an adult child to care for an aging parent. The authors state that even when the value of filial responsibility is embraced by children, it cannot be perceived to be an indicator of their intention or plan to provide support to their parents.

Silverstein, et al., (2006) explore the concept of filial responsibility as an aspect of social capital. Social capital is defined as a latent resource that accumulates over time when a person develops social relationships with others and provides them with resources or services, causing them to feel obligated to reciprocate and give something of value in return (Bourdieu, 1983). This accumulation of resources fosters a sense of obligation within children that compels them to reciprocate in later years when parents experience difficult times, and may lie dormant for years until triggered by extenuating circumstances such as the death of one parent or failing health (Silverstein, et al., 2006).

Values of collectivism have been overshadowed by values of individualism within the community and family life (Hareven, 1996; Putnam, 1995; Roberts & Bengtson, 1999). Some studies postulate that changes in the family structure caused by factors such as divorce and remarriage, may have contributed to the reluctance of adult children to care for aging parents (Crimmins & Ingegneri, 1990; Popoenoe, 1988). With an estimated 50% of marriages ending in divorce (Furstenberg, 1994), the face and structure of the American family has changed dramatically over the last half century. The twenty-first century is now home to remarriage, blended families, cohabitation, single-parent families, and same-sex relationships.

Boyd and Treas (1996) report that 60% of women over the age of 55 years have at least one living parent, and an estimated 20% of a woman's lifetime will be spent with a parent over the age of 65 years. Those demographics further support findings that indicate that daughters assume primary responsibility for elderly parents, despite contributions made by spouses, sons, and other care-giving groups. In the absence of a care-giving spouse, children are more likely to

fill that role (Cantor, 1992). Daughters are more likely to provide domestic help and personal care that is traditionally a female role, while sons are more likely to provide traditional role assistance such as home repairs and lawn work (Aronson, 1992; Chang & White-Means, 1991; Hequembourg & Brallier, 2005; Stoller, 1990). Women are especially impacted by care-giving as studies suggest that they are primarily the ones who assume this responsibility (Horowitz, 1978; Montgomery & Datwyler, 1992; Walker & Allen, 1991). As one research participant stated, "Care-giving is a full-time job" (Hogstel, Curry, & Walker, 2005/2006, p. 57). Consequently, studies have addressed the stressors and problems that affect caregivers (Hunt, 2003; Pot, Deeg, & van Dyck, 2000), conflict, family problems, isolation, and abuse (Marshall, Matthews, & Rosenthal, 1993).

While the American culture seems to embrace individuality, independence, and self-sufficiency, there is also ambivalence about the responsibilities associated with caring for elderly parents without it encroaching on one's personal life. Coupled with the prospect of caring for an elderly parent, many women and daughters are faced with the dilemma of also tending to their spouses and children. Luescher and Pillemer (1998) highlight the ambivalence that caring for one's parents can create while trying to fulfill the demands of other roles. Research also suggests that men in care-giving roles are typically without siblings, without sisters, or the only child that is geographically available (Campbell & Martin-Matthews, 2003).

Care-giving has been found to be a beneficial, rewarding, and fulfilling experience for many (Doka, 2004; Farran, 1997; Kramer, 1997; Marks, Lambert, & Choi, 2002). Caregivers are provided with the opportunity to repay a parent for the sacrifices made in earlier years and feel a sense of accomplishment in having provided for an aging parent (Hogstel, et al., 2005/2006). Caregivers can also feel satisfied by assisting other caregivers once their own care-giving responsibilities end (Bar-David, 1999). Non-Hispanic Euro Americans have been found to

respond less favorably than African Americans to the care-giving experience (Connell & Gibson, 1997; Dilworth-Anderson, Williams, & Cooper, 1999; Janevic & Connell, 2001), and are more likely to perceive it as being a burden (Hogstel, et al., 2005/2006).

Familial Perspective

From the perspective of the family, filial responsibility takes into account the relationships between and among family members and highlights the importance of those relationships in defining the nature and scope of family duties and responsibilities (Stein, et al., 1998). It acknowledges the presence of social norms but emphasizes that it is equally important for adults to take into consideration norms of obligation when dealing with family relationships.

Cicirelli (2006) proposes that an older mother who needs care-giving help is in a “position of reduced power relative to a care-giving adult child” (p.211). The theory is that the parent’s position has been impacted by declining cognitive skills (Denney & Pearce, 1989), and the relationship tends to be dominated by the family member who is in a position of power due to their authority, expertise, or interpersonal skills (March, as cited in Cicirelli, 2006, p. 210). Cicirelli opines that the older mother is more inclined to preserve the relationship because she is in a position of need and is therefore more likely to reach an agreement quickly in order to avoid conflict. Peek, et al. (1998) suggest that parents may generally expect more help from their children than they actually receive, which can potentially impact the family relationship and lead to disappointment and conflict.

Another argument proposed by Wicclair (1990) is that of past parental sacrifice and the obligation of adult children to reciprocate in later years. Wicclair reflects that parents make considerable sacrifices for children that would cause the latter to feel a sense of obligation to care for parents who eventually become dependent with age or as a result of illness. Wicclair opines that children who think their parents made substantial sacrifices for them would have a stronger

sense of obligation than children who perceived that their parents had been selfish, or worse still, children who had been abused, abandoned, or neglected by parents. Daniels (1988) argues that children do not directly ask their parents to make sacrifices for them and that parents perform duties for their children out of a sense of parental obligation and love.

Historically, African Americans have viewed formal institutions with suspicion, perhaps due in part to the perception that these institutions were exploitive (Miner, 1995; Seelbach, 1981). Some studies indicate a greater reliance on filial piety, a stronger family support system, and cultural beliefs that it is one's responsibility to care for one's own flesh and blood (McCallion, Janicki, & Grant-Griffin, 1997). Much of the research on minority families implies that acceptance of filial responsibility norms is greater among African Americans and Hispanics than among non-Hispanic Euro Americans (Hays & Mindel, 1973; Lawrence, Bennett, & Markides, 1992; Mindel, Wright, & Starrett, 1986; Zsembik, 1996). For African Americans, a long history of economic and social inequality and their struggle to level the playing field may have led to the development of an extensive support system between generations to increase the likelihood of survival (Rosenthal, 1986). Research conducted by Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody (1994) demonstrates that older African American individuals tend to rely on family and fictive kin for support in times of need. Their study implies there is a stronger sense of commitment to filial responsibility norms within the African American community. Another study conducted by Lee, et al. (1994) produced similar findings.

Empirical Studies

A review of the literature uncovered numerous empirical studies that highlighted varying perspectives of filial responsibility. Daniels (1988), Johnson (1996), and Luescher and Pillemer (1998) have discussed the societal perspective with regard to the role that society plays in influencing decisions families make regarding filial responsibility. The familial perspective has

also been studied (see Donorfio & Sheehan, 2001; Johnson, 1996, and Wicclair, 1990).

Examples of attitudinal perspectives that have been examined in the qualitative and quantitative literature include but are not limited to: differences according to gender (Hequembourg & Brallier, 2005; Matthews, 1995); socioeconomic status and race (Cagney & Agree, 2005; Williams, 2003); ethnicity (Choppelas, 2005; Pinqart & Sorensen, 2005); age, family composition (Barnes, Given, & Given, 1992); family life-cycle stage, and level of need (Donorfio & Sheehan, 2001). Factors that influence adult children's attitudes (Blieszner & Hamon, 1992), and circumstantial or situational factors (Brody, et al., 1983; Hanson, et al., 1983; Lee, et al., 1994; Thomas, 1993), have helped to increase the body of knowledge regarding filial responsibility. Cicirelli (1998) and Blenkner (1965) have studied filial anxiety and filial responsibility as a developmental stage, respectively.

Donorfio and Sheehan (2001) conducted a qualitative analysis using grounded theory, to explore the dynamics of the relationship between aging mothers and their daughters who provide care for them. Participants comprised of 11 mother-daughter pairs living in Connecticut and western Massachusetts: ten of the dyads were Euro American, the remaining pair was African American. The authors indicated that the research process, which took approximately 18 months, used the data-collection procedure of taping and transcribing information from in-depth semi-structured interviews, which were then coded and analyzed. Donorfio and Sheehan (2001) also reported that participants were encouraged to "freely share their personal narratives and experiences" (p. 47).

The authors acknowledge that the study itself was limited by the fact that it was geared toward the experiences of care-giving daughters and did not take into account sons who also provide care to aging parents. Secondly, the authors emphasize that, due to the small sample size, the study cannot be generalized to indicate any representation of the various types of mother-

daughter relationships in care-giving. Thirdly, the authors reflected that the low level of interpersonal conflict that was observed between the participants could be attributed to the fact that the study required the participation of both mother and daughter. A refusal to participate in the study by either a mother or daughter would naturally have eliminated that mother-daughter pair, and would therefore limit any conclusions that could be drawn.

Three distinct themes emerged from the study with regard to the care-giving daughters' sense of filial responsibility: undifferentiated, dispassionate, and mutually balanced. The authors described the undifferentiated care-giving daughter as one who is unable to differentiate between her roles of daughter and wife, thereby placing her mother's needs over that of her husband. The dispassionate daughter was described as lacking in communication and distanced from expressing emotions. The authors reflected that this daughter was less likely to have given any serious thought to the issue of filial responsibility. In contrast, the authors described the mutually balanced daughter as one who has a good working relationship with her mother, who has set clear limits in the relationship, and is able to communicate effectively with her parent.

Hequembourg and Brallier (2005) explored the similarities and/or differences between eight pairs of adult male and female siblings with regard to the distribution of responsibility when caring for elderly parents. Participants were recruited using advertisements throughout the Buffalo, New York and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina areas, and snowball sampling. A prerequisite of the study was that participants had to have a living parent aged 70 years or older who required assistance in performing tasks critical to independent living. The interviews which lasted 1 ½ hours were structured, in-depth qualitative interviews against the backdrop of grounded theory. The authors found that the distribution of tasks among the 16 siblings was greatly influenced by traditional gender perceptions about femininity and masculinity. The authors opined that despite the presence and assistance from male siblings, daughters were more

likely to carry the greater portion of responsibility for caring for an elderly parent than their male sibling.

A major limitation of the Hequembourg and Brallier (2005) study is that the racial/ethnic composition consisted only of Euro American participants, the majority of whom were middle-class. Secondly, the authors cautioned that the data gathered from the 16 adult care-giving children could not be assumed to be representative of the larger population of adult care-giving children. Thirdly, the authors reflected that the sample could have been biased in that those care-giving children who chose to participate may possess different characteristics than care-giving children who chose not to participate, thereby influencing the study's outcome.

Choppelas (2005) used both qualitative and quantitative methodology to study the differences among African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian caregivers with regard to the level of burden and stress they experienced as caregivers to older family members. The author found that there existed a range of emotions, from being accepting and using humor to cope with the responsibility, to feelings of resentment and guilt. A central theme that ran through the participants' experiences was their sense that it was their duty to provide care to that older family member.

Hamon and Blieszner (1990) conducted a quantitative analysis of a random sampling of 144 elderly parent-adult child pairs and found that both parents and children believed that there was some degree of filial responsibility that was the duty of the adult child. A stark limitation of this particular study is that of the 144 participants, 97.2% were Euro Americans, and were from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Rudolph, et al., (2005) sampled one hundred and thirty-six young adult college students of Mexican American heritage who resided in Laredo, Texas, a major gateway to the United States. Their quantitative analysis again emphasized the need for more in-depth studies among

specific cultures including Mexican Americans, to clarify the impact of immigration and acculturation, work schedules of adult caregiver children, physical proximity, frequent contact, and sharing holidays and special occasions, on the concept of filial responsibility among immigrant communities.

This study conducted by Rudolph, et al., (2005) had limitations in that it was a quantitative study with a relatively small sampling of Mexican American students, and an even smaller number of male students and Euro American respondents. The authors also indicated that due to differences in the way some of the questions were worded, some of the items could not be compared. The study also did not take into account the possible effect of the acculturation process on the outcome.

Pinquart and Sorenson (2005) used a meta-analysis to combine the results of 116 empirical studies that addressed variables found in the study of caregivers, such as their beliefs regarding filial responsibility, their coping mechanisms, psychological and physical health and resources, as well as stressors. The literature reviewed by the authors consisted of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Caucasian caregivers. A major drawback to this meta-analysis was the fact that the authors had available to them an insufficient number of empirical studies about ethnic differences, which limited their ability to compare variables. The authors opined that the results of their study underscored the need for more specific theories to explain the differences they found among the ethnic minority caregiver groups.

Much like other ethnic groups, Jamaicans are part of the group of Caribbean nationals of African descent who move between islands and countries, seeking a better life for their families. Frequently, this improvement in status is only realized much later by their children and/or grandchildren (Allen, 1988; Brent & Callwood, 1993; Gopaul-McNicol, 1993). The parental sacrifices, role ambiguities, adjustments, and stressors that many immigrant families face have

been documented in past studies (Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Lambert, Knight, & Weisz, 1989; McPherson-Blake, 1991). Lashley (2000) states that clinicians working with the Caribbean/West Indian youth may have difficulty comprehending the pattern of movement by the parents, especially the mother, to a foreign country, leaving their child(ren) behind to be cared for by other family members. Other studies have documented the problems that result when the child eventually reunifies with the parent in the new country (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Krauter & Davis, 1978; Lashley, 2000; Smith, Lalonde, & Johnson, 2004).

Turner, Wallace, Anderson, & Bird (2004) reflect that some of the cultural values related to the survival of the family unit include the nurturing of an extended family network, the value of children, respect for the elderly, and the primacy of kinship over all other relationships. Family members are the primary caregivers for the dependent elderly family member in the African American family (Dilworth-Anderson, et al.). It is their strong cultural sense of family values that has impacted the manner in which they define the care-giving experience (Hill, 1997). Similarly, Jamaicans have been long known for their tightly-knit network of blood and fictive relatives. What similarities and/or differences exist in the care-giving process and context of filial responsibility among Jamaican American families, and what implications are there for the marriage and family therapist serving this population?

Overview: The Island of Jamaica

Historical background

Jamaica is an island in the Caribbean Sea that is approximately 90 miles south of Cuba, 600 miles south of Florida, and 100 miles southwest of Haiti. It is approximately 50 miles wide and 150 miles long, with a total land mass area slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut in the United States. Approximately 80% of the island is defined by a range of mountains; the highest elevation of 7,402 feet is found in the Blue Mountains which are also known for the

famous coffee beans. The climate is tropical and is usually very hot and humid with the threat of hurricanes between August to October. Jamaica is divided into three counties that are further divided into parishes. There are 14 parishes in Jamaica, each with its own capital city. The capital city of Jamaica is Kingston where the head of government is located.

Jamaica was discovered in 1494 by Christopher Columbus who found native Taino or Arawak Indians living there who, after inhabiting Jamaica for centuries, were gradually exterminated and replaced by African slaves. Meditz and Hanratty (1989) indicate that at the end of the Spaniards' reign, the Jamaican population was approximately 3,000, which included the Spanish, their servants, and a few remaining Arawaks.

The island was seized by the British in 1655 who proceeded to establish a plantation economy of sugarcane, coffee, and cocoa, using slave labor. Plantation owners initially imported slaves from the Eastern Caribbean and later from the West Coast of Africa. The slave population exploded to approximately 350,000 by the early nineteenth century (Higman, 1976). Higman further states that a large number of African slave women had children for their plantation masters and the biracial population began to outnumber the Euro Americans who totaled approximately 16,000 in the years prior to emancipation. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, many of the freed slaves became farmers.

The country was ruled by the Spanish and the English for many years before finally gaining its independence in 1962 from England (Campbell, as cited in Buddington, 2002). Following the island's independence, a constitutional parliamentary democracy was created that composed of two major parties: the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). More recently, another political party emerged in response to what was perceived to be a combination of a stagnant Jamaican economy and a rapidly growing population. The National Democratic Movement was formed in 1995 by former JLP leader Bruce Golding, who broke

away from the JLP in an attempt to create a more stable and equitable society (Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaican_National_Democratic_Movement).

The people of Jamaica

It is estimated that the island of Jamaica is home to 2,758,124 people (The World Factbook, 2006). Its motto, “Out of Many One People” reflects the diversity of its people who came from different continents and are of different races and classes but who identify themselves as being Jamaican. The ethnic groups include African Americans, East Indians, Euro Americans, Chinese, and mixed groups. The family structure is matriarchal (Chevannes, 1988; Henriques, 1949), and it is estimated that more than one-third of Jamaican households are headed by women in the permanent absence of partners (Hamilton, 1997).

Language

The official language of Jamaica is English. Language separates Jamaicans across educational lines and is a clear delineator of class among Jamaicans (Douglass, 1992). The language is largely influenced by its British history and about 20 percent is derived from its African heritage, resulting in what is known as patois: the most widely spoken dialect on the island which is a combination of English and an Afro-centric syntactical structure (Buddington, 2002). Despite the fact that Jamaicans as a whole understand and can speak patois, patois as the primary form of communication in conversation denotes a lower class structure (Hamilton, 1997).

Class structure

Social class in Jamaica is predicated more by one’s location within the process of production (Beneria & Rolden, 1987), than by the color of one’s skin (Stone, 1973). “The material or economic role relationships are the principal determinants of both status and power and in the case of Jamaica, this dimension of stratification is best measured in terms of

occupational strata” (Stone, 1973, p. 7). The author further describes Jamaica’s class structure as comprising of (a) an upper class large scale business and property owners; (b) an upper middle class of professionals, college-level educators, medium-sized business owners, corporate managers and administrators; (c) a lower middle class of small-business owners, school teachers, white-collar workers and medium-sized property owners, and (d) a lower class of unskilled workers, agricultural workers, semi-skilled laborers, small peasants, and the urban and rural unemployed.

For many individuals living on the island of Jamaica, the difference in class structure reflects differences in education and training (Hamilton, 1997). Consequently, education is seen as a way out of poverty and most parents go to extreme lengths to ensure a good education for their children.

Religion

Religion plays a central role in the lives of most Jamaicans with an estimated 61% being Protestant (The World Factbook, 2006). The church is actively engaged in not only the politics of the country but can be found providing assistance in such areas as family planning, caring for the sick, social work, and literacy programs (Hamilton, 1997). The culture found on the island is comprised primarily from the beliefs, values, and attitudes of ancient African culture adapted to the New World (Chevannes, 1988).

Economy

Economic and political instability are two deciding factors that influence people’s decision to emigrate to another country (Allen, 1988; Cooper, 1985). Allen (1988) reflects that the poverty in Jamaica is so extensive that it severely impacts lower-class Jamaicans during most of their life time. In the 1970s, the country faced a rapidly deteriorating economy due to significant changes in the world economy, namely increased oil prices. The disparity between

export prices and the cost of imports was so great that then Prime Minister Michael Manley was forced to borrow large amounts of money from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to cover its balance of payments (Kirton, 1992). In an attempt to remain compliant with the stringent stabilization programs and structural adjustment policies of the aforementioned entities, the Jamaican government resorted to devaluing the Jamaican dollar. The result has been increasing food costs for items often imported and paid for with U.S. dollars, a reduction in income and employment, decreased availability of social services, and extreme hardship for many Jamaicans (Hamilton, 1997).

The unstable economic climate during the 1970s led to large-scale bloodshed as rival gangs, mostly associated with the JLP and PNP, fought for control of organized crime networks that involved drug smuggling rings and money laundering (The World Factbook, 2006). It was during this time that Jamaica saw the departure of large numbers of individuals in the private and public sectors who had been significant contributors to the Jamaican economy. Cooper (1985) argues that the high rate of migration during the late 1970s has a direct correlation to the then state of the Jamaican economy. Jamaica has never seemed to recover from the economic turmoil of the 1970s. Most recently, the number of employed individuals on the island in October of 2005 was 1,062,700, with an unemployment rate of 10.9% (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2005). Jamaicans continue to leave their island home for the United States of America, hoping for a better life for themselves and their families (Hamilton, 1997; Lambert, et al., 1999; Lashley & Coll, 2000; McPherson-Blake, 1991; Thompson & Bauer, 2003).

Coming to America

Jamaicans have typically migrated to the United States of America and other parts of the world for economic reasons (Smith, et al., 2004). The authors describe a staggered pattern of serial migration in which the parent or parents migrate to the new country first, followed by the

children at a later date. In the case of English-speaking Caribbeans, the mother is usually the first to migrate, and is able to obtain employment more easily than her male counterpart, because of the need for domestics (Thomas, 1992). Children who remain in the native country are usually placed in the care of a relative such as a grandmother, aunt, cousin, or close friend (Sewell-Coker, Hamilton-Collins, & Fein, 1985). Upon arriving in the United States, the parent is most likely to reside with a relative or friend until they become financially stable (Thomas, 1992). The separation of family members is frequently a source of stress and studies have been conducted to examine the impact of this phenomenon on children of immigrants (e.g., Gopaul-McNicol, 1998; Sewell-Coker, et al., 1985; Thrasher & Anderson, 1988).

During the period of separation, the parent will send money, food, and clothes to the children who remain in the native country (Thomas, 1992). This period of separation can last for several years during which time the parent is most likely to have missed significant and important developmental milestones of the child. The reunification of the parent with the child is described as the second stage of serial migration (Smith, et al., 2004). This reunification often results in conflicts related to family relationships, discipline, and communication (Lashley & Coll, 2000; Sewell-Coker, et al., 1985). It is well-documented that Caribbean immigrants leave their host country for the United States in the hopes of having a better life, gainful employment and educational opportunities (Lashley & Coll, 2000; Sewell-Coker, et al., 1985; Smith, et al., 2004).

