

Serial Migration and Its Implications for the Parent–Child Relationship: A Retrospective Analysis of the Experiences of the Children of Caribbean Immigrants

ANDREA SMITH
RICHARD N. LALONDE
SIMONE JOHNSON
York University

This study addressed the potential impact of serial migration for parent–children relationships and for children’s psychological well-being. The experience of being separated from their parents during childhood and reunited with them at a later time was retrospectively examined for 48 individuals. A series of measures (e.g., self-esteem, parental identification) associated with appraisals at critical time periods during serial migration (separation, reunion, current) revealed that serial migration can potentially disrupt parent–child bonding and unfavorably affect children’s self-esteem and behavior. Time did not appear to be wholly effective in repairing rifts in the parent–child relationship. Risk factors for less successful reunions included lengthy separations and the addition of new members to the family unit in the child’s absence.

• serial migration • Caribbean immigrants • parent–child relationship

Immigrating to a new country involves a number of transitions and adjustments. The upheavals experienced may take an adverse toll on the emotional health of the family

unit as well as on individual family members. When the migration of family members is staggered, the repercussions may be even more severe and may be ones from which

-
- *Andrea Smith, Richard N. Lalonde, and Simone Johnson, Department of Psychology, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.*

The writing of this article was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship to Andrea Smith, who is now with the Toronto District School Board.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Richard N. Lalonde, Department of Psychology, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada. E-mail: lalonde@yorku.ca

the family unit has great difficulty recovering. A staggered pattern of immigration, or serial migration, is a common feature of the movement of Caribbean people around the world; parents migrate to the new country first, with the children following at a later date. This can present a major risk factor and source of stress for these families (Gopaul-McNicol, 1998). Accurate appraisals of children's adaptation to the host country require an understanding of the impact of serial migration on families (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The phenomenon of the serial migration of Afro-Caribbean people to Canada is explored in this article using a retrospective analysis. The focus is on the perceived effects that serial migration can have on the parent-child relationship, self-esteem, and acting-out behaviors.

History of Caribbean Migration

Afro-Caribbean people have typically migrated to other parts of the world for economic reasons (e.g., high unemployment rates in the home country). The migration destination has primarily been determined by external factors, namely, the labor needs and immigration policies of foreign countries (see Coelho, 1988; Thomas-Hope, 1992). Prior to World War II, Caribbean migrants journeyed to the United States and Latin America to take advantage of employment opportunities (Nicol, 1971; Roth, 1970). Following the war, Britain faced a severe labor shortage and turned to its former Caribbean colonies for workers to satisfy its need (Coelho, 1988; Nicol, 1971). This, coupled with increasing restrictions on the immigration of Caribbean people to the United States, shifted the movement of Caribbean labor from the United States to Britain, where Afro-Caribbeans filled many positions rejected by the native population (Roth, 1970). Eventually, Britain also restricted immigration from the Caribbean (Coelho, 1988; Roth, 1970). Britain's Commonwealth Immigrations Act decreased ac-

cessibility of entry to individuals from the more tropical regions of the Commonwealth (e.g., the Caribbean, India, & Pakistan; Gmelch, 1992), and Caribbean people began to look toward Canada for employment opportunities.

Canada is a relatively new destination for Caribbean migrants in comparison with other countries. Moreover, migration to Canada from the Caribbean did not occur in the same vast numbers as migration to Britain or the United States (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Roth, 1970). A racially exclusive immigration policy in the first two-thirds of the 20th century restricted the entry of Caribbean people to Canada. Specifically, the Immigration Act of 1952 allowed the barring of individuals based on, among other factors, nationality, ethnicity, country of origin, and how well they were suited for the Canadian climate (Satzewich, 1989). In the 1960s, however, Canada adopted a more equitable criterion for entry to the country, one based on education and skill rather than on race, resulting in an influx of Afro-Caribbean people (Coelho, 1988; Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Winks, 1997). Emigration from the Caribbean to Canada continued at a steady pace in the 1970s, and in the 1980s children who had been left behind arrived to reunite with their parents (Coelho, 1988).

The Serial Nature of Caribbean Migration

A distinctive feature of Caribbean migration is its serial nature (see Christiansen, Thornley-Brown, & Robinson, 1982; Roth, 1970). Moreover, a variety of patterns of serial migration exist. In single-parent homes, the parent migrates to the new country first, with the children following at a later date. In two-parent families, both parents may migrate together and later send for the children, or one parent may migrate first then send for his or her spouse along with or without the children (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997b; Christiansen et al., 1982; Nicol, 1971). The pattern of Caribbean mi-

gration to postwar Britain, for example, was that of men arriving first and then sending for their wives; in the majority of cases children then followed at a later time (Arnold, 1997). Roth (1970) reported 1961 British statistics indicating that 98% of Jamaican children did not initially migrate with their parents.

Serial migration is related to the uncertainties and economic costs associated with starting a life for a family in a new country (Roth, 1970) and, thus, can be viewed as an adaptive course of action. From a developmental perspective, serial migration involves two stages. The first stage is the initial separation of children from their parents when parents emigrate from the home country. The second stage is the reunification of children and parents in the host country. Although separation and reunion will have psychological consequences for children and parents, the focus of this study is on children in serially migrated families.