Given the preceding discussion, the questions guiding the inquiry to be addressed by the proposed study are as follows:

1. How do adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?

2. What themes can be derived from these stories and how might they inform the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy as it relates to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents?

Summary

The chapter presented literature that have addressed the concept of filial responsibility and highlighted gaps in the literature that demonstrate the need for research involving adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents' experience of filial responsibility. Societal and familial perspectives regarding the concept of filial responsibility were examined and a history of Jamaica was presented in order to increase understanding of the social, economic, and cultural values that help to form the Jamaican belief and value system. A discussion of the circumstances surrounding the Jamaican individual's decision to migrate to the United States followed. The chapter ended with the central research questions to be presented to participants during the research process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

In trying to understand the experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents with regard to filial responsibility, several questions surface: What methodology can be used to enter their world in order to better understand their beliefs, values, and feelings? How can one present to others the meanings that adult Jamaican American children and their parents hold for their experiences? How do the past parental sacrifices of the Jamaican immigrant parent impact or influence the child's perception of filial responsibility in the later years? Do Jamaican immigrant parents expect more of their children because of the migration experience? Are children of immigrant Jamaicans more likely to feel a greater sense of obligation to their aging parents because of the stories they have been told regarding the obstacles their parents faced in coming to a foreign country? These questions call for a methodology that does not attempt to explain, predict, or control outcomes, but rather offers thick, rich descriptions of the lives and lived experiences of this group.

Since the purpose of this study is to help broaden the knowledge base regarding adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents and increase understanding of the decision process by which these adult children provide care to aging parents, the qualitative mode of inquiry is selected, using a phenomenological methodology. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), "The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it" (p. 222). In this chapter, factors which are taken into consideration when determining the methodology for a study, and the basic purpose and assumptions of qualitative research are addressed. An overview of the procedures that will be utilized for this particular study will be provided.

Design of the Study

Selection of Methodology

Selecting an appropriate methodology is one of the most important considerations when conducting research, and demands that the researcher has a clear understanding of the purpose of the study, the question that is being investigated, and the available resources (Patton, 1990). Whereas quantitative studies place emphasis on "...the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables..." (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8), a qualitative design emphasizes the processes and meanings that grow out of the study. It is also essential to understanding the various theories of knowledge associated with each mode of inquiry. Modes of inquiry can be classified into three categories or paradigms: positivistic, interpretive, and critical social science. The aim of positivistic research is to predict, explain, and control. Interpretive modes of inquiry aim to understand meaning. Critical social science theory is a combination of both positivistic and interpretive research, and aims to emancipate people from oppressive situations.

Qualitative research is inductive by nature in that it attempts to uncover themes that emerge from data collected about a particular phenomenon. Process, meaning, and detail are essential aspects of the qualitative design and are indispensable when conducting explorative research that involves social phenomena. The ability to know more about process implies having information to manipulate, control, adjust, interrupt, or change the process, and in so doing, impact the outcomes and effects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The researcher must carefully question, describe, and interpret the information being presented.

For the quantitative researcher, the world exists independently and we can come to know it by being objective and using a value-free stance. The qualitative researcher believes that there is no one true reality: that multiple realities exist because they are constructed from our social

interactions. Whereas the quantitative researcher relies heavily on examining and measuring in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, and frequency, the qualitative researcher is "...an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meanings of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language" (Creswell, 1998, p. 14). Using in-depth interviews and observation, the researcher becomes an active participant who collaborates with and spends time in the field with the participants. Hence, the researcher is not merely a distant observer but is able to coexist as an observer and a participant in a collaborative relationship with the individual being interviewed. The researcher allows the participant to describe their experience with the phenomenon in language that is native to their experience (Slife & Williams, 1995).

Unlike quantitative studies, the qualitative approach attempts to capture the view of the participant using detailed interviewing and observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Traditional investigations tend to create a contrived environment as the research subject is placed in an experimental situation that does not usually reflect the subject's experience (Creswell, 2000). Using a qualitative design for this study will allow the researcher to observe the participants as they confront the rigors of everyday living in their social environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This study will provide adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents with the opportunity to relay thick, rich descriptions of their world and the concept of filial responsibility, as they experience it. This would not be possible in a quantitative design where the researcher would be on the outside looking in.

Research Paradigm

A paradigm can be defined as a set of basic beliefs that deals with "ultimates or first principles" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 200). It signifies a worldview that defines the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and one's relationships with the world. Denzin & Lincoln

(1998, p. 26) state, “All research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.” The qualitative researcher therefore enters the research process and takes an inside-out or emic point of view. The authors further state that this stance allows the qualitative researcher the opportunity to “adopt particular views of the “other” who is studied” (p. 23). In contrast, the quantitative researcher’s view is from the outside-in or etic standpoint which allows for studies that rely on inferential and empirical material. A paradigm encompasses the three critical elements of epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Epistemology is the study of knowledge and is concerned with how we know the world, and the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and that which is known. Ontology is the study of being and the nature of reality.

Unlike the conventional social science researcher, a phenomenological study emphasizes processes and meanings, and strives to preserve as much as possible the natural setting of the participants. In addition, qualitative researchers are able to get closer to capturing the individual's point of view through detailed interviewing and observation. The researcher is not merely a distant observer but is able to coexist as an observer and a participant in a collaborative relationship with the individual being interviewed. In essence, the researcher is able to capture the reality of the situation. Information is gathered from an emic (inside) perspective as opposed to the etic (outside) stance adopted by the quantitative researcher.

The lived experience is described by van Manen (1990) as that which is lived by an individual or a group of individuals at a given place and time. For this study, the lived experience of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents is specific to the South Florida area. In utilizing a qualitative design and phenomenological approach, the researcher hopes to retain and effectively communicate the meaning of that lived experience to this particular group of people. The researcher will then be able to relay rich descriptions of the experience of filial

responsibility from the perspective of the Jamaican American participants, thereby giving greater meaning to the experience.

Interpretive research

Interpretive research includes several categories of theory including but not limited to ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Retrieved August 8, 2006, from the World Wide Web at: <http://openet.ola.bc.ca/sociglossary/interp.html>). It provides a means of gaining understanding of how individuals interpret and give meaning to their lived experience, and is more accepting of free will. Interpretive research is based on ontological questions of what it means to be human: that is, the meanings individuals give to their lived experiences (Benner, 1994; Leonard, 1994, Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1990). It is related to the symbolic interactionist tenet that meanings are constructed and expressed through language (Mead, 1934). Van Manen (1975) states that the aim of interpretive research is to understand how individuals perceive, interpret, plan, act, feel, value, and evaluate the social world from the perspective of the individual living through the experience. Lived experiences may be revealed through an individual's facial expressions, gestures, actions, signs, and symbols (Mahajan, 1992). Mahajan expresses the belief that such expressions of lived experiences have the power to invoke in the researcher a greater sense of what the participant expresses.

Interpretive research is inductive in that it develops insights, understanding, and concepts from the information being collected, rather than collecting data to assess a preconceived set of notions or hypotheses. Whereas traditional research was conducted within the positivistic mode of inquiry, interpretive research seeks to examine the whole rather than a set of variables. It is the study of an individual's experiences in the context of their past and the situations in which they find themselves (Mahajan, 1992). Hence, participants in this study will be encouraged to express through language their perception of filial responsibility within their family unit and then the

researcher will “interpret” or code their words. The aim of interpreting in this context is to reveal in the participants’ own words their perception of filial responsibility, and does not involve an imposed meaning.

When dealing with reliability and validity, phenomenological researchers utilize a different language: credibility, transferability, trustworthiness, confirmability, and dependability, all of which will be discussed toward the end of this chapter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The focus of interpretive research is to describe the lived experience of the participant while attempting to avoid imposing an outsider’s perspective (Benner, 1994; Merleau-Ponty, 1956). This approach argues the point that the lived experience or the individual’s perception of the world may not necessarily correspond to how the world actually “is,” but is the only “truth” the phenomenological researcher seeks (Boyd, 1993).

Major Assumptions

The researcher reflects on potential biases by bracketing any preconceived notions and seeks to understand the participant’s reality (Kvale, 1996). The profound emphasis on meaning, valuing the lived experience of the participant, gaining insight into the participant’s perspective and reality, and taking a stance of not knowing are significant pillars of the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology and are central principles that will be used to guide this study (Boyd, 1993; Kvale, 1996).

In bracketing, the researcher refrains from judging and avoids perceiving things as one is accustomed to do on a day-to-day basis. The researcher’s understanding of the everyday life and world, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the researcher must learn to see the essence of what is presented to him. Moustakas (1994) reflects that individuals hold knowledge judgmentally: that “we presuppose that what we perceive in nature is actually there and remains there as we perceive it” (p. 33). As a Jamaican immigrant with aging parents, this researcher

unquestionably has preconceived notions and feelings regarding the concept of filial responsibility and whose responsibility it should be to care for aging parents. In conducting this qualitative phenomenological study, all prejudgments will be bracketed to avoid bias and capture the essence of the lived experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, as well as to protect the validity of the study (Thorne, 2000). To clarify and bracket any biases the researcher might have, it is essential that the researcher comments on “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 202).

Bracketing in phenomenological research requires a new way of looking at the world. This suspension of all reference to the reality of the thing experienced leaves the philosopher with nothing but the experience itself, which Husserl divided into the "noesis" (act of consciousness) and the "noema" (object of consciousness). Because the mind can be directed toward nonexistent as well as real objects, Husserl noted that phenomenological reflection does not presuppose that anything exists, but rather amounts to a bracketing of existence or epoche (Greek for “a cessation”) that is, setting aside the question of the real existence of the object in question (Retrieved August 15, 2008, from the World Wide Web at <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/husserl.html>). Hence, Husserl called acts such as remembering, desiring, and perceiving and the abstract content of these acts, meanings. The researcher seeks to discover the world as it is experienced by those involved in it. It explores the nature of the human experience and the meaning that people attach to those experiences.

Phenomenology

The founder of phenomenology, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, proposed that phenomenology is the study of the structures of consciousness that enable consciousness to refer to objects outside of itself. Heidegger (1977) describes phenomenology as a term used to

describe a movement in the social and human sciences that has the primary objective of describing a phenomenon as it is consciously experienced. It is a study of experiences that asks the question: What makes something what it is? (van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological researchers believe that there is no one true reality because there are multiple ways of interpreting an experience, and that a person's interpretation is what constitutes reality for that individual (Tesch, 1988).

In phenomenology, the emphasis is on understanding the person's experience of the world and their situation using narrative accounts and qualitative interviews. Van Manen (2002) opines that it is an "influential and complex philosophic tradition that has given rise to various related philosophical movements such as existentialism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism, culture critique, and various forms of analytical and new theory" (Retrieved August 15, 2008, from the World Wide Web at <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/1.html>). It is a 20th-century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences. Creswell (1998) states this type of study "describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon" (p. 51).

Van Manen (1984) describes phenomenological inquiry as a study of lived experiences of the world as we experience rather than as how we conceptualize it. It is the study of essences that awaken deeper meaning behind those experiences. It is also an attentive practice of thoughtfulness that searches for what it means to be human, and it is a poetizing activity. Using thick descriptions, the researcher's aim is to present a vivid account of the lived experience of the participant.

In the first chapter of “The Interpretation of Cultures,” (1973) Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist, adopts the term “thick description,” which was first used by philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1971). It was Ryle who first pointed out that in the absence of context, we have no understanding or knowledge of what a wink means. He reflects that it might mean a person is attracted to us, that they understand what we mean, or it might be an attempt to secretly communicate with us: the meaning changes as the context changes. Geertz argues that all human behavior is like this and the task of the researcher is to explain the context of the act, experience, or phenomenon so that it becomes meaningful to the onlooker. This is the essence of thick description: it is both interpretative and analytic in nature.

The phenomenological study requires reflection on the content of the mind to the exclusion of everything else. Husserl (1931) called this type of reflection the phenomenological reduction. It is phenomenological because it transforms the world into phenomena. It is called reduction because it brings us back to the source of the meaning. In this reduction, not only extraneous opinions, but also all beliefs about the external existence of the objects of consciousness, are bracketed.

In phenomenological research, a relationship always exists between the external perception of natural objects in the world and the individual’s internal perceptions, judgments, memories, and other cognitive processes (Moustakas, 1994). The application of the phenomenological approach to this study on how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of and give meaning to filial responsibility will provide an outlet for these individuals whose voices have not been adequately represented in the literature.

The phenomenon of how adult Jamaican American children and their parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility occurs within a social context of culture, values and norms, behavior, attitudes, and family relationships. Any inquiry about filial responsibility should

therefore include an analysis of the interaction between the individual and social paradigms of those who have experienced this phenomenon. This is critical to understanding the experiences of these immigrant families and allows for a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon through the eyes of those who have lived it.

Description of Sample

The following segment describes the procedures and steps followed by the researcher while conducting this particular study. The criteria for recruiting and selecting, the method of interviewing, data sources, collection, and analysis procedures are addressed. The chapter ends with the measures and procedures that were utilized in order to protect the reliability and validity of the information gathered.

Selection of participants

Hycner (1999) states “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants” (p. 156). The qualitative sampling approach that was used is convenience sampling due to the large immigrant Jamaican American population residing in South Florida that was easily accessible to this researcher. In convenience sampling, participants are primarily selected due to ease of access to the researcher, and secondly, for their knowledge of the lived experience (Patton, 2002). The sample was selected based on the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), in an effort to identify individuals who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). For the purpose of this study, participants included individuals who had already made sense of the concept of filial responsibility, and/or individuals who were in the process of making care-giving decisions within the family unit.

On the approval of this researcher’s proposal, flyers were distributed to local businesses frequented by Jamaican Americans. Relevant research information was included in the flyer,

specifying the voluntary nature of participation in this research, and the ability of a participant to withdraw from the study at any stage (Appendix E).

In order to obtain an atmosphere where valid themes and concepts could be obtained, the researcher believes that, though not a significant concern for the phenomenological design, a sample size of 3 adult Jamaican American children and one aging parent from each family, represented a reasonable size. As stated by Creswell (1998), the significance of the sample size lies in its ability to describe the meaning ascribed to the phenomenon by a small number of individuals who have experienced it. Participants who met the criteria for participation in the study had experience regarding the phenomenon of filial responsibility among adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents. Participants were male and/or female residents of South Florida over the age of 65 years who had adult children with whom they maintained contact. As mentioned before, the WHO has stated that the chronological age of 65 years has been accepted by most developed countries to define older individuals. Boyd (2001) considers two to 10 participants as enough to reach saturation, and Creswell (1998, p. 122) suggests “long interviews with up to 10 people” for a phenomenological study. Hence, a sample size of 6 participants, that is, 3 adult Jamaican American children with a parent over the age of 65 years who were willing to participate in the study, and who resided in the South Florida area, met the sampling criteria.

Once potential participants were contacted by this researcher following the approval of this study, the researcher conducted an initial screening to determine whether or not potential participants met criteria for the study, and to provide information regarding the voluntary nature of participation in the study (Appendix A). The initial screening sought to identify participants’ eligibility to participate in the study by determining their age, ethnicity, residency, and

willingness to participate in the study. Information was also provided to potential participants advising them of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the process.

Data-management Procedures

Data selection

Four basic types of information to collect have been identified by Creswell (1998). They are observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials. The chosen method of data collection for this study primarily involved in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended, audio-taped interviews with 3 older Jamaican Americans and one adult child per parent that was transcribed by the researcher. Interviews consisted of one parent 65 years and older, and an adult child that was 18 years and older. Each participant was interviewed separately and adult children were not interviewed in the presence of their aging parent, and vice versa.

Whenever appropriate and/or possible, the researcher utilized observation to gather field notes. The researcher also kept a journal during the research study to record personal reflections of the interview process. Journaling the researcher's thoughts, feelings, emotions, and reactions helped to bracket personal preconceptions, enter the life world of the participant, "allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The journal entries also served as the initial step in the analysis process (Moustakas, 1994). Participants were encouraged to provide any additional sources of information that they considered may have been helpful in understanding their experience.

Data collection procedures

One of the most frequently used forms of data collection in phenomenological research is the long interview, which is informal, interactive, and utilizes open-ended comments and

questions (Appendix C) (Moustakas, 1994). It is an effective means of gathering information that is used to classify, analyze, and interpret data in order to extract meaning and make sense of an experience (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). Narrative interviewing is continuous, flexible, and iterative: continuous because it allows the researcher the flexibility to redesign the line of questioning throughout the research; flexible because it gives the researcher leeway to adjust the line of questioning as the interview process may shift focus or change; iterative because through repetition and constant review of the data collected, the researcher is able to understand the phenomenon being studied.

Interviews were conducted, audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher after obtaining approval from the university's Institutional Review Board and informed consent forms signed by the participants (Appendix B). Information collected for a phenomenological study primarily involves in-depth interviews, and "in-depth interview lasting as long as 2 hours," with as many as 10 subjects represents a reasonable sample size (Creswell, 1998, p. 122). This researcher field tested potential questions with a Jamaican American acquaintance so as to formulate the interview protocol. The interview consisted of several open-ended questions that were also provided in written form to the participants. Participants were asked to participate in two interviews: an initial tape-recorded information-gathering meeting lasting between 1 to 2 hours, and an hour-long follow-up interview for participants to review their own transcript for accuracy. The follow-up interview was not recorded.

Participants had the option of meeting with the researcher at a suitable and convenient location. The collected information was not linked to protect the identity of the participants' and preserve the integrity of the data. To protect the rights of the participants, the researcher completed the required Human Subjects Protocol form and submitted samples of the consent form and interview questions to the Institutional Review Board. The collection of detailed

information about the participant's lived experiences presented the researcher with thick and rich information out of which evolved themes that were organized and analyzed in a manner that led to increased dialogue and understanding regarding the phenomenon (Kvale, 1996).

Memoing and reflections of the researcher was an integral part of the data collection process. Memoing consists of field notes of the researcher that identifies what the researcher hears, thinks, sees, and experiences in the course of collecting data and reflects upon the process. In the field, the researcher can easily become absorbed in data collection and may fail to reflect upon the research process. Memoing helps to differentiate between descriptive notes and reflective notes such as feelings and impressions (Groenewald, 2004). Systematic reflection during the interview process is an essential aspect that can uncover meaningful and important information and may enhance its soundness (Chenail & Maione, 1997). The integrity of data collection can be influenced by the clinical experience of the researcher and has the potential to detract from or enhance the interviewing process. Taking that into consideration, it is critical that personal and/or clinical experiences related to the research are disclosed and attended to in order to avoid latent bias and/or interpretation. One way that the researcher can make his or her assumptions evident is to reflect on his or her own sense-making process by asking rigorous questions of himself or herself. The combination of the clinician's own sense of the phenomenon in question, the clinician's sense of the sense-making attempts of others in the field regarding the phenomenon, and the clinician's sense-making of the information generated from the study will provide insight into the relationship that exists among these three areas (Chenail & Maione, 1997).

Easton, McComish and Greenberg (2000) caution researchers about equipment failure and environmental conditions that might hamper the study, therefore, in addition to audio-taping the interviews, the researcher used an interview protocol (Appendix D), which is described as "a

predetermined sheet on which one logs information learned during the observation or interview” (Creswell, 1998, p. 126). Groenewald (2004) states that field notes are considered to be a secondary storage method for data in qualitative research. The interview protocol served as an aid to the other two forms of recording methods, and assisted the researcher in recording notes and making observations in the field about the responses and body language of the interviewee.

Finally, transcripts were read and reread in an effort to identify significant statements, the end result being a comprehensive list of non-repetitive statements that did not overlap (Creswell, 1998). Participants were provided with a hard copy of their respective transcripts within two weeks of the first interview so that they could review same for accuracy. A follow-up interview was conducted to verify the accuracy of the transcript. Having explained the data-gathering methods, the data storage will be explained next.

Protecting the rights of participants

In order to ensure ethical research, written and informed consent (Appendix B) was provided to and required of participants (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996). The privacy and confidentiality of the participants was honored and is outlined in the consent form that includes the following information based on Bailey’s (1996) recommendations: (a) That they were participating in research; (b) The purpose of the research; (c) The procedures involved; (d) Potential risks and benefits of the research; (e) The voluntary nature of participation in the research project; and (f) The procedures that were employed in order to protect the participant’s confidentiality (Creswell, 1998, Kvale, 1996; Street, 1998). All information or data that was gathered over the course of conducting the study was secured in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher’s home office. This included any written transcripts, audio recordings, photographs, written personal communications, or computer discs that were acquired during the interview process. Audio-tapes and computer discs were destroyed after completion of the

transcription process and following verification by the participants that their respective transcript was an accurate account. Other documents including the researcher's personal notes and communications, photographs, participants' signed consent forms, and transcripts will be preserved for a period of five years after which they will be destroyed.

Due to the personal nature of the phenomenon being investigated, participants were informed of the potential risks involved in participating in such a study. Participants were advised that interviews would be immediately terminated should a participant become emotionally distressed. They were also informed that referrals for mental health intervention would be provided at the participant's request, and if a participant chose to withdraw, any collected data would be immediately destroyed. Participants were also provided with the researcher's contact information if the need arose following the completion of the research project.

Data storage

As previously mentioned, every effort was taken to protect the integrity of the information obtained from participants during the course of conducting the interviews. Consequently, each participant was assigned a code to mask that individual's name. Each interview was recorded on separate audio tape units and labeled with the corresponding assigned interview code. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible and were saved on multiple hard drives including an external hard drive connected to the researcher's personal computer, to minimize the possibility of the data being lost. The personal computer was located in the home office of the researcher's residence and was password protected. Physical evidence such as computer discs, cassette tapes, and field notes including interview protocols that were obtained from the interview process were secured in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's

home office. Additionally, a file was also maintained that contained paperwork applicable to each participant that included items such as the informed consent, interview and field notes, data analysis notes, draft of transcripts, participants' confirmation and/or comments regarding the transcript and interview analysis, and any additional communications between the researcher and participants (Groenewald, 2004).

Data analysis

The method that was utilized to analyze the phenomenological data in this study is outlined by Moustakas (1994). Each participant's transcript underwent the following steps:

1. **Horizontalization:** This is the process by which the researcher selected, listed, and grouped the significant statements of each participant so as to identify all expressions that were relevant to the phenomenon. More specifically, van Kaam's (1959, 1966) criteria for determining horizons as outlined in Moustakas (1994) include the following considerations: (1) does the statement capture a moment of the experience that essential and sufficient enough to understand the experience, and (2) can the statement be extracted and labeled? Moustakas (1994, p. 118) goes further and states that every statement or horizon that is "relevant to the topic and question," must be treated as "having equal value."
2. **Reduction and elimination:** After the list of relevant meaning was developed, the researcher carefully reviewed the material to eliminate redundant units (Moustakas, 1994). Statements that did not meet the above-noted requirements were eliminated, as was statements that overlapped, or were repetitive or vague. The statements or horizons that remained represent the invariant constituents of the experience. Moustakas (1994, p. 128) explains that the invariant constituents (or horizons) "point to the unique qualities of an experience, those that stand out." The process of identifying invariant constituents is

similar to the process of delineating units of meaning as described by Creswell (1998), Holloway (1997), and Hycner (1999). Reading the transcripts several times and combining it with the researcher's notes of the participants' nonverbal communication eventually resulted in the reduction of the transcript into several horizons.

3. Clustering and thematizing invariant constituents: the horizons were grouped together and labeled under common themes or core categories. Moustakas (1994, p. 131) explains that as a result of this process, the researcher, "using phenomenological reflection and imaginative variation," is able to construct a clear and true portrayal of the themes identified in the participants' experience.
4. Final identification of invariant constituents and themes by application: The researcher again reviewed the groupings of themes to determine and ensure that they were valid and true to the transcript, and that they were compatible with the data gleaned from the transcript. If not, they were eliminated.
5. Construct an individual textural description of the experience: this is the weaving together of "the general description of the experience" (Creswell, 1990, p. 55) of what was experienced by the participants, and includes verbatim examples from the transcribed interviews.
6. Construct an individual structural description of the experience for each participant: this is a rich description of the participants' thoughts and feelings related to how the phenomenon was experienced, and "provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135).
7. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon: Moustakas (1994) describes this step as the integration of both textural and structural descriptions to synthesize the "meanings and essences of the experience" (p.

135). This process can be likened to the “thick description” made famous by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973). Denzin (1989) best describes this practice as narrative that “presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships, and evokes emotionality and self-feelings . . .” (p.83).

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of a qualitative study such as this was verified using peer review, clarifying the researcher’s bias, member checks, and rich, thick description (Creswell, 1998). Moustakas (1994,) believes that the first step in establishing the truth is for the researcher to first reflect upon his or her own feelings and then turn outward to the participant who has experienced the phenomenon. The validity of the study is enhanced through this series of “back-and-forth social interaction” (Creswell, 1998, p. 207). Qualitative research is deemed to be trustworthy when it stands as an accurate representation of the thoughts, feelings, and views of the participants (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Krefting (1999) states that the misrepresentation of data is minimized once the qualitative researcher accurately translates the perspectives of the participants into data.

Creswell (1998) describes the eight verification procedures that are frequently used in qualitative studies, namely, external audits, member checks, rich, thick description, peer review, negative case analysis, triangulation, clarifying researcher bias, and prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field. Creswell (1998, p. 203) identifies triangulation, writing detailed and thick description, and member checks as “reasonably easy procedures to conduct,” popular among researchers, and cost effective. The author recommends that researchers conducting a qualitative study should engage in at least two of the eight procedures for verification purposes. Creswell (1998, p. 208) echoes the sentiments of Polkinghorne (1989) who suggests that a study can be deemed valid if the idea is “well grounded and well supported.”

This researcher established an audit trail that will be useful in future evaluations of the method used in the study, as well as the replication of the study. As such, the researcher was committed to maintaining accurate and detailed records of the data generated, the methods used to generate the data, and the steps and procedures involved in the execution of the study. In establishing an audit trail, the researcher ensures the confirmability of the research study, which is a process that underscores the thinking and evidence that produced the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The peer reviewer helps to keep the researcher honest (Creswell, 1998) by asking questions about the methods used in the study, the meanings and interpretations that evolved, and can also provide support to the researcher by listening to the researcher's retelling of the experience. This researcher enlisted the aid of two peers to serve as reviewers to verify the information provided in the study. Peer reviewers were provided with typed copies of the study. Both individuals had executed research studies and were able to assist this researcher in maintaining the integrity of the study by keeping the pattern of the research together logically (Cresswell, 1998). This researcher approached two additional peers and asked that they stand-by in the event the original peer reviewers were unable to assist, or changed their minds.

Member checks were also done as it is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher asked participants to review the draft of the study and to provide feedback on the findings and interpretations found therein (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This step was completed following the transcription of the interviews and later during the follow-up interviews. Using member checks is also another way of enhancing the credibility of the study (Guba, 1981). Once credibility of the findings is established, it is safe to say that the study is also dependable as both are intertwined and cannot exist one without the other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Thick, rich descriptions were used to construct a vivid account of the lived experience of the participants and saturate the categories. This researcher provided detailed descriptions of the participants and the phenomenon being investigated, however, it is the reader who decides whether or not the information contained in the study has transferability, i.e., can be applied to other settings because of similarities or shared characteristics.

Limitations

Due to the nature of this research study, time constraints and a sample size that could not possibly reflect the experience of this particular population are two significant limitations of this qualitative phenomenological study. The entire range of possible experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents cannot be explored from the lives of three Jamaican American families. Since not all aging Jamaican Americans receiving care from their adult children lived with those children, this researcher may not have witnessed the interaction between aging parent and child that could have provided additional insights into the family's lived experiences. It is also noteworthy that the time limitations of the study may have also impacted the manner in which participants connected with the interviewer, and could have affected the quantity and/or quality of information shared.

Finally, this study is culture-specific in nature in that it addresses the perception of a particular group of individuals, adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, and its findings cannot and should therefore not be used as a gauge for any other cultural group. The use of a phenomenological design will, however, provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of filial responsibility as experienced by adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents.

Summary

This chapter began with a review of qualitative research and why it is the preferred method for conducting this particular study. Also included was a review of some of the factors that one should consider when determining the methodology for a study, and the exploration of the basic purpose and assumptions of interpretive research. This was followed by an outline of the procedures used in conducting the actual research study. Steps to protect the integrity of the study were outlined, as well as procedures to ensure its trustworthiness. The chapter ended with potential limitations to the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, the phenomenological findings of this study about how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regard the concept of filial responsibility, is presented. The challenge was to analyze the lived experience of filial responsibility as the six Jamaican American participants understood it. Polkinghorne (1989) states that this lived experience is an exploration of the structures that make up the consciousness in human experiences. Any analysis of the data gathered from a phenomenological study is first reduced, analyzed, and examined for meanings (Creswell, 1988).

This study used a phenomenological method to investigate the lived experiences adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, with a social constructivist theoretical framework to provide a more process-oriented understanding of how that lived experience affected these Jamaican American families living in South Florida. The researcher set aside any and all prejudgments, thereby “relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience” (Creswell, 1989, p. 52). This chapter describes the key questions that were explored and the themes that emerged from this study.

Description of the Participants

The six participants in this study consisted of three family dyads of one aging parent and one adult child. Families were distinguished using A, B, and C according to the order in which they were interviewed, and AP for aging parent, and AC for adult child. Each participant was assigned a number to aid in the organization of the data and had no other significance. For example, family A-AP1 is indicative of the first family, and the interview was conducted with the aging parent. All the participants were interviewed separately as appointment times were

scheduled at their convenience and according to their availability. The identities of the participants were protected in this study.

Family A had the following demographic information: Parent A-AP1 was seventy-four years old at the time of the interview and identified herself as Jamaican. She lived in Jamaica for most of her adult life and moved to New York in the mid 1980s on a visitor's visa, after the untimely death of her husband. She had been married for more than twenty-five years and was a homemaker at the time of her husband's passing. Her husband had been a school principal in Jamaica and on occasion, she would assist in the school's front office, which was within walking distance of her residence. After leaving Jamaica, she lived in New York then moved to Georgia in 1994 where she lived for approximately four years before relocating to South Florida. She resided with her daughter in a sprawling four-bedroom house and was in the process of applying for U.S. citizenship at the time of this interview. Family A's adult child, A-AC1 was forty-one years old at the time of the interview and also identified herself as Jamaican. She was an advanced registered nurse practitioner and had been teaching at the tertiary level for approximately 6 years. She applied for and became a U.S. citizen about the same time she began teaching. The researcher's first interview was with the aging parent as she was more accessible due to the fact that she spent a great deal of time at home. The interview with the adult child occurred several days after the meeting with her aging parent.

The aging parent in family B, participant B-AP2, was seventy-six years old at the time of the interview, and identified herself as Jamaican. She originally migrated to the United States in 1982 on a visitor's visa and was eventually granted permanent residency after her employer filed for her. She initially resided in upstate New York with her employer and relocated to South Florida in 1990 where she joined her husband and two children for whom she had filed for, and had been granted permanent residency in the United States. She had been married for more than

fifty years and had retired from the workforce a few years after receiving her permanent resident status. She applied for and became a U.S. citizen in the early 1990's. Participant B-AP2 resided with her husband in a three-bedroom home at the time of her interview. Her daughter, B-AC2, was forty-four years old at the time of the interview and was working as a licensed practical nurse. She migrated to the United States in 1986 and lived in New York for the next eighteen years until relocating to South Florida with her husband and child. The researcher met with the aging parent at her home. Her spouse was also at home and greeted the researcher at the front door but soon retired to one of the bedrooms where he remained until the interview was over.

In family C, the aging parent, C-AP3, was eighty years old at the time of the interview and identified himself as Jamaican. He migrated from Jamaica to South Florida in 1975 with his wife and son. He had been married for fifty-five years and was self-employed before retiring at the age of sixty-nine years. Participant C-AP3 was living independently in a gated community for seniors at the time he was interviewed. His wife had died of complications from cancer five years earlier. The adult child, C-AC3 was fifty-one years old at the time of the interview and identified himself as Jamaican. He was approximately seventeen years old when he migrated to South Florida with his parents. He was self-employed as a pharmacist and had been living with his same-sex partner of twenty years. Participant C-AC3 was the last to be interviewed and evoked the greatest level of anxiety after the researcher was made aware of his sexual orientation from his father. That revelation had stirred fears within the researcher that had been present since early childhood, and had been placed there by the cultural climate that existed at the time in Jamaica. This researcher soon realized that those fears were unfounded when participant C-AC3 ushered me into his home.

The relationships between the adult children and aging parents were all biological and consisted of two mother-daughter dyads and one father-son dyad. One of the adult daughters and

the adult son had completed doctoral degrees and the other daughter participant had completed some college. One of the aging parent mothers had completed college in Jamaica while the other mother participant had completed the equivalent of a technical education in secretarial work. The aging father participant was a self-made millionaire while living in Jamaica and in addition to his jewelry business, had made several real estate investments in the United States that enabled him to live quite comfortably upon his entry to the United States. Five of the six participants were United States citizens and the one remaining participant was in the process of applying for citizenship at the time of the interview. The six participants were cordial and willingly shared their lived experiences during the process of securing the personal interviews and reviewing and analyzing the data. The atmosphere was pleasant and rapport was easily established. All of the participants endorsed the informed consent form (Appendix B) prior to the interviews which were all conducted at the homes of the participants.

Findings

This researcher used the following data analysis process: (1) bracketing any preconceived notions by the researcher so as to obtain pure and untouched descriptions from the participants who experienced this phenomenon; (2) horizontalizing significant statements in order to identify pertinent expressions relevant to the concept of filial responsibility by reducing and eliminating redundant and/or vague statements then grouping statements under core categories; and (4) identifying themes running through the statements and constructing textural and structural descriptions of the participants' experiences, thereby giving a clear account of the phenomenon that is easily understood by readers (Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing

This researcher made a concerted effort to set aside any preconceived notions regarding adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents with regard to the concept of filial

responsibility. Through reflection, journaling, and field notes, this researcher was able to identify personal constructs and experiences that could influence the researcher's role in the interview process. According to Moustakas (1994), bracketing is the first step in reducing the data in a phenomenological study and challenges the researcher to be transparent. This researcher was therefore compelled to approach the process with an open mind, thereby allowing the six participants the opportunity to give voice to their experiences without interference or distractions.

Horizontalization

Moustakas (1994) states that this is the second step in analyzing phenomenological data. In horizontalization, the researcher lists all significant statements made by the six participants that are relevant to the topic of filial responsibility, and gives them equal value. Taking it even further, van Kaam (1959, 1996) states that it is important to consider whether or not the participant's statements captures a moment of the experience that can adequately describe and give meaning to it, and whether or not the statement can be extracted and labeled. Significant statements were gathered after this researcher repeatedly read, reread, and reflected on the participants' statements in the original transcripts. Josselson (1995) stated that meaning becomes real when it is experienced and expressed. In the reduction phase of the data analysis, the researcher took on the task of describing exactly what was seen both externally and what was expressed by the participants. In this way the researcher was able to make meaning of and understand the participants' perception of the experience. Appendix F lists significant statements and meanings attached.

Textural and structural descriptions

This researcher placed the various motifs and themes running through the interviews into categories or clusters of meaning that aptly provided an in-depth description of the adult

Jamaican American children and their aging parents' concept of filial responsibility (Moustakas, 1994). The textural description as described by Moustakas (1994) analyzes the data and provides information about what the participants experienced and its meaning. The structural descriptions embody how the participants experienced the phenomenon and when woven with the textural descriptions, provide a richly unified statement that captures the essence of the participants' concept of the phenomenon. The author described the process as one that is constantly in motion and stated, "The essences of any experience are never totally exhausted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100).

Credibility of this Study

Creswell (1998) identified eight verification procedures used in qualitative studies and highlighted three that are frequently used by researchers because of their cost effectiveness and relative ease to conduct, namely member checks, triangulation, and detailed, thick descriptions. Of the eight procedures described, the author recommended that researchers use at least two of the eight quality checks so as to enhance the credibility of the data. This researcher used an audit trail, peer review, member checks, and thick, rich descriptions as quality checks for this study.

To create an audit trail, this researcher chronicled the events leading up to, during, and after the interview process, in journal form. This researcher made a concerted effort to record the data, describe the methods used, and the steps used in executing the study in as much detail as possible. In so doing, the researcher was able to establish a trail that can be used by future researchers to evaluate the confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Much of this researcher's perspective and prior assumptions regarding filial responsibility can be found in the journal that was kept. As an adult Jamaican American living in the South Florida area, this researcher was conscious of clearly identifiable personal biases and assumptions regarding filial responsibility and the passage of Jamaicans to the United States. This reflexivity or sensitivity to

the data is instrumental in the flow of the phenomenon as a pure process and not one tainted by researcher bias (Padgett, 1998). Guba (1981) reflected that reflexivity in qualitative analysis is perhaps the most significant regulator of researcher bias as it acts as a guard against the researcher becoming overly involved in the research and resulting data.

Peer reviewers were used to give feedback and add other possible perspectives to the topic being studied. The reviewers challenged this researcher by asking poignant questions regarding the themes running through the interviews, requesting clarification about certain statements that were useful to the researcher during the second interview, and gave their own views on the data presented. Kvale (1996) reflected that using this strategy is likely to result in a lesser potential for bias in the analysis and reporting phase by using multiple perspectives to validate results.

The peer reviewers who provided feedback to this researcher agreed with the themes that were identified. One reviewer challenged this researcher after sensing some reservation on the researcher's part to identify and verbalize awareness of the personal pain that was felt from the researcher's own migratory experience. This prompted the researcher to review what was already written and to be more honest about feelings that had surfaced as a result of the interview process, and had been left as a mere field note without being addressed in the researcher's analysis of the data. The process proved to be a cathartic experience for the researcher (Creswell, 1998). It not only served to validate the researcher's own experience of migration to the United States of America and the personal sacrifices made by the researcher's family but it also laid to rest some unresolved feelings that had laid dormant for many decades, particularly with regard to the researcher's perception of homosexuality and dichotomous feelings associated with the researcher's sense of obligation to parents and family.

Streubert and Carpenter (1999) emphasize that qualitative research can be deemed trustworthy when it provides an accurate representation of the participants' views. To verify the accuracy of the participants' responses, this researcher provided a copy of each participant's transcript to them for their review. The member check process allowed each participant to correct errors and data they perceived as incorrect interpretations of their experience, thereby enhancing the credibility of the study. They could also give additional information as the researcher conducted a second interview with each participant to ensure that their experience was accurately presented in the data. This process also gave the researcher the opportunity to analyze and understand the participants' intent through their actions, and was open to feedback and clarification as necessary, from each participant. In so doing, this researcher was able to obtain an in-depth account of the participants' experience that was credible in its representation.

Thick, rich descriptions were used to reflect everything that this researcher observed, heard, and experienced regardless of whether or not it seemed significant at the time. These descriptions served as the basis for data analysis coupled with direct quotes from the participants to enhance the credibility of this study. Creswell (1998) states that readers are able to get a sense of the experience through the feelings evoked when reading the thick descriptions. Readers can then determine whether or not the findings are transferable to other settings because of similarities found therein (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Themes

The themes derived from this study emerged after a series of steps were taken to: (1) bracket any prejudgments, assumptions and biases of the researcher, (2) horizontalize the participants' statements and treat them with equal value by eliminating irrelevant questions or topics as well as repetitive or overlapping statements, (3) categorizing the horizons into themes, and (4) organizing them into an accurate description of filial responsibility which was then

presented to the reader (Moustakas, 1994). Data was analyzed using the research questions found in Chapter 1 as a reference point. The data that emerged from the interviews with the six Jamaican American participants revealed five major themes and twelve minor themes (Table 1).

Thematic Portrayal

The core themes derived from the participants' transcribed interviews are outlined below.

Table 1

Analysis of Themes

Major Themes	Minor Themes
Personal obligation	Potential for guilt correlated to past parental sacrifice. Honor and respect for the elderly. Self is defined by one's relationship with parents.
Family values	Values instilled from early childhood. Role responsibilities passed from generation to generation. Family first. Education as gateway to success.
Cultural conflicts	Child-rearing and lifestyles
Perception of reality	Difficulty assimilating into different culture. Difficulty adjusting to socio-economic status. Return to family values
A race apart	Out of many one people: what sets us apart

In-depth Descriptions

Each of the five identified themes is addressed first from the perspective of the adult child then from the perspective of the adult parent.

Personal obligation

Research question #1: How do adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?

Personal obligation was a major theme that emerged as the participants described their sense of what filial responsibility meant to them. Both the adult children and aging parent participants expressed a sense of foreboding that things would not go well for a person that shirks their duty to a parent who needs it. This researcher easily identified with the participants in this regard and reflected on the way in which the researcher's own sense of duty to one's parents was instilled since early childhood, through religious teachings, family stories, and verbal reinforcement from the researcher's parents. The researcher was compelled to bracket those past memories as the guilt associated with the participants' sense of personal obligation was almost palpable.

The adult child participants all seemed to echo the sentiment that filial responsibility was a personal obligation to their parents, and experienced it as a way of showing appreciation for the efforts and sacrifices made by their parents in raising their children. Participant A-AC1 said, "*I believe that it is every child's responsibility to care for their aging parents. I can't begin to imagine me not caring for my mom when she needs me most. I mean, it's just inconceivable. After all that she's done for me and all that she's gone through to help me become the woman I am today, I would have such guilt that I'd rather die than live with myself.*"

Participant B-AC2 said "*I think if you're in a position to do it, you should take care of your parents when they get old or when they get to the point where they can't take care of*

themselves anymore.” She added, “I think that you have a responsibility to care for your parent in whatever way you can.” Her feelings of guilt were apparent in her recollection of her missed opportunity to complete college at the expense of her mother’s sacrifice when she said, “So, it took me a long time to get over the guilt. I don’t even know that I’ve gotten over it because I still think about it sometimes when I look at my life and realize that she was working to put me through college and I missed that opportunity because of my own stupidity.” She also stated, “Top that with what mummy went through to bring us here and boy, I feel guilty. I mean, I would feel really bad if I wasn’t in a position to help her out now.”

Participant C-AC3 remarked, *“It’s what you do for your parents, man, when they can’t do it anymore for themselves.”* He added, *“...if they can help themselves and do things for themselves, then there’s no need for me to step in. It’s when they can’t do the shopping or the cooking or the cleaning, or the banking...you know, all those things. When they start forgetting and it gets to the point where it’s a problem because they can either hurt themselves or end up hurting someone else, then that’s where you step in as a child.”* Participant C-AC3’s sense of guilt and personal obligation was compounded by his sexual orientation and the circumstances under which the family migrated to the United States. He stated, *“Maybe it’s guilt. No. I don’t know. I guess I still feel responsible for them giving up the life they had in Jamaica. I still feel that if I hadn’t been gay, if they hadn’t caught me with R----, if I hadn’t told them anything, we would have been okay...they would have been okay. They wouldn’t have had to root up their lives and leave everything they loved behind.”* He continued, *“I mean...the guilt is my issue...one of my issues that I need to deal with...that I never dealt with.”*

Adult child participants described varying degrees of guilt they felt they would experience if they failed to care for a parent that needed help. There was a sense that part of an individual’s selfhood and self-respect was determined by their relationship with their parents. This was

strongly connected to how the elderly was viewed in the Jamaican society. Participant A-AC1 reflected, *“As a matter of fact, absent extenuating circumstances, I would really wonder about someone’s upbringing if they stuck their mother or father in a nursing home. I know it sounds harsh but that’s just the way I feel. An old person has every right that we have, if not more because of the contributions and sacrifices they made to the generation that came after them. Sending them off to another state under the guise that it’s warmer and will be better for them, and then not seeing them but once a year is like the unforgivable sin to me.”* Participant B-AC2 recalled, *“I grew up with my grandmother and my grandaunt living with us until she died. I saw how my mother treated her mother and the kind of relationship they had. Even when they disagreed about something, they would never disrespect one another. I could never walk on the street and not say hello to the people that passed by me. It was just something that was instilled in me, that I was to respect those people older than me, and we loved our old people because they were the ones who were the wisest. They had been there before and they knew what worked and what didn’t. So, we went to them and honored them. It wasn’t like now where so many of them get put in nursing homes, you know. Any respectable person knows that you defer to the elderly...otherwise, you’re nothing. It implies that you weren’t raised right, that you have no morals, no values.”* She added, *“I think that if you have any respect for yourself and for your parents, then you will know that it’s the honorable thing to do.”* Participant C-AC3 reflected, *“...if you have any decency at all and if your parents raised you right...you know what I mean...with the right values and respect, then you wouldn’t hesitate to repay them when they get old.”* He also stated, *“Whatever is in your power to do for your parents, you should do as a child. It doesn’t matter what happened in the past, they’re still your parents and you can’t change that. You have an obligation to give back to them what they sacrificed for you from*

birth.” These responses seem to suggest that one is defined by how they respond to the needs of their aging parent. It is as if the intensity is heightened by their displacement in the host country.

Family Values

There was a strong emphasis placed on *family values* which was another motif that emerged from the data. Participants echoed sentiments that suggested family was highly important and was a value that was instilled throughout the early childhood years. There was also the sense that family members learned about their roles and responsibilities within the family unit through lessons passed on from one generation to the next. The participants all seemed to feel that family was first over anything else, and that the value of education was also a critical component in determining one’s success. The elderly was also held in high esteem, honored and treated with respect among family members. This researcher made candid field notes regarding early adulthood experiences with the researcher’s parents who were mortified when at the ripe old age of 30 years, this researcher made the decision to move out of her parent’s home, much to their chagrin. It was a painful process that almost seemed to defy this researcher’s sense of loyalty to parents and the burning and compelling desire to exercise absolute independence.

In responding to early childhood values, participant A-AC1 stated, *“There was an unspoken agreement that family could stay together for as long as they wanted to, for as long as it was deemed necessary, and it wouldn’t be an issue. So, was this something that was instilled in me as a child? Yes, I guess so. It was part of the nurturing that I got as a child...knowing that I was safe with my parents...that I would always be safe with them, no matter what...that I would always be their daughter even if we had differences in opinion, if we didn’t see eye to eye, they would always be there for me because I was family until death. My parents did not make us feel that our coming of age meant that we had to move out. We instinctively knew that we could have stayed with our parents for as long as we needed to and it would have been okay.”* She

continued, *“...the way you’re raised, and the way the elderly is treated in your environment would have a significant impact on your perception of...filial responsibility...”* Participant B-AC2 simply stated, *“I was raised that way.”* Regarding the treatment of the elderly, she reflected, *“It was just something that was instilled in me, that I was to respect those people older than me, and we loved our old people because they were the ones who were the wisest. They had been there before and they knew what worked and what didn’t. So, we went to them and honored them. It wasn’t like now where so many of them get put in nursing homes, you know. Any respectable person knows that you defer to the elderly...otherwise, you’re nothing. It implies that you weren’t raised right, that you have no morals, no values.”*

Participant C-AC3 stated, *“You have an obligation to give back to them what they sacrificed for you from birth.”* When asked how he came to that understanding, participant C-AC3 described how this value was learned through observation from one generation to the next and stated, *“I saw how my parents were with their parents. I saw how my aunts and uncles were. And believe me, my grandparents...on both sides, were tough. They didn’t think twice about speaking their minds. As a matter of fact, it was funny, because I remember, even as a child, hearing my grandpa telling my father what to do and my father just nodding his head and saying, ‘Yes, daddy. Yes, daddy’... even when he knew that what his father was saying to him was not something he was going to do. He still gave him the respect. So...definitely, I grew up seeing much love and respect for my grandparents. It was just the right and acceptable thing to do. You take care of your old people.”*

Family came first in the lives of these adult children participants and they shared similar insights on just how important family was in their lives. Participant A-AC1 reflected on how geographical distance had impacted the relationship among family members that once lived in close proximity to each other on the island but were now separated by states and time zones in

the United States. She stated, *“I mean, my family is tight.”* When asked to describe what she meant by that, she continued, *“Oh, we’re close. We’re very close. Everybody knows what’s going on with the other person. We all helped each other out and were always there for each other.”* She continued, *“I miss being close to my family. You know, here, it’s different. Yes, we stay in touch but it’s mostly by telephone because most of my other relatives live in other states. My sister lives in Maryland. Here, it’s just mom and me. We’re still close and we talk every day but it’s not the same. You know, I just can’t get up and say I’m going to my sister’s house or I’m going to hang out with her, or my cousins, or see my aunts. Visits have to be planned way in advance because of the distance and sometimes it just gets lonely.”* She added, *“But family is all there is. If you haven’t got a family to lean on, life is so much more challenging for you and the experiences you face are that much more difficult to navigate.”* Participant B-AC2 stated, *“When I had my son, it kind of just...it reverberated inside me...you know, that if I didn’t have my family in my life, what did I really have? Family was always number one in my life...even as a child when I rebelled, I think part of me knew that it was safe...that they wouldn’t give up on me no matter what, so I pushed the boundaries, I crossed the line...because I knew that I would always be their child and they would always love me.”* Participant B-AC2 also stated, *“Well, there’s a lot of emphasis on family...and not just your blood relatives either. Family could be someone in the neighborhood that helped you out with eggs and chickens or cutting your grass, or someone who helped raise you. Before we go to someone for help, we go to our family first.”*

Participant C-AC3 stated, *“In Jamaica, once a child always a child. It don’t matter how old you are. You could have grandchildren! If your mother or your father is still alive, they are going to put in their two-cents worth and tell you what you should be doing. (Laughs). You just grow up with the understanding that family is everything, man. No matter what you think or how you feel, your family has an input in your life. Matter of fact, your life is not your own, you*

know? You answer to your family first before anything else. Is just the way it is, man. That's how we were brought up. You know what I'm saying!"

Education was a value on which much emphasis was placed by the participants' parents and which the adult child participants still hold in high esteem. Their perception of education was that it was the key or gateway to success. In the field notes, this researcher recalled the sacrifices made by the researcher's parents to provide the best education they could afford for their children, regardless of the financial cost and strain. It was a poignant reminder that this researcher grew up in an environment where many in the Jamaican community viewed education as the escape from a life of mediocrity. It was a matter of great pride when a Jamaican parent was able to report that their child had passed the common entrance examination and had been accepted to one of the more prestigious schools in the island's capital, or when a child was sent off to study abroad.

Participant A-AC1 stated, *"They really emphasized the importance of a good education and we were always encouraged to work hard and bring home good grades."* For her, it was more than an unspoken understanding that she should pursue her education no matter what. She stated, *"I always knew that I was expected to do well in school so I could get a good job and live a productive life..."* She reflected that getting a good education involved sacrifice on the family's part, adding, *"I got one of the best educations the island had to offer. I went to prep school and primary school (I guess that would be the equivalent of elementary school here), and also high school in Jamaica. My high school was an all-girls Catholic school and it was one of the top schools. Passing the entrance exam after primary school and getting a place at that school was the envy of many. We lived in the country and my high school was in Kingston, the capital, right? I couldn't travel from the country to town every day, so I had to board at the school. I mean, it wasn't easy because that was money for boarding, you know, but every parent*

wanted the best for their child and would do whatever they had to do...sacrifice whatever they had to, if it meant their child would have a good education. After high school, I went to the local university and pursued my Bachelors and Masters. That was the expectation, you know. We didn't even have to have a conversation about it. We just knew that that was what was required of us." Participant A-AC1 was proud of her educational accomplishments and stated, "I'm highly educated...a successful career individual, and my sister is a respected doctor in her field. My parents raised two very independent women who were not afraid to pursue their dreams and write their own stories."

Participant B-AC2 stated, "Education is also a big deal...a very big deal. I remember in the early '70s growing up in Jamaica and hearing the Prime Minister Michael Manley talk about getting rid of illiteracy and how every Jamaican would be able to read. At home, education was touted as the thing that was going to make our lives better. Our parents drilled that into us. As a matter of fact, if you didn't have to work for anyone, if you could be your own boss, that was even better. To this day, I remember my father saying that over and over again. So, they looked for the best schools to send us to because that was our ticket to a better life. You know, it's not like here in America where little boys want to grow up and be a professional football or basketball player. I mean, sports is important to Jamaicans, too, you know, especially track, as you know. But with that goes a good education. You can't have one without the other. It's not like you think that track and field is going to be your meal ticket. It helps, yes, but in the long run, it's how you can communicate with others, how you speak, how you present yourself, how you can hold your own with other people, that really shows how much of an education you've had."

In reflecting on her own failure to successfully complete college, participant B-AC2 continued, "She [B-AC2's mother] enrolled me in college but at 19, I really wasn't interested in

studying. To this day I can still hear my father telling us as children that we needed to have a good education in order to be a success. I remember him saying that having a job was good but being able to work for yourself and be your own boss was even better.” She added, “Looking back, I was stupid and made a mess of my life. I never completed college...to this day, I haven’t finished. I tried to go back a few years ago but it’s so much harder when you have a family and a fulltime job...and school was always hard for me, you know. I couldn’t just read something one or two times and get it. I had to go real slow and go over it again and again and again...and even then, I wasn’t an A student. So, that is my biggest regret.”

Participant C-AC3 specifically identified education as one of the values that his parents emphasized when asked, he said, *“Get a good education, say your prayers, read your bible, respect your elders, respect others, respect yourself, family first...things like that.”* Despite the fact that his own father who was a self-made millionaire did not attend college, participant C-AC3 reflected, *“He was able to make it without the college degree but he always stressed to me that I needed to have a good education in order to make anything of myself. In fact, that was one of the things...that when we came here...the time when I left home and didn’t have any contact with them for years, he was still paying my college tuition and I still kept going to school. You understand what I’m saying? He didn’t stop paying for my college. Every semester, he kept paying because he believed in it and he knew that I believed it too. So I got the education.”*

Cultural Conflicts

The cultural conflicts that were described by the adult child participants included differences in child-rearing styles and lifestyles of Jamaicans and Americans. The participants seemed to identify a distinct difference between the manner in which Jamaicans raised their children compared to Americans. This researcher recalled her mother’s disapproving comments about “the American way,” and reflected on what seemed to be a clear conflict between her

perception of the American culture and the desire to partake of all the opportunities it had to offer.

Participant A-AC1 stated, *“I’ve taught hundreds of students and I’m always appalled at what appears to be the high percentage of students who say that they will not be going back home after college...not because they don’t want to, but because their parents made it abundantly clear to them that their responsibility as parents end with the college degree. There seems to be a much higher degree of emphasis on kids taking ownership of themselves and being totally independent of their parents. I was dating an American guy for a couple of years and he told me that when he joined the Army at 18 years, he never returned home. As a matter of fact, he just couldn’t understand how all my friends he met had college degrees. It blew his mind. He didn’t get it. Born and raised here in America, education was a part of his life but apparently, it was not a critical component. I mean, he and his friends grew up taking it for granted, I guess, and not really valuing it the way we Jamaicans did. To me, that is just totally foreign. That culture, that way of thinking is foreign to me.”* She continued, *“I’m not saying that Americans don’t want their children after age 18. I’m saying that from what I’ve seen and heard from my students, they are strongly discouraged from returning home. I doubt that you would find many, if any American parent who would tell you honestly that they don’t want their kids around after they turn 18...and mean it. My sense is that as children grow up and become teenagers, American parents make it pretty clear to them that they’re getting to the point, the age where the parent no longer feels that the child is their burden to bear. This is my perspective from just talking with my students and listening to them talk about their families and home life. It’s like an emancipation. You’re free to go...so go. It wasn’t even discussed in our family. I wasn’t exposed to that concept until I came to the United States.”*

Participant B-AC2 described the sense of freedom she experienced upon migrating to the United States when she said, *“I mean, now, I...looking back, I guess you could say that I abandoned the values I had when I was in Jamaica, because I sort of took on the American way of living, you know? I was...I was Americanized, if you want to call it that. I wanted to do what they did, go where they went, and dress like they dressed. I went into shock, culture shock...”* Recalling the values that had been instilled in her as a child, she stated, *“Yes, I went to church and all that. I had to. I didn’t have a choice if I wanted to live. You know? My parents didn’t have any discussion about whether you wanted to go to church or not.”* She continued, *“We weren’t allowed to go to the movies, either. That was against our religion.”*

Participant C-AC3 stated, *“My parents thought that they were doing me a favor leaving Jamaica but I tell you, the things that I learned when I came here, I don’t think I would have been exposed to that in Jamaica back then. You know, it was a different time in the ‘70s in Jamaica. It was kinda like we were still in the dark ages. America really didn’t have an impact on us as far as influencing us with their culture and goods, you know, like they did in the ‘80s when the IMF came in and loaned us money that we could never pay back. Anyhow, coming to America was an eye opener for me, a 17 year old still-in-the-closet gay teenager on the verge of becoming a man...it was a whole new world that opened up for me and I just walked right in. I mean, I didn’t know what I was doing but it felt good and everybody was just loving everybody. Man, it was crazy.”* Participant C-AC3 described his experience of the United States in liberating terms and reflected, *“I was able to go places and do things with my friends that I would never have been able to do in Jamaica. I mean, it was like I was free for the very first time in my life. I felt liberated, man! Don’t get me wrong, though, you know...looking back now I’m lucky I’m not dead, man. I could have gotten some serious diseases...AIDS, HIV, you name it, man, I was lucky. I was stupid and lucky. I didn’t know how to live a normal life because everything here*

was just so much bigger, brighter, prettier, more fun than anything I had ever experienced in Jamaica. In Jamaica, you were expected to act a certain way because of your social standing. Here, it didn't really matter. Nobody cared who my father was. Nobody cared that he moved with big time politicians. I could be whoever I wanted to be. In Jamaica, is like I was in a straight jacket, you know!" He continued, *"I think if I had had the opportunity in Jamaica, if that had been the culture there, then I would have participated in it."*

Perception of Reality

Another major theme running through the experiences of the adult Jamaican American children participants was that of their *perception of reality*. This had a direct correlation to what they perceived to be the challenges and/or difficulties they faced assimilating into the American culture, and the perceived difficulty adjusting to a shift in their socio-economic status. The participants first described their socioeconomic status while living on the island of Jamaica, then presented detailed accounts of the changes they were forced to make after migrating to the United States of America. Again, this researcher had to bracket her own recollections of migrating to the United States, as much of what the participants shared rang true for this researcher's own experience.

Participant A-AC1 talked about the fact that her mother, despite her college education, had jointly agreed with her now deceased husband that she would remain at home and care for their two daughters. Participant A-AC1 reflected, *"After daddy died, things were different, harder...money was a big problem because suddenly we had to change the way we had lived."* She continued, *"My mom had been a housewife all her life and never really had to work for a living. I mean, we had a housekeeper and a man that kept the yard and did odd jobs around the house."* In describing the quality of life that her family had been accustomed to, she said, *"If you saw the house that we grew up in, in Jamaica, you would never imagine that my mother would*

stoop to changing a stranger's dirty diapers and keeping their wounds clean when she had never been exposed to anything like that in her entire life."

Participant B-AC2 provided a backdrop for the socioeconomic shift that her family had to make upon migrating to the United States. She described her home in these words: *"My father worked for the agricultural ministry but he also had a huge farm...over 60 acres that he used to grow sugarcane, oranges, coconuts, grapefruits and all different kinds of other fruits. He also raised chickens and cows, goats, pigs, rabbits, turkeys...I mean, it was a real farm in every sense of the word."* As a child growing up, she described a sense of being distant from others because of her family's standing within the community and recalled, *"Growing up in Jamaica, my parents were very strict. We didn't have any friends in the neighborhood because...well, I guess because we lived on such a large property, we really didn't have anybody that was close to us, you know. And then the people in the neighborhood were not...they weren't in the same class like we were, you know. They were very poor and many of them worked for daddy on the farm, so it's not like we had anybody that went to the same school like we did. They moved in different circles. A matter of fact, even if we had wanted to mix with them, our parents would have forbid it. It was just not something that we were allowed to do."*

Participant B-AC2 recalled the humbling experience of her mother working for others as a nurse's aide and stated, *"She had sacrificed so much for me and my sister...leaving Jamaica and her home behind, she had to start all over when she came to this country. And I mean, it was menial labor, other people's dirty work that she was doing, and my mother was never accustomed to that. In Jamaica, she had helpers that lived on the property and yard boys, you know, men that worked outside to take care of the animals and the landscaping. When she came here, she was cleaning up other people, bathing them, dressing them. It was humiliating in a sense because it wasn't even her own. It wasn't her family members that she was taking care of."*

It was strangers who were paying her to do this. I mean, for us...that was the lowest you could get from where we were when we lived in Jamaica.”

Participant C-AC3’s recall of the socioeconomic shift that his family had to make was also graphic when he described his father as being “well off,” and stated, *“He started a jewelry business in Jamaica and it did really well to the point that he was exporting his products to other countries, including the United States. I mean, he was a millionaire, you know. So, we were very, very comfortable and lived in what you could call a little mansion. We had maids and houseboys and yard boys, a cook and two drivers. Mummy didn’t need to work, of course, so she moved in the upper socialite crowd with politicians and their wives. That was how she spent her days...going to parties, throwing parties, starting charities, giving back to the poor in Jamaica. Daddy was well-known, of course, so he knew who to go to if he needed a favor...whether it was business or personal. I mean, when people talk about the upheaval in the ‘70s and how afraid they were because they thought that we were going to become a communist island, we never had any of those fears because daddy moved among the leaders of the island, so he knew that he would have been all right if anything was to happen, you know.”*

The effect of the family’s migration to the United States was immediate and C-AC3 recalled, *“It was a difficult time in the sense that even though we owned a house, it was nothing compared to what we had in Jamaica because it had been just a place for us to stay whenever we visited Miami for the holidays. So, it didn’t have all the frills that the house in Jamaica had. It was a simple three bedroom house. I mean, it was comfortable, you know, and a lot more than what some people had back then, coming from an island nation to a foreign country, but it still wasn’t anything like what we had been accustomed to. So, I think that was maybe the hardest part for us...was not having all the house help mummy was used to and driving, now, well, we had to drive ourselves wherever we wanted to go.”* When asked about other changes the family

experience, he replied, *“Everything! I mean, daddy was still able to carry on with the jewelry part of his business here because that arm of it he had already from he was in Jamaica, you know. It had already been in operation for years so that was income there already. But I think my mother had it the hardest because her social standing changed. I mean, is not... What I mean is that in Jamaica she was used to being in the limelight and was well-known by all the movers and shakers, you know. Here, she didn’t have that circle of friends in close contact with her. She knew a lot of people and she had a lot of acquaintances but she lost the women friends that she’d had in Jamaica. I mean, if you ask me, looking back on it now, I think mummy was depressed for years after coming here. So, as far as finances, yes, we had to scale back somewhat because what our Jamaican dollars could have gotten us in Jamaica was... What I mean to say is that we were worth a whole lot more in Jamaica than we were in the United States.”*

Two of the three adult children participants talked about their return to the values that had been instilled in them as children, after leaving them behind upon their entry into the United States. Participant B-AC2 stated, *“It’s only, I would say, after I got married and had my baby that I sort of calmed down and came into my own, you know what I mean? I got back to the... I started going back to church which was something that I had stopped doing unless it was a special occasion like a wedding, or something like. Suddenly, I didn’t want my child to be like the other kids, even though he was born in America, I wanted to raise him with the values I had when I was growing up in Jamaica. It’s like it put things in perspective for me. I had always known that family was first but somehow I had been sidetracked... blindsided... I don’t know... I did abandon the values that had been instilled in me as a child. When I had my son, it kind of just... it reverberated inside me... you know, that if I didn’t have my family in my life, what did I really have? Family was always number one in my life... even as a child when I rebelled, I think part of me knew that it was safe... that they wouldn’t give up on me no matter what, so I pushed*

the boundaries, I crossed the line...because I knew that I would always be their child and they would always love me.”

Participant C-AC3 seemed to chide himself when he said, *“I embraced that culture at the time because I was trying to find myself. Like I said, I didn’t know who I really was. I hadn’t come into myself yet. So, of course, I took on the American culture because it was fresh, new, exciting, and I was a stupid kid.”* He continued, *“I look back on those days and think how anybody with a brain could have done some of the things I did in their right mind. Yes I was stupid.”* He acknowledged his return to his family’s values when he stated, *“I have no hard feelings for my parents. They were trying to do the right thing for me and raise me how they believed a child should be raised. I respect them for that. I mean, I think even in my situation, I would have done the same things they did as a parent. As a matter of fact, gaydom aside, if I had a child right now, I would raise them the same way my parents raised me.”* In his words, he explained, *“Those values are sound and what we’re lacking in this society today.”*

Personal obligation also emerged as a major theme among the adult Jamaican American parent participants, with some religious undertones and influence. Participant A-AP1 stated, *“Any child that was raised the right way wouldn’t think twice about caring for their parents as they get old and need the help. You know what I mean? That’s all there is to it. Don’t tell me any story about how you didn’t ask your parents to bring you into this world, and it’s your parents’ responsibility to take care of you...that it’s their duty, their obligation, and you don’t owe them anything! Children who talk like that weren’t raised right. They didn’t grow up with the right values. They didn’t learn or didn’t appreciate what it is to be a parent and to raise your child from infancy through teenage years to adulthood. They don’t know what that pain is like.”* She continued emphatically, *“You don’t tell me that a child shouldn’t step up to the plate and do*

whatever is humanly possible to make sure that their mother or father that birthed them isn't taken care of!"

Participant A-AP1, though admittedly not particularly religious, stated, *"I believe that every child has a responsibility to their parent, their aging parent, to care for them, to nurse them, wash them, bathe them, cook for them, help them get dressed, feed them if they can't feed themselves, go shopping for them, clean... whatever it is, I don't care. If you have any respect for yourself and if you love and honor your parents, then you will know that is the right and Godly thing to do."* She explained, *"I am not a religious person but I go to church from time to time. In fact, I was brought up in the Anglican church. So, well...I mean, I pray, you know and things like that. I read my Bible sometimes, too, but I'm not fanatical about it, you know what I mean? So...but, I remember as a child growing up and going to Sunday School and learning about honoring your mother and father. That was something that was talked about a lot to us as kids and it stuck with me."*

Participant B-AP2 stated, *"I would much prefer staying in my home and having my children take care of me, or having someone come in to take care of me. In my reclining years, I think I would be much happier having my children around me and getting someone to help out. Being in your own home, you would be more comfortable...it's scenery that you're used to. It's much better than going in to a nursing home where the people are strange. You know how to move around in your own home. I think it's much better for the children to take care of their parents in their own home."* She explained, *"...as a parent I took care of my children. I did not neglect them. I thought it was my duty. I brought them here so it was my duty to take care of them until they reached the age of accountability where they could take care of themselves. So I think that the love that parents give to their children during the time they were unable to support themselves, I think the same should be given back. That same love that the parents had for their*

children, the children should give it back to the parents. And I know that the blessing of the almighty God will follow them and be upon them.”

Participant B-AP2 quoted a verse from the Bible to lend credibility to her statement as she said, *“In the Bible, it is written, ‘Children, honor thy mother and thy father that your days may be long upon this earth,’ not just in the afterlife but here upon earth. So as a parent, children taking care of their parents would be a part of showing honor to their parents. If one takes the word of God seriously, then they should realize how important it is to live by the word, do the right thing, and the blessing will follow them always and also their children.”* She was very specific when asked about the responsibilities she perceived adult children had to their parents as she stated, *“They should see about the overhead expenses and make sure that if they have someone, like a nurse’s aide, that they are doing...they should never leave their parent up to the nurse’s aide but make sure that they are being cared for properly while they are at home. Whatever their parent is in need of, they should make sure that it’s taking care of so that their aging parent will not lack anything while preparing for their departure from this life...make them as comfortable and as happy as they can during this time.”* She added, *“Well, things that the parent used to do and can’t do now because of their age or sickness or whatever, the adult child should take over the responsibilities for the parent and carry on as the parent would have them.”* She went as far as stating that she would give Power of Attorney rights to her adult child to ensure the proper monitoring and execution of her affairs, stating, *“I would give that adult child Power of Attorney so that they can manage my affairs properly.”*

Participant C-AP3 sighed when he said, *“I would like to think...I want to believe that children would feel a sense of obligation to their parents, you know what I’m saying? I know that they didn’t ask to be brought into this world. (Laughs). All of us can say that to our parents...but if you have any decency...any sense of decency, any honor and respect for your parents and what*

they've done for you over the years to make your life better and raise you the right way to be an upstanding citizen, then you will want to give something back to them in return. And if it means being responsible for them when they get old and can't take care of themselves anymore, then so be it! It's the right thing to do."

Respect for and honoring the elderly was a sub-theme that echoed through the thoughts of the adult Jamaican American parents. Participant A-AP1 stated, *"Mama and daddy reinforced it because they always expected us to be respectful to them and our elders."* She added, *"So you see...it's a different age that we live in. Back then, in Jamaica, we grow up with respect and manners. It was grounded in us at church, by our parents, and even the people in the community. Everybody had high standards."* Participant A-AP1's expectation of her adult children was a reinforcement of what she had learned as a child. She stated, *"Well, I would like them to love me and care for me, and treat me kindly and with respect. You know what I'm saying? I raised my girls to respect their parents and I expect them to continue being that way until the day I die. I don't really want anything from them right now but that. That's all I want from them right now."*

Participant B-AP2 used the acronym "TLC" to describe her expectations of her children as she ages. She stated, *"I'm expecting to get or receive TLC from my child which is very important during my reclining years."* She explained what that meant to her: *"Tender loving care. Children do seem to get a little uptight with their parents during that time but as for me, I am hoping that the training I gave to my children and the TLC that they received from me will be given back to me during that time."* She continued, *"I'm expecting they will be gentle, and having to address a situation with me, they will use the correct words to me and not to allow me to feel hurt in any wise, or in any case...or in any way."* In essence, she stated, *"I want them to be nice when I call and ask for a favor, even if it's at the spur of a moment, they will not be upset with me. They'll remember that I'm an elderly person and I'm not vibrant and hopping and*

skipping about. They must take that into consideration even if it's the last minute that I'm asking. They should understand my situation and work with me in a loving, caring manner. That will also help my adult child in years to come too, it will be like school for them...learning something by taking care, they will have that experience. So taking care of their mom...that will be an experience and may help them with maybe even a friend. They will know how to respond to that person, to be gentle and be kind to that individual."

Participant C-AP3 was very matter-of-fact in stating his expectation of his adult child as he ages when he said, *"I expect him to love and respect me. Nothing more, nothing less!"* Whereas the adult Jamaican American children defined themselves by their relationship with their parents, the adult Jamaican American parents, while not speaking in as specific terms as those used by their children, spoke of the expectation that their children would return the favor, so to speak. The implication was that with the "right" upbringing, adult children would appreciate past parental sacrifices made and demonstrate that gratitude by tending to the needs of the aging parent, as needed.

Family values

The aging parent participants all described aspects of family values that were instilled from early childhood or were perceived to be passed on from one generation to the next.

Participant A-AP1 stated, *"As for me and my two girls...they know...I mean, it's not something that we even had to talk about because that's just the way we live, you know. I take care of them, they take care of me. It goes both ways and we just know it. Nobody has to say anything. They grow up seeing how I lived with my family. Auntie and uncle and cousins...everybody live together good, you know. They see that from their eye at their knee, you know that saying?"*

Speaking of the communal spirit of the Jamaican family, she recalled, *"We share what we have, we don't think twice about it. If I have corn and you need it, I give you some corn. You have fresh*

cow's milk, you give me some. So you see, we were a real family back then, you knew that you could depend on one another...no worries, you know. The girls saw us take care of grandparents and granduncles and grandaunts, old cousins...everybody...we look out for. It was a community, like, you know."

Participant B-AP2 stated, *"But you see, the Bible tells you to train up a child in the way he should go when he is young so that when he is old he will not depart from it. I believe with all my heart that it's the training that she got when she was a child that brought her back to her senses. You know what I'm saying? Even though she rebelled and turned her back on her family, so to speak, she couldn't shake off what was riveted in her as a child. She couldn't forget what she learned. It was always there."*

Participant C-AP3 talked about his perception of how a child's upbringing would influence how they treat the elderly. When asked to clarify how he had come to that conclusion, he replied, *"That's the way I was raised. My parents raised me that way and their parents raised them that way. It was handed down from generation to generation...ingrained in me."* He further explained that he had passed on similar teachings to his son and stated, *"Well, I raised him the same way. You know...I believe in respect for the elderly. I hold those things dear. If you're lucky, you'll live to a ripe old age. I think you only get there if you do the right thing throughout your life...you know, you treat others the way you want to be treated, then you have long life. I look back and wonder sometimes if I didn't do the right thing with Robbie, but I know I gave him the right tools to succeed as a man. He may have chosen a different path...sexually, I mean...but he's a good man, he's honest and respectful and sensitive and caring. So, I know I did something right."*

There was a general sense from the aging parent participants that regardless of the situation, family should be first. The participants did seem to vary on their perception of what

defined a family, as some indicated that family comprised of blood relatives while others felt that family was one's partner.

In describing the shift that occurred when her elder daughter got married, participant A-AP1 stated, *"When she and her fiancé got married, I couldn't make the wedding because I was waiting on Immigration to call me for my green card. That broke my heart...and hers, too. Her father was dead and it was almost like her mother was dead too. She didn't have her parents with her on her special day. So, after that, I think she drew closer and closer to her husband, you know, and by the time they came to America, she had started her family, and I was "grandma" then, not "mummy" anymore. You see, so, then when she decided to take the job in Maryland, it was more for her family. It wouldn't have been fair to her because that is her responsibility now. I mean, they are her family, and they come first now."*

Despite participant B-AP2's admission that she expected her children to be there for her in her "reclining years," she also made allowance for the fact that her younger daughter had responsibilities to her spouse, children, and job that came first and therefore limited her ability to assist her aging mother. Participant B-AP2 stated, *"...my other child is raising her young children. She hasn't been married for as long as her sister and so, I guess, her priority is building that relationship and working on taking care of her husband and children. Her job, too...she works two jobs you know. She goes from one to the other so she's running all day. By the time she gets home, it's just enough time to feed her children, help them with their homework, bathe them and put them to bed. She doesn't...she isn't as flexible as her sister is so that's a big difference."*

Participant C-AP3 stated, *"The more I lose the ability to do things for myself, the more I look to him to help me. So, if I had any expectation of him, it would be for him to be there for me during my last days here on earth, to help me, look after me, support me in any way that he can."*

When he wasn't in a position to help himself, I helped him as a parent. Now that I need help, he's here for me. I don't expect that to change." He also made allowances for an adult child's contribution to his aging parent when he said, *"I wouldn't expect my son to help me if he was in poor health and needed attention himself. I wouldn't look to him if he couldn't afford the time from work or couldn't provide for me financially if I needed it. Thank God that I have enough money not to worry about that. I think too that maybe if he had been married and had children, even though he was the only child, that might have changed the equation somewhat, you know what I mean? If a child has their own life and family to care for, it makes it a little bit more challenging for them to really devote the time to care for an elderly parent unless they're living at home with them...and even then, it's still hard. So, things like that I believe would affect how I feel about children and their responsibility to parents."*

While participant C-AP3 did not directly make mention of the importance of education to Jamaican children, the fact that he continued to pay his son's tuition even after his son had left home, implied that he placed great value on education. Participant A-AP1 talked about the fact that despite her own challenges in leaving her home country, she encouraged her daughters to stay focused on their education. She stated, *"No, they were in school and whenever I talked with them on the phone, I encouraged them and told them that we would soon be together, and that they were to stay strong and focus on their education."*

Participant B-AP2 talked about the importance of her daughters completing their education in the United States, and the fact that they would be close to her once again. She stated, *"I really wanted them to finish their schooling here."* She continued, *"My main reason is that I had missed them because it had never been my plan or intention to be away from my children for any length of time. So having them here it would be the ideal thing, and when I got here, I realized that it would be good for them to finish school here. Everything seemed so*

different, or better than back home in Jamaica. The opportunity was given to me to be here so I said it would be very, very good to have them finish up here in the United States.”

Cultural conflicts

A sub-theme that also emerged from the cultural conflicts that the aging Jamaican American parents experienced was that of differences in child-rearing and lifestyle practices. Participant A-API’s sense of how she raised her daughters reverberated throughout her description of the values she had taught them and what she expected from them, namely, love, respect and support for her in her later years.

Participant B-AP2 recalled the way in which she was raised as a child and stated, *“As a matter of fact, anybody that we came across, we had to be respectful. You know, “Yes, Sir,” and “Yes, Ma’am.” It wasn’t like today where children talk to their parents anyhow. We would have swallowed our teeth if we talked back to our parents or showed a face to them. Walking down the street, anybody we passed we had to greet them with a “Good morning, Sir,” or “Hello, ma’am.” God help us if somebody saw mama and told her that they saw her child and the child didn’t say hello. You wouldn’t be able to sit on your bottom for a week! (Laughs). You don’t see that in this day and age. Children call the police on their parents. Lord help me! What I live to see! My parents would be rolling in their grave.”* She recalled how she raised her daughters in Jamaica when she said, *“I was strict. Yes, I was a strict parent. My children didn’t grow up running around in the neighborhood and they went to church every Sunday...almost every day they were in church. That was a big part of our lives. It still is.”*

Participant C-AP3 spoke about the values that he expected children to be raised with and reflected, *“A child, no matter how old you are, have an...has an obligation to help a parent in need. If you have any respect for yourself, if you’re a real man or a real woman, you’re not going to allow your mother and father to suffer, or for some stranger to come in and put their*

hands on them.” He also stated, “Once you lay the groundwork as a parent, you expect that child to reciprocate as they get older. I gave him love as a child and taught him to respect himself and others. I expect him to show that now as a man.”

Perception of reality

Without exception, the three aging Jamaican American parent participants spoke of what they perceived to be the difficulty and challenges they faced in assimilating into the American culture and adjusting to their new socio-economic status. Participant A-AP1 recalled that she hid the pain she felt from her daughters who were still residing in Jamaica, and suffered the humiliation and embarrassment of tending to a stranger’s physical limitations in silence. She stated, *“But I didn’t tell them about the crying and not eating and me feeling sad and worrying all the time.”* She added, *“They never knew nothing about what I was going through...the humiliation of having to clean someone else’s body waste...clean their house. I never had to clean my house because I had two helpers, you understand? In Jamaica, I had people who did that for me. So, it was a rude awakening, you know. Very humbling. Very humbling. I never talked to them about it until years after they were here with me and settled.”*

Participant B-AP2 recalled, *“I worked hard when I came to this country to make a living so I could bring my daughters to America. I left a five bedroom far house...big house with a basement that was as big as the house itself. I had two maids that lived in the outside maids’ quarters. I had yard boys and workers that were at my beck and call. I didn’t have to work on the farm and do anything if I didn’t want to because we had many, many people to do the work. I came from that to this. It wasn’t easy, you know. It was a shock to my system, you know. I wasn’t used to this kind of life. I was Busha’s wife in Jamaica, the lady of the house. I drove a nice car and was well-known by everybody in the town. People bent over backwards to help me. When I*

came to America, I suffered and toiled for many years in other people's homes, doing their dirty work..."

Participant C-AP3 reminisced about the life he had in Jamaica and the status he enjoyed when he said, *"It wasn't an easy decision because we had everything there to our comfort. I was very successful, had several businesses and employees, and an export business to the U.S. I didn't want for nothing, you know."* Participant C-AP3's decision to migrate to the United States was made in less than two weeks and was accelerated by the risk of having his 17 year-old son exposed as a homosexual, and the stigma that was associated with it at the time in Jamaica. The sense of loss he felt was almost palpable. He said, *"It was a rough time. On top of that, it was a major adjustment for us. In Jamaica, we had people who did everything for us...cook, clean, drive...all those things. Here, we had to do those things for ourselves. We didn't have the friends here like what we had back home so it was hard...very hard. Even my wife had it rough too because she was so used to jumping from here to there and organizing charity events and parties...things like that. It was a different thing here because we weren't moving in the same circle. It's like we lost our status, you know what I mean? It wasn't the same. So, my son saw all that and experienced all that...I mean, we would talk about just how different it was here as opposed to being in Jamaica...the culture, the people and their ways. We were used to having a community of people around us...close family, close friends...everybody helping each other out. Here, we were isolated...not that we didn't have friends here, you know, because we weren't the only ones that left Jamaica in that time...but even though we had friends here, the culture here dictated a different way of being, a different way of life, and we all sort of conformed to it in a sense because we lost that community that we were used to."* He reflected, *"And you have to remember you know, it's not like we were foreign to the States. We had a house here and we would spend summers and holidays here, many, many times over the years. We were very*

familiar with the place. But living here and visiting here turned out to be two different things. For one, we had to sort of adjust to the culture and that in itself was a difficult task.”

Two of the three aging Jamaican American parent participants shared how their family’s migration to the United States negatively impacted their relationship with their teenage children, at the time. They appeared to view it as a departure from the values and norms that their children had been raised with, and made note of what they perceived to be their children’s return to those family values and norms, after succumbing to the culture shock of the host country. These feelings resonated strongly with this researcher as my own family experienced its own separation, fueled by the children’s desire for independence and acceptance in the new culture, and our parents desire to hold on to the values they had held dear in Jamaica.

Participant B-AP2 recalled that even though her daughter was head strong when they lived in Jamaica, matters worsened when she migrated to the United States. She stated, “...*it was worse because now we didn’t have the structure like we had back home. I wasn’t living in the apartment with her every day because I was working, so she was pretty much on her own. I couldn’t monitor her actions and guide her like I did in Jamaica. She enrolled in college and she went for a little while and then just dropped out. For years I didn’t know where she was or what she was doing because she had left the house...the apartment where we were living. She moved out and went with her boyfriend...at least, I think at the time she was with her boyfriend. I’m not even sure. I think that’s what was going on.*” She continued, “*You know, she thought she was a woman from long time and didn’t want to abide my rules, and that’s why she left. Don’t get me wrong, though, I love my daughter and really was worried about her the time when she stopped talking to me and I didn’t know where she was. It was a difficult time back then because I didn’t raise her to be like that and I couldn’t understand why she was doing what she was doing. I think her coming to America and seeing how other children lived and maybe even treated their*

parents, had something to do with her behavior.” Participant B-AP2 recalled that her relationship with her daughter did not begin to show signs of improvement until years later when she said, “It wasn’t until after she got married that the relationship between us started to get better. And then when she had her baby, I was mummy again.”

Participant C-AP3 recalled his experience with his teenage son when the family left Jamaica for good. He stated, “...it was a very bad time for all of us because he really rebelled coming here. It was like we had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. When we got here in the ‘70s, gays were starting to find their voice and there was a community of young people that he made friends with and really went all out...he went crazy, you know what I mean? It was like now he had this freedom and he really went all out experimenting and doing his own thing. It nearly killed us.” He added, “At first he would stay out late at night, then he would be gone for a day or two, and then he just eventually just stopped coming home. It was a rough time.” As the years passed, participant C-AP3’s relationship with his son improved with time. He said, “I’m proud of my son today. He’s a successful man and he respects...I would say he shares many of the values I have and that I raised him with, you know. He’s a respectable man. When he first came up here, it was rough, I tell you, but he got through it and settled down, got his education and worked until he was able to have his own store. I mean, that is a success story!”

A Race Apart

Research question #2: What themes can be derived from these stories and how might they inform the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy as it relates to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents?

A resounding theme that echoed throughout the conversations with the Jamaican American adult children and aging parent participants was the perception that Jamaicans were different than other groups of people and ought to be treated as such, particularly in the

counseling and therapy arenas. Both adult children and aging parents spoke of the perspective that despite the fact they might have lived in the United States for several years, or had U.S. citizenship, they still identified themselves as being Jamaican. This researcher has resided in the United States for the past twenty years: the last ten have been as a naturalized citizen, and yet, this researcher still identifies herself as Jamaican. The participants also discussed the idea that one could not simply look at a Jamaican and assume that they are African American because of the color of their skin. Being fair-skinned, this researcher could also identify with this idea and easily recalled numerous occasions where individuals expressed surprise that the researcher is Jamaican, simply because of the researcher's pigmentation. The participants spoke of the culture and the values inherent in the Jamaican culture that made them unique.

Participant A-AC1 stated, *"You've got to learn about the culture, man. You've got to be aware of the little nuances and the little intricacies that make Jamaicans, Jamaicans. You can't just look at us and think that because of our skin color, we're like black Americans because we're not. Our culture, our values are different in many ways."* When asked by this interviewer to speak specifically to those differences, participant A-AC1 identified the value placed on education first among Jamaican children as opposed to what she perceived to be sports first among American children. She replied, *"A lot of black kids will say that they want to be a basketball player or a football player because...largely because I think that's what they see as their role model...that's what's out there in their faces every day, you know."* She drew the distinction here: *"A Jamaican kid will tell you they want to be a nurse or a teacher or a doctor or a paramedic, or something that requires more focus on education. I'm not saying that people in sports don't have an education, now, don't get me wrong. I'm just saying that Jamaicans place greater value on education."*

Participant B-AC2's identity difference was evident when she stated, *"Yes, we're black but our situation is different. You see how black Americans here have issues with their color and many of them have a tendency to blame their situation on whites? Well, that wasn't an issue for us in Jamaica. In Jamaica, you were measured not by the color of your skin but by social standing, education, land ownership...those things were important. I mean, you have Chinese Jamaican, Indian Jamaican, Syrian Jamaican, English Jamaicans, of course. Our motto, "Out of many one people," is really a reflection of the diversity that we grew up with, that was the norm. We didn't think anything of someone having a different skin color than we did because we were from everywhere...one people from many different places, and we all saw ourselves as Jamaican, not like black American or Euro American or native American and all that crap. We were simply Jamaican. That's it."*

Participant C-AC3 had similar comments when he said, *"Don't think you know us because of the color of our skin."* He also gave an example about his uncle who was ill and in the hospital which shed light on the length that Jamaicans will go to in order to care for their own. He stated, *"I mean, I remember when my uncle was sick and in the hospital and the nurse came in and wanted to change him and give him a bath. I mean, he look at her like she was crazy! She didn't understand that! But little things like that, we don't take lightly. Something like that is for a family member to do."* Participant C-AC3's uncle appeared not to care that these were extenuating circumstances: he still wanted to maintain his privacy and dignity and looked to his family to help him achieve that goal, even while lying in a hospital bed.

The aging parent participants also spoke to some of the nuances within the Jamaican culture that may not be readily understood by others outside of that culture. Participant A-API1 stated, *"You need to know how we operate. You can't just think that we're like any other black person because we're not. Jamaicans have a mixture of British influence and a strong African*

heritage. We have a lot of beliefs that come from the stories we were told about the Arawaks and the slaves and the plantation owners that are woven into our religious beliefs, our spirituality, our family values, and the culture at large. So, when you see a Jamaican come into your office, you have to get to know them. Put aside anything you may have heard about them or blacks or West Indians, or people from the Caribbean, or Rastas. I mean, you have to find out what makes us tick. We don't just put it out there for you to see. We're a private people and counseling is probably the last place we go to...after our pastor, our priest, the doctor, the bush doctor, the auntie, the uncle, the mother who is not our real mother..." She continued, *"Don't make any assumptions. Don't think that because we're black we're going to behave or think like another black person, say an American then, African-American...sorry. If you take the time to find out about our background and how we come to believe and behave the way we do, then you're just beginning to scrape the surface..."*

The idea that Jamaicans should not be judged by the color of their skin appeared to be prevalent in the minds of the participants. Participant B-AP2 stated, *"...you can't put us in the same basket as other people of color. You have to understand the culture we're coming from. Family...and I'm not just talking about daddy and mummy and brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. I'm talking about the lady in the neighborhood that you call "Auntie" or "Mama" because she helped take care of you. All those people are family even though they may not be blood. You have to understand how our family goes beyond blood and we take that pretty serious. So, don't knock us when a child is raised by someone who is not their mummy. That's how it is. We're a community and we try to support each other. We don't think anything about taking in a fourth cousin's child from the country and raising them as our own. And understand this, government don't pay us like here you have foster children and the foster parents get money from the government to take care of them. We raise them on our own with no help."*

Participant B-AP2 also spoke of the influence of religious beliefs on the way that many Jamaicans live their lives. She stated, *“Get to know us. Get to know about our family. Get to know how we think. Most Jamaicans are very religious, or at least very spiritual. And a lot of them believe in that black magic and that people can do bad things to you.”* She explained, *“Some Jamaicans live their lives that way, you know. They think that if they’re having a lot of bad luck, that someone put obeah on them, you know...the black magic. When you think like that, you behave like that...and an American counselor may not realize that and think that the person is crazy. It’s not crazy, it’s just what they believe, and you’re going to have a hard time trying to convince them otherwise because it’s not just a thought, it’s a way of life, it’s their religion.”*

Participant C-AP3 gave an example of a time when his brother was in the hospital and the nurses came in to bathe and change him and he refused. Participant C-AP3 stated that it was his belief that if it had been *“...the average American, it wouldn’t have been a problem.”* He also stated that it appeared as if, *“...some doctors and some medical people are not prepared to learn about...”* the cultural leanings of Jamaican patients. He also talked about the difference in diet that is frequently unfamiliar to others and the resistance that his family faced from medical personnel at the hospital who did not know what *“fish tea”* was and why family members would want to bring it to their loved one in the hospital.

Participant C-AP3 was the only one who spoke about his own experience with a mental health professional and the difficulty the therapist had in understanding her client’s behavior. He stated, *“I was in therapy for a long time, and there were certain things that my therapist couldn’t understand...and I know it’s because of my heritage. Like she couldn’t understand why I would do certain things...because that is what you grow up and you see and that is what you learn. You don’t...I didn’t learn that here.”* His recollection of the interaction between himself and his

therapist relays the importance of mental health professionals understanding and embracing the developmental niche or physical and social setting in which an individual grew up.

Counseling Strategy

The concept of a developmental niche was first proposed by Super and Harkness (1982) and is formed out of three complementary ideas regarding the child's cultural environment: (1) the child's social and physical environments; (2) culturally regulated customs of daily life; and (3) the cultural psychology of the child's caregiver with regard to their beliefs and traditions. A culturally sensitive marriage and family therapist will inform him or herself regarding the upbringing of the Jamaican American client and the social and cultural values and norms that helped to form that individual. Hence, the marriage and family therapist will ask questions about the objects and people that helped to shape the client's environment, as well as gather information regarding the interactions that significantly influence the client's growth as a child. Secondly, the cultural customs are those which are so deeply ingrained in the client's psyche, that once they have become a daily practice, caregivers no longer pay attention to or give very little attention to them because they have now become a learned behavior with no need for a second thought. Thirdly, marriage and family therapists need to gather information regarding "the psychology of the caretakers" (Super & Harkness, 1999). This specifically refers to the beliefs, practices, cultural traditions, or ethnotheories of the client's caregiver with special attention given to their philosophy on child-rearing practices.

Marriage and family therapists need to be cognizant of the fact that the Jamaican American client is operating within the context of his or her socially constructed reality. Keeping the theoretical framework of Social Constructivism in mind, the therapist or counselor will appreciate the complexity of the immigrant Jamaican American client, knowing that the client's knowledge of the world varies according to time and space and that nothing can be taken for

granted. With the ever-increasing numbers of Jamaicans in the South Florida area, it is imperative that marriage and family therapists fine tune their cultural competency skills regarding local beliefs of Jamaicans and their social organization. Their customs of care and the cultural beliefs of parents and caregivers provide invaluable information for uncovering the basis for the development of valued traits within the Jamaican family's community.

Conclusion

The results of this study will help to shed light on the perceptions of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents who reside in South Florida, regarding the concept of filial responsibility. As previously noted, studies that examined issues related to filial responsibility and filial piety did not include Jamaicans. This study is important as it will give voice to the growing population of immigrant Jamaicans who reside in the South Florida area, and will help health care professionals gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Jamaican Americans living in South Florida.

This study examined the perceptions of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents living in South Florida, regarding the concept of filial responsibility. It highlighted the contributions of immigrant Jamaicans to the ever-changing face of the United States of America, and the challenges that immigrant families in South Florida face upon leaving the shores of their island home. Major themes that emerged included the participants' sense of personal obligation, the importance of family values, cultural conflicts faced, participants' perception of reality within the confines of a new culture, and the participants regarding themselves as a race set apart from others.

The chapter began with a brief overview followed by a description of the participants and a breakdown of the steps used to analyze the data and to establish its credibility. The major themes that emerged were then presented and described using the words of the participants. The

chapter ended with an examination of possible counseling strategies that might prove beneficial to marriage and family therapists when dealing with an immigrant Jamaican American client.

Chapter five will summarize the previous four chapters and this researcher will discuss how the findings relate to the research questions, ending with recommendations related to the implications of this study for practice, research, and policy for marriage and family therapists.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

In this chapter, the researcher will provide a brief description of chapters I, II, and III, as well as the findings in chapter IV. The researcher will describe how the findings relate to the research questions found in chapter I, and will discuss how those findings relate to the findings that the researcher had anticipated. This segment of the study portrays an overview of the research procedures and findings, and discusses the aim of this phenomenological study. In this chapter, the researcher highlights the outcomes and implications of this study. The researcher will also examine the findings and address the limitations of this research and recommendations both for future research and for marriage and family therapists.

The aim of this phenomenological research was to explore the perception of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regarding the concept of filial responsibility. The participants comprised of three parent-child dyads that included two mother-daughter pairs and one father-son pair. The aging parent participants were in their seventies and two of the adult child participants were in their forties while the other was in his fifties. All the participants resided in South Florida, had experienced the phenomenon of filial responsibility, and were either naturalized citizens or permanent residents of the United States.

This study grew out of the researcher's curiosity regarding how immigrant Jamaican Americans made sense of the concept of filial responsibility. The researcher had grown up in an environment where it was the custom that elderly family members were taken care of until death and wondered how that custom might or might not be impacted by migration to another country. Much of what the researcher discovered during the interview process evoked deep emotions, many going back to childhood years in Jamaica. The researcher was forced to bracket her own

experience in order to fully appreciate and reflect upon the stories shared by the participants. In addition, the researcher had read several studies that suggested that it was more likely for the daughter in a family to care for an aging parent than it was for a son (e.g., Brandler, 2001; Brody, 1990; Hollis-Sawyer, 2003; Horowitz, 1985; McGraw & Walker, 2004; Sheehan & Donorfio, 1999). This discovery led to questions regarding the researcher's own fate, being the mother of two young sons. Further review of the literature revealed the absence of any representation of Jamaican Americans and their perception of the concept of filial responsibility. Being a resident of South Florida for the last twenty years, the researcher began to wonder about the growing numbers of immigrant Jamaican Americans in South Florida, and their experience of the phenomenon.

Social Constructivism was the guiding theoretical framework used to understand and reconstruct the constructions held by the Jamaican American participants. This philosophy of learning states that as we reflect on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in, all the time remaining open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve. Out of this came the questions guiding the inquiry which were:

1. How do adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?
2. What themes can be derived from these stories and how might they inform the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy as it relates to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents?

Chapter two began with an overview and a working definition of filial responsibility. Attitudes toward aging, the elderly, and care-giving were examined in the literature from a societal and familial perspective. Empirical studies that addressed issues related to filial responsibility were presented, described, and discussed, and the absence of literature that spoke

to the experience of immigrant Jamaican Americans with regard to the topic was highlighted. Readers were introduced to the island of Jamaica and its people through a snapshot of the country's historical background including a brief history of the language, class structure, religion, and economy. Some of the reasons that prompted Jamaicans to migrate to the United States were presented and the chapter ended with a summary.

Chapter three provided a step-by-step description of the methodology used in the study. Each participant was interviewed individually and interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. The interview questions consisted of open-ended semi-structured questions to ensure an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences. These interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by this researcher. Copies of each respective participant's interview was provided to them for their review, correction, and clarification as needed, during follow-up interviews that lasted no more than an hour each. After transcription was completed, each was read and reviewed to draw out relevant data and themes which were then categorized and analyzed.

The methodology used to analyze the phenomenological data in this study was outlined by Moustakas (1994) in a series of steps. First, the researcher selected, listed, and grouped the significant statements of each participant so as to identify all expressions that were relevant to the phenomenon in a process known as horizontalization. Second, redundant, overlapping, repetitive, and/or vague statements were reduced and/or eliminated. Third, the meaningful statements were grouped and labeled under common themes or core categories. From this study, five major and twelve minor themes emerged. The researcher categorized the data as a major theme when the majority if not all the participants made direct mention of it. Minor or sub-themes included statements that were identified as facets of an identified major theme. The researcher again reviewed the groupings of themes to ensure that they were valid and true to the

transcript, and if found that they did not, they were eliminated. Fourth, the researcher wove together a textural description of the experience using verbatim examples from the participants, then constructed structural descriptions that described the participants' thoughts and feelings related to how they experienced filial responsibility (Moustakas, 1994). The textural and structural descriptions were then integrated to solidify the essence and meaning of filial responsibility among the participants. According to van Manen (1984) phenomenological inquiry studies lived experiences of the world as we experience it rather than how we conceptualize it. The researcher bracketed her own experiences of migrating from Jamaica to the United States and caring for aging parents so as to be free from suppositions (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's aim was to present a vivid account of the participants' experiences of filial responsibility by using thick, rich descriptions in the words of each participant.

The study examined how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents who reside in South Florida deal with issues such as the sense of personal obligation to care for elderly family members inherent in the Jamaican culture, the clash between family values and the values of the host culture, and the cultural conflicts that emerge as a result of changes in socio-economic status, cultural beliefs, and child-rearing and lifestyle challenges. From a phenomenological perspective, the participants gave a snapshot of their continued sense of filial responsibility despite being transplanted into a host culture that seemed to value independence and autonomy. The adult child participants clearly held on to the value that the elderly were to be honored and respected, while the aging parent participants drew a correlation between a child's upbringing and sense of self and how that child treated an aging parent. Even with what appeared to be a temporary departure from cultural values by the children when they first arrived in the United States, the participants' description of what they held dear suggests that they were eventually able to resolve the initial cultural conflict they experienced in earlier years. This study

has added to the existing body of literature on filial responsibility as it highlights the challenges and conflicts faced by some immigrant Jamaican American families, and gives a clear perspective on how these families strive to preserve their cultural identity. The pull of the host country's culture is almost palpable as the adult Jamaican American children recall the conflict they felt in assimilating into a new culture. Similarly, their aging parents describe the struggle they experienced in trying to keep their family together and maintain some semblance of parental authority within the confines of a new culture. Chapter two made note of the fact that Jamaicans living in the United States are usually categorized as African-American, and the response from the participants in this study clearly indicate that they wish to be treated as a separate ethnic group.

Discussion of the Findings

This phenomenological study is the first known of its kind that gives voice to adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents who reside in South Florida, regarding filial responsibility. It uncovers and highlights the many sources of conflict faced by immigrant Jamaicans in South Florida departing a home country that values familism and arriving in the United States where autonomy and individualism is touted as the ideal. In that regard, the study itself adds to the existing literature and is a major contribution to the body of knowledge for marriage and family therapists.

Much of what the participants described with regard to their experiences in migrating to the United States of America resonated strongly with this researcher. The first set of interviews was unquestionably the most gut-wrenching as this researcher had not previously engaged in in-depth interviews, and had many unanswered questions about what would be revealed in the process. It was somewhat exhilarating and sobering at the same time, to discover that the researcher had more similarities in the migratory experience than differences with the

participants. For example, the participants all seemed to agree that great sacrifices had been made in migrating to the United States, primarily for the good of the family. These sacrificial acts led the adult child participants to feel a sense of obligation to their parents, particularly when it was perceived that the sacrifices were made to directly benefit the child and the child's future. Similarly, the aging parents also voiced the sentiment that children who were raised to respect themselves and others would instinctively know that caring for an aging parent was the honorable thing to do. Chapter one highlighted this researcher's interest in the concept of filial responsibility among Jamaican Americans living in South Florida as it emerged from the researcher's own experience with family members caring for an aging grandparent and facing the stark reality of the researcher's own aging parents.

There appeared to be some incongruence in the general expectations that parents verbalized as opposed to when they spoke directly about expectations of their children. For example, when asked how she made sense of the concept of filial responsibility, participant A-AP1 stated, *"Any child that was raised the right way wouldn't think twice about caring for their parents as they get old and need the help."* Participant B-AP2 replied, *"...I think that the love that parents give to their children during the time they were unable to support themselves, I think the same should be given back."* Participant C-AP3 reflected, *"...if you have any decency...any sense of decency, any honor and respect for your parents and what they've done for you over the years to make your life better and raise you the right way to be an upstanding citizen, then you will want to give something back to them in return."*

In contrast, however, when asked directly about what they perceived to be their own child's responsibility to them, the responses were somewhat kinder and gentler. Aging parent participants seemed to treasure the idea of living independently of their children and not posing an undue burden, however, they still expressed the hope that their children would be there for

them when needed. Participant A-AP1 stated, *“I would like them to love me and care for me, and treat me kindly and with respect. You know what I’m saying? I raised my girls to respect their parents and I expect them to continue being that way until the day I die. I don’t really want anything from them right now but that. That’s all I want from them right now.”* In speaking with participant A-AP1, the researcher reflected in memo form that this particular participant’s perspective was reminiscent of the researcher’s own mother who frequently painted a picture of her twilight years as, *“I’ll still be living in my house and you won’t be far away... right there at my beck and call!”* She would laughingly add, *“After all, that’s the least you can do for your mother that raised you!”*

Participant B-AP2 stated that she expected “TLC” which she explained was “tender loving care” and stated, *“I’m expecting they will be gentle, and having to address a situation with me, they will use the correct words to me and not to allow me to feel hurt in any wise, or in any case...or in any way.”* Participant C-AP3 simply stated, *“I expect him to love and respect me. Nothing more, nothing less!”* He added, *“I gave him love as a child and taught him to respect himself and others. I expect him to show that now as a man.”* In speaking with Participant C-AP3, this researcher made a journal entry about the mixed emotions that were encountered while interviewing him and the surprise this researcher felt when meeting his adult son, participant C-AC3: an imposing gentleman who held none of the stereotypical traits of Jamaican homosexuality that the researcher had been exposed to as a child.

Participant C-AP3 presented as kind, gentle, pensive and articulate, yet clearly still struggled with his son’s homosexuality despite his unconditional love and acceptance of his son. Participant C-AC3 was cultured, eloquent, humorous, intelligent, poised, and focused: traits that as a child, this researcher had assumed were not possessed by anyone who would dare to defy the natural purpose of a woman by loving another individual of the same sex. It was a revelatory

experience for this researcher who for the very first time, came face to face with a Jamaican homosexual male who challenged the preconceived and admittedly erroneous notions of what Jamaican homosexuals looked like. It left this researcher pondering the barbaric acts that had been executed against Jamaican homosexual males and brought to mind some of the songs within our culture that spoke of doing harm to these individuals.

In an apparent attempt to balance expectations of their children and the actual attention and care they received from them, the aging parent participants seemed to make allowances for their children's other responsibilities such as work and family. For example, when asked about factors that would influence a parent's decision about filial responsibility participant A-AP1 stated, *"I think that if my health really declined to where I couldn't take care of myself... Say I needed 24-hour care, or something like that... where it would be an undue and extreme burden of care for my daughter... I think I would want them to make the decision to put me somewhere..."*, alluding to a nursing home. In reviewing the transcript, this researcher wondered about the participants' apparent flexibility in assigning filial responsibility to an adult child if that child had other obligations. In the follow-up interviews, this researcher questioned the aging parent participants about this seeming discord between what was said and what was really meant. All the aging participants echoed similar sentiments as they reflected on the difference between when they were growing up as children and the environments in which their now adult children had been exposed to. They all seemed to agree that their adult children were under greater duress and had more demands placed on them because of the advances in technology around the world and in the workplace, which limited their ability to provide the same level of care for aging family members as did the aging parents in their time.

Participant B-AP2 talked about her other daughter who had young children and more responsibilities at home, and the fact that she expected less of that daughter, as a result. She

explained, *“Well, like her other sister...I was saying how she has her family...she has little ones, you know. This daughter here, her child is grown and her job isn’t too demanding: she goes in to work early and gets off early so she always has time to run errands and do things for me. So, when you talk about factors...well, in my case, my other child is raising her young children. She hasn’t been married for as long as her sister and so, I guess, her priority is building that relationship and working on taking care of her husband and children. Her job, too...she works two jobs you know. She goes from one to the other so she’s running all day. By the time she gets home, it’s just enough time to feed her children, help them with their homework, bathe them and put them to bed. She doesn’t...she isn’t as flexible as her sister is so that’s a big difference. You have to take things like that into consideration.”* She also surmised that should she become very ill to the point where she needed constant care, she would not want her children to assume that burden.

Participant C-AP3 stated, *“...the person’s health, finances, and things like that. I wouldn’t expect my son to help me if he was in poor health and needed attention himself. I wouldn’t look to him if he couldn’t afford the time from work or couldn’t provide for me financially if I needed it. Thank God that I have enough money not to worry about that. I think too that maybe if he had been married and had children, even though he was the only child, that might have changed the equation somewhat, you know what I mean? If a child has their own life and family to care for, it makes it a little bit more challenging for them to really devote the time to care for an elderly parent unless they’re living at home with them...and even then, it’s still hard. So, things like that I believe would affect how I feel about children and their responsibility to parents.”* Interestingly enough, the findings in a study conducted by Brandler (1998) seemed to suggest that while aged mothers said they did not think much should be expected of adult children, *“they communicated a different reality to their daughters”* (p. 53). It is therefore likely

that the aging parents in this study could have different expectations of their children if they found themselves in a situation where they were totally dependent on their child for assistance.

Cowgill (1986) suggested that there is perhaps an absence of trauma about growing old in cultures where individuals have been socialized to accept the dependence of older individuals from an early age. The adult child participants' responses seemed to lend credence to this school of thought, and complemented the ideas expressed by the aging parents with regard to factors that would influence one's decision on filial responsibility. The adult child participants all acknowledged that it was a natural to honor the elderly and to respect them. When asked about factors that might influence decisions regarding filial responsibility, participant A-AC1 stated, *"...husbands and children...family would come into play. It's just not an issue for me because I don't have a husband or children. But I'm sure that if you were talking to someone with a family, they would have to make...perhaps different decisions about caring for their aging parent."*

Participant B-AC2 reflected, *"I think if I wasn't married, I would take on more responsibility. I think that just the simple fact that I have a husband that I'm accountable to, and a child...well, not even my child so much because he is a teenager now and is pretty independent. But I think that if I didn't have to answer to my husband, I wouldn't hesitate to do more or be there at my parents' house more often."*

Being an only child, participant C-AC3 was asked if his situation would have been different if he had siblings to which he replied, *"Yes and no. Yes because I wouldn't be the only one carrying the burden of caring for my father. I think with other brothers and sisters, you share the responsibility. In my case, it's just me. I mean, daddy still has his brothers but all of them are in some stage of decline, you know what I mean? They're all at the place where they themselves need help from their children. So, they can't help him. It's just me. I have cousins here and they come around from time to time to check in on him but nothing like what he needs."*

In fact, although all participants had relatives residing in Florida or other states of the United States, they did not rely heavily on them for support. It would appear as if geographical distance, commitment to family and careers were potential hindrances to siblings and families to be reliable sources of support for aging family members.

Participant C-AC3 candidly stated that he had no factors to personally consider because, as he stated, *“In my case, I was just born that way, you know! I just believe it’s my responsibility to take care of my father, no questions asked!”* In considering other families, he added, *“Well, if you had terrible parents who hated you and treated you bad when you were little, then I suppose you wouldn’t want to have anything to do with them, you know! But if you had parents that cared about you, even if they were strict and didn’t let you do the things that you wanted to do when you were growing up, when you grow up and look back at it, if you have any decency at all and if your parents raised you right...you know what I mean...with the right values and respect, then you wouldn’t hesitate to repay them when they get old. Outside of that...maybe finances...or if your parents were really sick and needed constant care, then maybe you would have to make other arrangements for them to live outside...I mean away from their family, you know. I suppose people would have other reasons like family responsibilities or husbands or wives that would have issues with that. I mean...people have different circumstances that would dictate whether or not they’re able to help a parent.”*

Luscher and Pillemer (1998) discussed the fact that negative aspects of family life were frequently interpreted as an absence of solidarity within the family, and did not take into account other circumstances that could hinder an adult child from providing care. Peek, Coward, Peek, & Lee (1998) further discussed circumstances such as child-rearing, marital conflict, and unemployment that had the potential to limit the ability of an adult child to care for an aging parent. They contended that even when filial responsibility was embraced by children, it could

not be assumed to be an indicator of their intention or plan to provide support to their parents. In the case of the participants in this study, they made allowances for the negative aspects of family life and other circumstances that restricted a child's ability to provide care for their parent.

Chapter two highlighted the importance of the Jamaican family unit and the great lengths that parents who migrate to the United States and other countries take to ensure that the children they leave behind are cared for by other family members. Turner, et al., (2004) reflect that some of the cultural values related to the survival of the family unit include the nurturing of an extended family network, the value of children, respect for the elderly, and the primacy of kinship over all other relationships. The participants in this study spoke of the enduring quality of their family values, despite the fact that they were transplanted to another country. Even when the then young adult children seemed to stray from or abandon the values they were accustomed to while in Jamaica, they spoke of returning to those same values in later years, and emphasized how those values had helped to shape them.

In my own reflection, this researcher recalled the challenges an older brother faced when our grandmother became feeble and needed care and attention. He juggled the demands of a high-profile job, the pursuit of higher education, a wife and three young children and willingly provided room and board for our grandmother. There had been a time in years past when he was at odds with our parents because of choices he had made that they disagreed with, despite the fact that he was an adult. In this study, the participants all seemed to agree that their family values were deeply ingrained in their psyche, had been handed down from one generation to the next, and was easily observed by the children who saw parents, uncles and aunts caring for aging grandparents and other family members. There was a sense that this was the norm and anything else was a sign of disrespect to the elder in the community because family was the first priority.

Another value held dear by the participants was that of education and the perception that it was a critical component in one's success. Chapter 2 identified it as one of the primary factors that motivate Jamaicans to migrate to the United States because for them it offers the hope of a better life. The aging parent in family C left her home behind and migrated to the United States so that she would be able to continue to finance her daughters' tertiary education that was already in progress in Jamaica. The adult child in family B bemoaned the fact that she had not taken advantage of the opportunity she had to complete her education upon migrating to the United States, as she had been blinded by the lure of partying and having a good time. The adult child in family C recalled that despite the fact he had left his parents' home in rebellion, they still continued to pay his college tuition. He reflected that though his father had been financially secure and successful without attending college, "*...he always stressed to me that I needed to have a good education in order to make anything of myself.*" He stated, "*...he kept paying because he believed in it and he knew that I believed it too. So I got the education.*"

This researcher was also reminded of the sacrifices made by my parents in the mid 1970's to send my three older siblings abroad to study at New York University and the University of Toronto. It was a time of great economic upheaval and political instability on the island of Jamaica, and the government's decision to take loans from the International Monetary Fund led to the demise and devaluing of the Jamaican dollar. Our parents went through great lengths to procure precious foreign exchange in the form of U.S. dollars, in order to provide funds for my older siblings. In listening to the stories of the participants, this researcher recalled painful memories of food shortages and long trips from our home in the country to the island's capital to buy food and U.S. dollars.

Perhaps the most striking contrast that emerged from the participants' discourse was that of the cultural conflict they experienced, particularly in the areas of child-rearing and lifestyle

expectations. This study uncovered the struggle between holding on to traditional values obtained through informal family training, and the exposure to the Western value system that idealized independence and individualism. There did not appear to be much of a compromise between the two value systems in coming together and, depending on the situation, one value system would take precedence over the other. For example, for the aging parent participants who had conflicts with their then young adult children, the former struggled to hold on to the traditional Jamaican values of child-rearing. In contrast, the then young adult children abandoned the traditional Jamaican values for what they deemed to be a more exciting and seductive Western value system.

Examples of the clash between Jamaican ideals and that of the host culture were scattered throughout the experiences of both aging parent and adult child participants. Participant A-AC1 described what she perceived to be a stark difference between the value placed on education by Jamaicans and that of American children. Participant B-AC2 felt that whereas Americans are defined by the color of their skin, Jamaicans value the individual's socioeconomic status, their level of education or whether or not they own real estate. Participant C-AC3 spoke of his uncle's insistence in maintaining his privacy despite being confined to a hospital bed, and the fact that he intended to preserve that privacy with the help of his immediate family and not the nursing staff.

Participant A-AP1 mentioned that Jamaicans are complex due to the mixture of British and African influence. She described how family values and ideals grew out of stories told by one generation to the next about the Arawak Indians who were the original co-residents of the island, as well as the influence of slaves and plantation owners intricately woven into the Jamaican religious beliefs, spirituality, family values and culture. Participant B-AP2 also made mention of religious and spiritual influences which included the belief of many Jamaicans in the power of black magic or obeah. This, she felt, was a critical component that mental health

professionals needed to be aware of in treating a client. This researcher made mental note of an encounter as a rookie intern with a mental health professional who wanted to diagnose a young middle school client originally from Jamaica with schizophrenia because the child had stated he talked with God and could see God in other people. This researcher recalled personal efforts made to enlighten the counselor about the role of religion and spiritual beliefs among Jamaican nationals. It was a poignant reminder that healthcare professionals need to immerse themselves as much as possible in the cultural norms and beliefs of their client.

Participant B-AP2 also spoke of the communal coming together of family and friends to raise and care for children in the absence of a parent or to help a parent in need. Participant C-AP3 spoke about the differences between the diet of Jamaicans and that of the host culture. In his follow-up interview, he explained that it was important for anyone interacting with Jamaicans that they understood that many foods are actually viewed as having medicinal qualities, and are treated as such. He also discussed how Jamaican children were raised to speak respectfully to adults and compared it to American children who respond either without mentioning the adult's last name, or who address the adult by their first name: something that is unheard of among Jamaicans who view this as a sign of disrespect and shoddy upbringing.

Lashley (2000) stated that mental health professionals working with Caribbean or West Indian youth may have difficulty understanding the pattern of movement by parents who frequently leave their child behind in the care of a family member. Some of the literature have addressed the problems that result when the child eventually reunifies with the parent in the new country (e.g., Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Krauter & Davis, 1978; Lashley, 2000), however, nothing in the literature documents if or how these conflicts are resolved, and what happens to the relationship between the now adult child and aging parent if they are not resolved. While this aspect of adult child-aging parent interaction was not directly addressed in this study, it was

referred to indirectly when some of the participants spoke of the difficulty within the family unit in adjusting to the new culture, and its impact on the parent-child relationship in the early years. At least two of the adult child participants reflected on the changes they went through, how those changes impacted their relationship with their parents, and their coming full circle to again embrace their Jamaican heritage after many years of living in the United States.

In speaking with those two adult child participants and in following up with them after they completed their member checks, this researcher was curious to discover how they had managed to make peace with the old culture after abandoning it for the new, and what steps, if any, they had taken to repair the relationship between themselves and their parents. Participant B-AC2 had spoken about the many years of separation following her turning aside from the values her parents had instilled in her and that she did not reconcile with them until she got married and had a child. Participant B-AC2 reflected that it was more a part of the process of healing something that had been sick for a very long time which led to her reconciliation with her parents. Participant C-AC3 explained his reunification with his parents as being “...*just something that had to be done. A child don't always know what is right for them and you resent your parents. When I got older and could really appreciate what my parents did for me, that's when I recognized I needed to apologize, make amends, you know. They might have gone about it a different way...but in the long run, they were right.*”

Both adult child participants provided a snapshot of the thought process they went through in reclaiming their original Jamaican family values after years of embracing the American culture. This researcher wonders whether or not this is common to the Jamaican immigrant experience or if families remain torn apart because of the upheaval and trauma experienced in trying to assimilate into and accommodate the new culture. This is an area that

warrants further research as it has vast implications for the lasting impact of migratory patterns on Jamaican families living in the United States.

As discussed in the literature review, the traditional Jamaican parenting style is collectivistic with its closely knit network of family members and fictive relatives. In contrast, the traditional American parenting style is individualistic in nature and values autonomy. The clash of these two differing worldviews resulted in a breakdown of communication between parents and children. This is highlighted by the stories told by adult child participants B-AC2 and C-AC3 of their separation from their families shortly after migrating to the United States. Both participants acknowledged that they were drawn by the excitement and thrills that the host culture had to offer, and abandoned their Jamaican values for several years. Rosaldo (1993) makes reference to the dynamic nature of culture and the fact that it is constantly shaping, reshaping and adapting. This seems to support the adult child participants' perspectives that despite the initial pull of the American culture and their new-found peers, they returned to what was known to them, the familiar: their Jamaican heritage.

While the then young adult children struggled with accommodating a new lifestyle, their parents seemed to struggle more with the changes in their socioeconomic status in the host country. Without exception, all of the aging parent participants spoke of the difficult transition they had in leaving their homes behind and the comforts that they had been able to afford, and coming to a country where they no longer could afford those added benefits. The aging parent from family A spoke about the fact that for the very first time in her adult life, she was forced to work for wages. She described how humbling it was to live in a stranger's house and to care for him. She recalled how painful it was that she missed her daughter's wedding because she was not permitted to travel outside of the United States at the time. In her follow-up interview, she was asked how she made sense of her cousin's apparent change in behavior toward her. She

stated that she felt it was because she (participant A-AP1) had been held in high esteem by family and friends because of her social status, and that her cousin had not been accustomed to seeing her in a position of need. In addition, A-AP1 reflected that her cousin was also being challenged by the new culture and was perhaps not adjusting well to the obstacles that she was facing at the time. A-AP1 reported that her once estranged cousin has since made amends with her.

This researcher memoed about a similar experience that an older sibling had, living in the United States and attending university, when monetary resources that were once available to our parents dried up and that sibling was forced to move in with cousins. It was not long before my sibling was being ridiculed and taken advantage of by these cousins who had been treated well and taken care of in every way by our parents when they lived in Jamaica. There seemed to be a subtle shift, as if to say my sibling no longer had the upper hand because our cousins were now being relied upon to provide living accommodations. It was a stark reminder that some Jamaicans define themselves by what they have and if you are unfortunate enough to be one of those without, regardless of the color or your skin, you are treated like a second-rate citizen.

Participant B-AP2 stated that she left a large farm behind in Jamaica and the status that came with land ownership. She spoke of the tears she shed during those years of separation from her husband and daughters but interestingly enough, did not go into as great detail as her daughter did when asked about the stories she might have heard about her mother's experience of migrating to the United States. In her follow-up interview, this researcher commented on the difference in intensity as described by parent and child. Participant B-AP2's explanation was that she had made peace with the fact that she had to do it for the good of her family while her daughter, participant B-AC2 reflected that she perhaps still had feelings of guilt stemming from

the difficult time she gave her mother, knowing how much she had sacrificed in migrating to America.

Participant C-AP3 spoke of losing the extra support he had in Jamaica and being forced now to cook, clean, and drive himself and his family around town. He clearly stated that it was a definite loss in status not only for himself but for his wife, too, who had been a socialite in Jamaican circles.

Two of the three adult child participants mentioned the fact that they had returned to their roots after years of abandoning their family values. In their experience of migrating to the United States, they perceived that they had chosen the culture and values of the new host country over that of their country of origin. Participant C-AC3 described the fascination he felt with finally being able to embrace his homosexuality without fear of repercussion. Participant B-AC2 recalled the thrill of going out to parties and hanging out with new friends, something which she had not been allowed to do when she lived in Jamaica. Participant C-AC3 candidly reflected that if he had a child, he would raise that child with the same values with which his parents had raised him, adding, *“Those values are sound and what we’re lacking in this society today.”* Participant B-AC2 recalled that she reconnected with her mother once she got married, stating, *“...all that changed after I got married and had a baby. I realized that another generation had begun with the birth of my child. I was getting older and so were my parents.”* In her follow-up interview she described the change in her relationship with her mother as a new appreciation of her parents, a better understanding of what it meant to be a mother, and a compelling desire to leave an honorable legacy for her own child.

Despite the fact that the parent participants tried to provide for their families in the host country and made every effort to maintain some semblance of normalcy for their children, the children yearned to be free from what they perceived at the time, to be their cultural chains. Yet,

after years of being part of the new culture, they shed the image so as to re-embrace their Jamaican heritage. It was as if the cultural conflict resolved itself after years of struggle and the adult-child participants had come full circle in returning to their family values.

Habermas and Bluck (2000) stated that individuals must acquaint themselves with the culture's perception of biography before one can begin to formulate convincing life stories, and added that biographies are most likely to begin within the family unit. A striking theme that pulsed throughout the participants' stories was their perception that Jamaicans were a race apart, were unlike any other group of individuals because of their ethnic melting pot, and should be regarded as a unique group. Participant A-AC1 explained, *"You've got to be aware of the little nuances and the little intricacies that make Jamaicans, Jamaicans."* Her mother cautioned, *"You can't just think that we're like any other black person because we're not."*

Participant B-AC2 stated, *"...counselors need to get to know the Jamaican individual and what makes them Jamaican. I mean, I have been a U.S. citizen for almost 25 years now and I still think of myself as Jamaican...that's how I define myself, that's who I am and how I see me. I still have that Jamaican mentality, you know, that Jamaican value system still inside of me. I still think Jamaican, if you know what I mean! Yes, I have citizenship here but I'm a born Jamaican. So, you have to consider my background, my upbringing, the things that helped make me the person I am today...not to say that it's not the same for other nationalities, but Jamaicans have some little unique qualities about them that you're not going to know about unless you really take the time to get to know them. So don't lump us in a group with other people who may have the same color skin as we do because that's only going to piss us off..."* Her mother added, *"...Jamaicans are a breed to themselves."* She added, *"...you can't put us in the same basket as other people of color. You have to understand the culture we're coming from. Family...and I'm not just talking about daddy and mummy and brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. I'm talking*

about the lady in the neighborhood that you call “Auntie” or “Mama” because she helped take care of you. All those people are family even though they may not be blood. You have to understand how our family goes beyond blood and we take that pretty serious.”

Participant C-AC3 cautioned, *“Don’t think you know us because of the color of our skin.”* His father made reference to the cultural nuances that his past therapist was unable to grasp because the behaviors were deeply ingrained in him since childhood. He also made reference to one’s skin color and stated, *“Being a Jamaican has nothing to do with the color of your skin because we can look Asian, Indian, Syrian, Jewish, African, European, Hispanic, even. Our race is connected by something much deeper than the color of our skin. We’re a proud set of people, you know. We have been through a lot...from the days of slavery to our emancipation and independence in 1962 from British rule. We have a spirit that distinguishes us no matter where in the world we go...is not just the patois...”* Clearly, the participants regarded themselves as a unique group that, if not treated as such, would lead to a breakdown in communication, especially with healthcare professionals.

Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists

The findings of this study add more weight to the importance of not merely understanding and appreciating the characteristics and traditions of the immigrant Jamaican family but more so, accepting them. The belief of some immigrant Jamaicans that the intricate differences inherent in their culture make them unique from other immigrant groups in the United States further reinforces the critical components of cultural pluralism. Havighurst (1974) identified several components of cultural pluralism including mutual appreciation and understanding, cooperation, peaceful coexistence of the many lifestyles, languages, beliefs, and customs, and the autonomy of each group within the society, with positive regard for the rights of other groups.

Marriage and family therapists need to be wary of the incongruence that is commonly found between understanding and accepting an idea or concept. Too often, healthcare providers have the theoretical knowledge of how one should operate but in practice, one finds that there exists a great divide between theory and its practical application. Hence, despite the fact that immigrant families face various types of discrimination in terms of cultural pluralism, providers sometimes forget when sitting opposite the client being served. The immigrant Jamaican participants in this study made their perception clear: that they possess cultural and family values incongruent with that of the American culture.

The implications for marriage and family therapists working with this population are further underscored by the assumption that some immigrant Jamaicans should not be expected to forego their cultural identity and heritage because they are living within the context of the American culture. Providers not only need to be acutely aware of these differences but would do well to utilize a counseling approach that is respectful of, and embraces the client's own cultural frame of reference. This is the essence of acculturation: immigrants are able to live and function within the culture of the host culture while retaining their original culture. The marriage and family therapist therefore needs to be sensitive to their special cultural needs. Hence, one may need to educate themselves about the immigrant Jamaican's diet, or make accommodations for the client's family to have a more active role in the client's treatment, or incorporate elements of the client's religious or spiritual beliefs in treatment, to name a few.

Chapter 2 highlighted the intricately woven family network frequently found in Jamaican families that includes blood relatives and fictive relatives as well. This study has highlighted some of the aspects of the Jamaican culture that some immigrant Jamaicans still hold dear, and by which they define their very existence in the host country. Marriage and family therapists therefore need to be respectful of the resistance they may encounter when a Jamaican client

hesitates to make decisions that may have a significant impact on their family unit. Being able to identify these traits among Jamaican clients will undoubtedly bolster the rapport building and therapeutic alliance between marriage and family therapists and their immigrant Jamaican client living in South Florida, and perhaps in other parts of the United States.

These findings suggest that in order to increase, enhance, and improve service use among Jamaican Americans, agencies on aging and other caregiver support providers need to create more aggressive outreach services programs that are sensitive to not only primary caregivers but family support systems, and also embrace the linguistic and cultural components indigenous to the Jamaican American population. Marriage and family therapists should be encouraged to speak out against the prejudices that minority groups face, not only in the American society at large, but which are also embedded in the services that are made available to them and those that seem to be less accessible. There are serious and perhaps fatal implications for marriage and family therapists who fail to recognize the importance of the immigrant Jamaican's culture within the context of the therapeutic relationship.

Despite the fact that this researcher was of the same cultural background as the participants in this study, new realities emerged from the discourses that this researcher had not previously encountered or considered. For example, an undeniably fierce sense of pride emanated from the participants' discourses with this researcher. This revelation underscored the importance of marriage and family therapists not mistaking naturalized citizenship or permanent residency as a sign that the client had relinquished hold of his or her roots. Though aware that Jamaicans were a proud people, this researcher was taken off guard by the strength of that pride in participants who had lived in the United States for several decades and who had given up their Jamaican citizenship to become naturalized citizens of the United States of America.

A subtle dichotomy that surfaced during the interview process was the fact that while one participant felt one's personal circumstances had a direct impact on one's ability to care for an aging parent, another participant reflected that nothing should prevent a child from caring for a parent in need. These conflicted feelings resonated strongly with this researcher whose own siblings have demonstrated varying levels of filial responsibility and irresponsibility over the years. For the marriage and family therapist, it is a poignant reminder that even within families where the same values are taught, children will undoubtedly adapt and adjust them to fit their particular life story and situation.

This researcher also had to face the memories of being raised in a culture where homosexuals lived in fear for their lives and could potentially lose their life if they were identified as such. This researcher had never met an openly homosexual Jamaican male until this study got underway and it was an eye-opener that removed the stigmas and myths I had grown up with as a child. It was also consoling for this researcher to finally embrace the fact that this participant was as real and as human and as kind and as giving as any other individual I had encountered in my lifetime, regardless of his sexual orientation. It helped reinforce the fact that the marriage and family therapist must approach the therapeutic alliance from a position of neutrality, regardless of the client's presentation. The encounter helped this researcher put the monsters that had terrified and taunted me as a child about homosexuals to rest.

A study by Portes and Rumbaud (2001) found that Jamaicans were likely to feel more racially discriminated against than other ethnic groups, particularly second-generation members residing in Florida and California. The authors determined that the participants in the study responded to the perceived discrimination by embracing even more fiercely their original identity which was based on their culture, more so than the color of their skin. The authors also explored stereotypes that Americans had of Jamaicans living in the United States, notably that Jamaicans

were hardworking and deeply committed to the pursuit of education: this was often done in comparison to the culture of native African Americans. Thompson and Bauer (2003) reported that when compared to other Caribbean and Latin American immigrants, Jamaican families did, in fact, have the highest median family income of all the groups, and were much more inclined to be involved in educational pursuits than the other immigrant groups.

This discovery further highlights the importance of marriage and family therapists understanding that their attitude in the therapeutic alliance should be based on mutual respect and acceptance of the client's culture and values, and underscores the importance of being culturally aware and sensitive when working with a culture other than your own. Therapists should not avoid discussion of the myths and stereotypes specific to immigrant Jamaicans. In fact, openly expressing awareness of misconceptions about this group of people is more likely to benefit the relationship than to hurt it, as it implies openness and honesty on the part of the therapist. Marriage and family therapists will serve their clientele well by pursuing resources and continuing education that further enhance and add to the knowledge they already possess regarding working with culturally diverse populations. In so doing, one not only increases their knowledge but also increases the likelihood that the community in which they work will recognize them as culturally sensitive practitioners not afraid to collaborate with their client in facing the challenges that accompany the assimilation into a host culture.

Limitations

The aging Jamaican American parents in this study were cognitively intact in order to complete this study and were in relatively good health, needing minimal to moderate assistance with activities of daily living. Consequently, a limitation of this study which should be addressed in the future is one where the recipients of support and care are not cognitively intact and are not in fair health. Past literature has shown that there are some stressors present in the caregiver-

recipient relationship when cognitive decline is a factor in the aging individual (Choppelas, 2005; Knight, Robinson, Longmire, Chun, Nakao, & Kim, 2002; Peek, et al., 1998; Pinguart & Sorensen, 2005). It may be also that the expectations of the aging Jamaican American participants in this study were impacted by the fact that they required minimal to moderate care and did not seem to pose a significant burden on their adult children. Participants from a lower socioeconomic level or with significant health problems that warranted more intensive caregiving and support would likely produce different results. Hence, despite the fact that the small sample size of this qualitative study was efficient and effective in gathering open-ended information about the perception of aging Jamaican American parents and their adult children regarding filial responsibility, the process itself limits the study's findings to the identified population.

Another limitation of this study is that the primary source of data collection was the interviews, unlike other qualitative designs that might have included historical documents, questionnaires, and other forms of documentary evidence. The nature of this particular study did, in fact, require the use of a phenomenological research design that would more fully provide an in-depth picture of the experiences of aging Jamaican American parents and their adult children regarding the concept of filial responsibility.

The study is also limited by the fact that the participants either lived with each other or were within driving distance of their loved one. The data uncovered in this study suggest that adult Jamaican American children are influenced by a deeply ingrained cultural sense of filial obligation and piety toward aging parents and other aging family members. It is unknown how geographical distance would impact the parent-child caregiving relationship and the adult child's personal sense of obligation to the aging parent if they were not within easy reach of each other. Obligation to spouses, jobs, children, socioeconomic factors, personal resources, health, level of

acculturation and non-caregiving-related stressors could also potentially interfere with the caregiving process and should be assessed in future studies.

Future Research Directions

The sense of personal obligation felt by the adult Jamaican American children was tied to their perception of the immense parental sacrifices made by their aging parents. Two of the three adult child participants described tumultuous teenage years where they were at odds with their parents and the cultural values and norms they had grown up with prior to migrating to the United States of America. These adult child participants were able to appreciate the value of the parental sacrifices made in former years and seemed to have made peace with the conflicts that had existed then. Future research that addresses the conflicts, adjustments, and transitions between immigrant Jamaican parents and their children would help to shed further light on the challenges that these families face in assimilating into a new culture. Aging parents who are totally dependent on their adult children for support and care would perhaps have different results that would also be critical in understanding the experience of Jamaican American immigrants living in the United States.

A quantitative study similar to this phenomenological study could also provide greater understanding of Jamaican American families living in the United States, and the unique challenges they face. It would also open dialogue about subtle nuances that may or may not exist between Jamaican Americans and other ethnic groups residing in the United States with regard to the phenomenon of filial responsibility.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing multicultural body of knowledge and enhance the understanding of marriage and family therapists regarding the cultural conflicts and dilemma faced by Jamaican Americans living in South Florida, with regard to the concept of

filial responsibility. The findings herein revealed that immigrant Jamaican Americans experience numerous challenges in trying to assimilate into the new culture of the host country while retaining some of their more traditional Jamaican values that govern attitudes toward personal obligation and family values.

An analysis of the participants' perception of filial responsibility revealed a strong sense of personal obligation, honor and respect for aging individuals. Participants described this value as one that was deeply embedded in the Jamaican culture, and spoke of seeing parents and relatives care for aging parents, making it part of the Jamaican lifestyle. Adult child participants spoke of aging parents as deserving of respect for the care they gave their children when they were young, and/or for the sacrifices they made in migrating to the United States and leaving their homes behind, or simply just for the fact that they were getting older. The participants also remained strongly loyal to their Jamaican roots, despite having resided in the United States of America for several decades, and despite the fact that most of them had become naturalized citizens. It was also interesting to note that despite the fact that the aging Jamaican American parents stated they had no expectations of their adult children, they still reflected on and emphasized the importance of children honoring and respecting their parents by helping them in whatever areas of need they had.

The socioeconomic status of the participants in this particular study was an important factor in the relationships presented therein between aging parent and adult child. The aging Jamaican American parents in this study all seemed to have made adequate preparation for their final years so as not to be a significant burden on their children. In so doing, the adult Jamaican American children in this study did not express feelings of being burdened by their parents as they were not required to provide full financial support for them. It is this researcher's

assumption that the findings of this study would have varied if the aging Jamaican American parents had been poor or had not made adequate financial preparation for their final years.

The family's migration to the host country also seemed to have a significant impact on its ability to provide care and support to aging parents. A recurring recollection found in the participants' conversation was that of the network of family members that existed while the family lived in Jamaica. In migrating to the United States, participants reflected on the shift that occurred when relatives were no longer within walking or driving distance of each other, and now resided in different cities or states. Consequently, the support of aging parents now became the primary responsibility of the adult children rather than that of an extended family network that may have included aunts, uncles, cousins, and fictive relatives. It would seem, then, that with migration comes a relatively small network of caring family members, namely adult children, relegated with the task of tending to the needs of an aging parent. Hence, while the family as a whole has not totally lost its capacity to care for aging parents, a number of factors, including geographical distance, living arrangements, other family responsibilities, and socioeconomic status, may have a telling impact on the extent to which adult children are able to care for aging parents.

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Appendix A

Telephone Contact and Initial Screening

As the principal researcher of the study (Perceptions of Adult Jamaican American children and their Aging Parents Regarding Filial Responsibility: Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists), and upon initial telephone contact with a potential participant, the following is the presentation which will be followed when conversing with potential participants:

Hello, my name is Shari Edwards Randerson. I am a Doctoral candidate at Barry University and I am conducting a voluntary research study of the storied experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents regarding filial responsibility. Filial responsibility is a term used to describe the sense of personal obligation that a child may feel with regard to the care of aging parents (Hamon & Blieszner, 1990). To participate in this voluntary research study you are required to read, review, and sign an informed consent form, which will be fully explained to you at the initial interview, and you must presently reside in the South Florida area. In order to ensure that you meet the criteria for participating in this study, I would like to ask you the following questions:

1. Do you currently reside in the South Florida area?
2. How would you define your racial or ethnic background?
3. For adult children: Do you have a parent who resides in South Florida who is over the age of 65 and may be willing to participate in this study?
4. For aging parents: Are you over the age of 65 years and do you have an adult child who also resides in the South Florida area and who may be willing to participate in this study?
5. Are you willing to participate in a study that will require that you share your thoughts on the meaning of filial responsibility and your experience of it?

This study is being developed out of the need to fill a gap in the literature as it relates to understanding how adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents make sense of the concept of filial responsibility. This inquiry will be useful to healthcare providers, marriage and family therapists and counselors who work with adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents, the general public, policymakers, and educators.

If you are interested in participating in this study, we will make an appointment to meet at a location that is most convenient to you. I will answer any questions that you may have and will also provide you with additional information and clarification regarding this study. If this study does not appeal to you, I thank you for the time taken to inquire about it.

Appendix B

Barry University Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research project. The title of the study is Perceptions of Adult Jamaican American children and their Aging Parents Regarding Filial Responsibility: Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists. The research is being conducted by Shari Edwards Randerson, M.S., a Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Department with a specialization in Marriage, Couples, and Family counseling/therapy housed in the Adrian Dominican School of Education at Barry University. The purpose of this study is to further understand the perception of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents as it relates to filial responsibility. Filial responsibility is a term used to describe the sense of personal obligation that a child may feel with regard to the care of aging parents. This study is an attempt to examine the essence and central underlying meanings of the lived experiences of Jamaican Americans residing in the South Florida area, with regard to filial responsibility.

I will conduct a maximum of two interviews with adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents. When possible and comfortable for you, I will conduct audio-taped interviews of 1-2 hours for the initial session which I will transcribe. When possible and comfortable for you, I will conduct a follow-up session lasting no more than an hour for the purpose of verifying your transcript for accuracy. The follow-up session will not be audio-taped. The anticipated number of participants is a total of 6 adults.

Interviews will be conducted at a location agreed upon by us that is convenient and conducive to conducting an interview. Interviews will consist of one parent 65 years and older, and one adult child 18 years and older. You will be interviewed separately: adult children will not be interviewed in the presence of their aging parent, and vice versa. In order to obtain the fullest descriptions possible, I will allow you to see the questions in written form (See Appendix C).

You have the right to refuse to answer any question or questions you see fit. You are also being asked to make yourself available for the first interview which will last between one to two hours and a follow-up interview (within four to six weeks) lasting no more than an hour. The follow-up interview is for the purpose of verifying your own transcript for accuracy and will not be recorded. Your consent to be a part of this research is voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw or remove yourself from the study, there will be no repercussions to you or your family member, and any data collected from you will be immediately destroyed.

Your involvement in this study may cause you to experience an emotional reaction during the interviews. The following procedures will be used to minimize the risks: If it is determined at any time during any interview that you need a referral for mental health intervention, the interview will immediately be stopped. Referrals for mental health intervention will be provided should you request that assistance, or as an alternative, I will refer you to your current health insurance plan or preferred provider.

It is possible that the interviews may be helpful to you, your spouse and/or family, in understanding how family members make sense of filial roles and responsibilities, and increasing your understanding of the challenges faced in assimilating into a different culture. Your participation in this study may also assist our understanding of the experiences of adult Jamaican

American children and their aging parents regarding filial responsibility. This increased understanding may help clinicians, mental health professionals, therapists and marriage and family counselors who serve Jamaican American families, and also may provide useful information to immigrant Jamaican families who may be faced with caring for an aging parent.

As a research participant, any information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Names will not be used and you will be assigned a number that will be recorded on each tape recording. All data will be kept separate from the consent form and audio tapes. Data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. The audio tapes will be destroyed immediately after transcribing is completed. Consent forms, notes and transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years. Any published results of the research will protect the anonymity of all participants, and no names will be used. You may come to my office and obtain a copy of the results of the study if you choose. Please contact the researcher at (954) 483-9517. The results will be available in approximately 6 months after the completion of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, you may contact me, Shari Edwards Randerson, M.S., at (954) 483-9517, my supervisor and faculty sponsor Richard Tureen, Ph.D. at (305) 899-3741 or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Voluntary Consent - I acknowledge that I have read this consent form and have been informed of the nature and purposes of this research study by Shari Edwards Randerson, M.S. Also, all questions I have regarding this study have thus far been answered by Shari Edwards Randerson, M.S., and I have read and understand the information presented above. I have also received a copy of this form. If in the future I have further questions, I will contact the researcher Shari Edwards Randerson, M.S., or her supervisor and faculty sponsor Richard Tureen, Ph.D. I hereby give my voluntary consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your background and family of origin?
2. How and when did you come to the United States of America, and what was that experience like for you?
3. To the adult child: What stories have you heard or been told about your parent's experience of migrating to the United States of America?
4. To the aging parent: What stories have you told your adult child about your experience of migrating to the United States of America?
5. How do you make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?
6. What do you perceive to be the adult child's responsibility, if any, to an aging parent?
7. Has your sense of your responsibility (or your adult child's responsibility) changed over time? If so, how?
8. What are your expectations of your adult child (or of your aging parent), if any?
9. How do you describe your relationship with your adult child (or with your aging parent), and has this relationship changed over time? If so, how?
10. How would you describe your life as it is, today?
11. How do you perceive that your expectations of your adult child (or aging parents) will change over time?
12. What factors, if any, do you think would influence your decision about filial responsibility?
13. What should counselors know when working with Jamaican American families about the roles and values of Jamaican American parents and their adult children?

Appendix D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: Perceptions of Adult Jamaican American children and their Aging Parents Regarding Filial Responsibility: Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists.

Time of interview:

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Role of interviewee (parent or adult child):

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of adult Jamaican American children and their aging parents with regard to the concept of filial responsibility. Filial responsibility is frequently used to describe the sense of personal obligation that a child may feel with regard to the care of an aging parent. It is hoped that this will help to inform theory, research, and practice in the field of marriage and family therapy by broadening the knowledge base regarding this group of individuals and their families.

Questions:

1. Can you tell me about your background and family of origin?
2. How and when did you come to the United States of America, and what was that experience like for you?
3. To the adult child: What stories have you heard or been told about your parent's experience of migrating to the United States of America?
4. To the aging parent: What stories have you told your adult child about your experience of migrating to the United States of America?
5. How do you make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?
6. What do you perceive to be the adult child's responsibility, if any, to an aging parent?
7. Has your sense of your responsibility (or your adult child's responsibility) changed over time? If so, how?
8. What are your expectations of your adult child (or of your aging parent), if any?

9. How do you describe your relationship with your adult child (or with your aging parent), and has this relationship changed over time? If so, how?
10. How would you describe your life as it is, today?
11. How do you perceive that your expectations of your adult child (or aging parents) will change over time?
12. What factors, if any, do you think would influence your decision about filial responsibility?
13. What should counselors know when working with Jamaican American families about the roles and values of Jamaican American parents and their adult children?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today and for participating in this interview. Please know that your responses to my questions today will be held in the strictest confidence, and that I will contact you within four to six weeks for a follow-up interview. This purpose of this interview is to allow you to review and verify the accuracy of the transcript, and will not be recorded. This interview should take no more than an hour. I appreciate your time. Thanks again.

Adapted from "Campus Response to a Student Gunman," by Asmussen & Creswell, 1995, *Journal of Higher Education*, 66, pp. 575-591.

Appendix E



IMMIGRANT JAMAICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES RESEARCH STUDY

SEEKING JAMAICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES LIVING IN SOUTH FLORIDA TO SHARE THEIR CONCEPT OF FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

THIS STUDY IS DESIGNED TO INVESTIGATE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE EXPECTATION THAT ADULT CHILDREN SHOULD SUPPORT THEIR AGING PARENTS WHEN THE NEED ARISES.

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ASKED TO BE AVAILABLE FOR TWO INTERVIEWS. THE FIRST INTERVIEW WILL LAST BETWEEN 1-2 HOURS AND THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW WILL LAST NO MORE THAN AN HOUR. INTERVIEWS WILL BE CONDUCTED AT A CONVENIENT TIME AND MUTUALLY AGREED UPON LOCATION.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY IS STRICTLY VOLUNTARY AND PARTICIPANTS MAY WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PENALTY. ALL INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM THE INTERVIEWS WILL BE HANDLED WITH THE UTMOST CONFIDENTIALITY.

THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR IS SHARI EDWARDS RANDERSON, A DOCTORAL STUDENT AT BARRY UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH, PLEASE CONTACT ME AT 954-483-9517, OR THE FACULTY SPONSOR, RICHARD TUREEN, Ph.D. AT 305- 899-3741.

Appendix F

Italicized print: *significant statements*

* Regular print: meanings attached by this researcher

Researcher's question: Can you tell me about your background and family of origin?

Outside of my immediate family I have aunts and uncles, you know. Back home, they all lived within driving distance of our house so we always had someone visiting or going back and forth to our cousins' houses.

*Family members maintained close contact with each other.

My parents were from a humble upbringing but they worked hard and pursued college degrees. They really emphasized the importance of a good education and we were always encouraged to work hard and bring home good grades.

*Education was of great value within the family unit.

...my family is tight.

*Family members were closely knit and felt connected with each other.

Daddy had four brothers and Mummy had three sisters and one brother. All of them had children so I had plenty cousins and uncles and aunts. On top of that, both my grandparents lived well into their 90s...on both sides of the family...

*The extended family was of great importance.

There was always some family coming through the house or somebody visiting from the States or some other country. As a matter of fact, I can't remember our house being empty for more than a month.

*Family members maintained frequent contact with each other and this was perceived to be the norm.

Researcher's question: What stories have you heard or been told about your mom's/dad's experience of migrating to the United States of America?

...money was a big problem because suddenly we had to change the way we had lived.

You know, many of us who migrate to the United States have property and status back home. We come here and do menial jobs...housekeeping, taking care of the elderly, working two, three, four jobs to make ends meet. People look at us and think that we're greedy and too ambitious. They don't know that we're not accustomed to being subservient to other people. They don't know that we've left huge houses and hundreds of acres of property behind to come to this country. They think that we're working all those jobs because we want to have what they have. They don't know that we have more than they could ever achieve here in the United States.

*Feelings of being misunderstood by the host culture. Bitterness over the loss of status and property. Resentment related to the lowered standard of living and menial jobs that one is forced to take in order to survive in the host country.

If you saw the house that we grew up in, in Jamaica, you would never imagine that my mother would stoop to changing a stranger's dirty diapers and keeping their wounds clean when she

had never been exposed to anything like that in her entire life. She wanted to preserve what was left of her family and so she made a humongous sacrifice for her daughters.

*A strong sense of pride and loyalty to preserving the family regardless of the cost to one's sense of self.

I didn't really know what my mother went through until years and years later because when I first came here, I kind of lost touch with her.

*Detachment of the family unit related to the migratory process.

Well, I was there. I was part of it. So I saw everything that they went through. It was a difficult time in the sense that even though we owned a house, it was nothing compared to what we had in Jamaica...

*Overwhelming sense of loss for what was left behind in Jamaica.

Researcher's question: What stories have you told your children about your experience of migrating to the United States of America?

They haven't heard everything, that's for sure! I never wanted to burden them because they had it rough, too.

*Parent felt the need to shield the child from the impact of migration on the parent.

But I didn't tell them about the crying and not eating and me feeling sad and worrying all the time.

*Parent experienced overwhelming feelings of sadness that remained hidden from child.

I encouraged them and told them that we would soon be together, and that they were to stay strong and focus on their education. They never knew nothing about what I was going through...the humiliation of having to clean someone else's body waste...clean their house.

*Parent put on a strong front to protect the child. Parent remained proud despite having a menial job.

I never talked to them about it until years after they were here with me and settled.

*Parent carried the burden of the migratory experience until children were reunited with parent and “settled” in the host country.

I didn't want to make it any worse for them...knowing that I was here, they were there, in school, not working...I didn't want them to worry about me.

*Geographical distance was a determining factor in how much was shared with the child.

My children knew that it was difficult for me leaving them behind and they knew that what I was doing, they would benefit from it, and that the life here in the United States was much better for me, getting away from the farm life.

*The family had an understanding among themselves that life in the United States offered more opportunities for them.

I let them know that my desire was to have them coming here too...

*The parent let the child know that the parent's migration to the United States was for the express benefit of the child.

Well, he knows. He was with us, you see. He experienced it with us too, so there weren't many stories to tell. It affected him too because we literally upped and packed the day before we were to leave...

*Leaving one's roots in Jamaica was a difficult experience for the family.

Researcher's question: How do you make sense of the concept of filial responsibility?

Any child that was raised the right way wouldn't think twice about caring for their parents as they get old and need the help.

*A child's upbringing is a good indicator of how they will respond to an aging parent's needs.

So I think that the love that parents give to their children during the time they were unable to support themselves, I think the same should be given back. That same love that the parents had for their children, the children should give it back to the parents.

*Quid pro quo.

In the Bible, it is written, "Children, honor thy mother and thy father that your days may be long upon this earth," not just in the afterlife but here upon earth. So as a parent, children taking care of their parents would be a part of showing honor to their parents. If one takes the word of God seriously, then they should realize how important it is to live by the word, do the right thing, and the blessing will follow them always and also their children.

*Religious beliefs are used to support the parent's perception of what the parent-child relationship should look like.

I would like to think...I want to believe that children would feel a sense of obligation to their parents...

*Children have an inherent sense of responsibility to the parent because of what the parent has done to raise them.

...but if you have any decency...any sense of decency, any honor and respect for your parents and what they've done for you over the years to make your life better and raise you the right way to be an upstanding citizen, then you will want to give something back to them in return. And if it means being responsible for them when they get old and can't take care of themselves anymore, then so be it! It's the right thing to do.

*If one has basic values such as decency, honor, and respect, that individual will automatically feel the need to give back to, or care for an aging parent.

I believe that it is every child's responsibility to care for their aging parents.

*This is not even open for discussion.

I think if you're in a position to do it, you should take care of your parents when they get old or when they get to the point where they can't take care of themselves anymore.

*One's circumstances may dictate whether or not one is able to care for an aging parent.

It's what you do for your parents, man, when they can't do it anymore for themselves.

* This is the way it is.

Researcher's question: What do you perceive to be the adult child's responsibility, if any, to an aging parent?

I believe that it is the adult child's responsibility to care for their aging parent.

*Filial responsibility is part of the package of being an adult child with an aging parent.

I believe that every child has a responsibility to their parent, their aging parent, to care for them, to nurse them, wash them, bathe them, cook for them, help them get dressed, feed them if they can't feed themselves, go shopping for them, clean...whatever it is, I don't care.

*One's circumstances should not dictate whether or not one is able to care for an aging parent.

I think that you have a responsibility to care for your parent in whatever way you can. I think that if you have any respect for yourself and for your parents, then you will know that it's the honorable thing to do.

*Caring for an aging parent is indicative of a child's self-respect and self-honor.

Love them, take care of them, respect them, do whatever you can do for them, honor them.

Whatever is in your power to do for your parents, you should do as a child. It doesn't matter what happened in the past, they're still your parents and you can't change that. You have an obligation to give back to them what they sacrificed for you from birth.

*People, including parents, make mistakes. Families need to forgive each other for past hurts and not allow painful memories to impede one's sense of responsibility to the aging parent.

Help them any way you can. If they need something, you as a child should be there for them.

*Children ought to be available to assist their parents.

I don't believe that there is anything that a parent, an old person could ask of their child within reason, that would be unreasonable...not when you consider the price of being a parent and raising children.

*Parents have made sacrifices in raising their children so children too, must make sacrifices in caring for the aging parent.

A child, no matter how old you are, have an...has an obligation to help a parent in need. If you have any respect for yourself, if you're a real man or a real woman, you're not going to allow your mother and father to suffer, or for some stranger to come in and put their hands on them.

*The true measure of a man or woman can be seen in their relationship with their aging parent.