Separation

When migrating to a new country without their children, parents typically leave the guardianship of their children to extended family members (Arnold, 1997; Evans & Davies, 1997; Lashley, 2000; Roth, 1970). Parents usually contribute to the material well-being of their children through the provision of money, food, or clothing to the children's caregivers (i.e., those who take care of the children during the parents' absence), and they maintain contact with their children through letters, phone calls, and personal visits (Sewell-Coker, Hamilton-Collins, & Fein, 1985; Thrasher & Anderson, 1988). Factors associated with emotional and behavioral difficulties in children over the separation period include receiving inadequate preparation for separation, feelings of marginalization in the adoptive home, being shifted from one caregiver to another, and lengthy periods of parental absence (Christiansen et al., 1982; Crawford-Brown, 1997; Douglin, 1995; Evans & Davies, 1997; Leo-Rhynie, 1997).

Bowlby's work on attachment provides a useful framework from which to examine the separation of children from their parents during serial migration. According to Bowlby (1982), attachment behavior appears within the first year of life. After age 3, children are able to tolerate absences from their mothers, but their coping is tempered by their familiarity of the adult in whose care they are left, their awareness of their mother's whereabouts, and their knowledge that she will return. Although some young children who are separated from their parents exhibit great distress and detachment from their parents upon reunion, Bowlby (1973) noted that most children who experience such separation appear to recover and to have a normal development. He observed that the care children receive while the mother is absent and their relations with their parents before and after separation are important to the children's coping responses. In line with Bowlby's model, Bhugra, Mallet, and Leff (1999) postulated that prolonged separation from parents may play a role in the etiology of schizophrenia among African Caribbeans in the United Kingdom.

Bowlby's model is reflective of a Western cultural view that puts preeminence on mother-child attachment. Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie (2002) observed, however, that in the cultures of many immigrant groups, relationships with extended family members also are significant. Thus, the temporary loss of the primary attachment figure may not be as traumatic as expected in such cultures. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2002) noted that attachment theory would lead to the prediction that length of separation would be positively correlated with psychological symptoms. They did not find this relationship, however, in a study of 385 adolescents who had immigrated to the United States from China, Central America, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico (85% had experienced separation from at least one parent during migration). Suárez-Orozco and her colleagues suggested that the availability of extended family members may have

helped alleviate the potential problems of separation.

Reunion

For some families the parent-child reunion is a time of excitement and joy. Children are able to find a comfortable niche in the family with little difficulty, and the family system attains a state of equilibrium. For other families, however, the reunion process is fraught with difficulty. Immigrating to a new country poses numerous challenges, and the process can become even more onerous when reuniting with family members after an extended period of separation. Baptiste et al. (1997b) noted that children whose parents preceded them to the United States experienced greater difficulties adjusting than children who accompanied their parents. Similarly, Elliston (1985) observed that families that emigrate as a unit tended to cope better with the demands of a new society compared with those that did not. The stress associated with separation and reunion may sometimes lead to the disintegration of the family unit. While it is important not to lose sight of the fact that many family reunions take place successfully, it is families whose members are in distress that come to the attention of mental health professionals and that generally receive attention in the literature. Following is a review of the factors that have been identified by counselors and researchers as detrimental to the parent-child relationship post reunion.

Clinicians in North America and England note that the problems that bring immigrant West Indian families to mental health settings are frequently related to their separation-reunion experience (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997a; Christiansen et al., 1982; Prince, 1968). Common themes that emerge relate to issues of loyalty, identity development, discipline and authority, isolation, rejection and counterrejection, estrangement, abandonment, disillusionment, and bereavement (Baptiste et al., 1997b; Douglin, 1995; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Gopaul-McNicol, 1998; Gopaul-

McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1997; Lashley, 2000). Children may present with a host of internalizing and externalizing difficulties such as anxiety, depression, anger, and delinquency (e.g., truancy, running away from home; Adams, 2000; Baptiste et al., 1997a; Burke, 1980; Christiansen et al., 1982; daCosta, 1976; Douglin, 1995; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1997; Prince, 1968).

One of the primary concerns for counselors is the damage to the parent-child bond resulting from lengthy separations. Parental migration represents a loss of the primary attachment figure for the young child who may have difficulty reestablishing close ties with parents (Arnold, 1997). Children may view parental migration as abandonment (Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995) and feel hurt, angry, or resentful when reunited (Douglin, 1995; Graham & Meadows, 1967; Prince, 1968; Roth, 1970). They may attempt to punish their parents by engaging in acting-out behavior (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Furthermore, they may have become strongly attached to their caregivers who have taken the place of their parents (Baptiste et al., 1997a; Douglin, 1995; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Graham & Meadows, 1967; Lashley, 2000); and, thus, this second separation from the caregiver(s) may also be emotionally difficult. Graham and Meadows (1967) noted that this second separation tends to be more directly related to the clinical problems with which children present than the first. In the host country, children may be mourning the loss of their caregivers (Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Graham & Meadows, 1967; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Parental insensitivity to the importance of the caregiver to children and consequent discouragement of the grieving process can contribute to depression (daCosta, 1976).

The parental viewpoint of separation-reunion is often very different from that of their children. Parents are often unaware of the magnitude of the psychological ramifications of separation and reunion (Christiansen et al., 1982). They typically have ex-

pectations that their children will be happy, affectionate, appreciative, and obedient when they are sent for. In the absence of such behaviors, parents may perceive the child as ungrateful given that migration was undertaken to enhance the parents' and child's life opportunities. Thus, parents may experience hurt, dismay, anger, or disappointment when faced with a sullen, resentful, hostile, or unappreciative child (Baptiste et al., 1997a; Christiansen et al., 1982; daCosta, 1976; Douglin, 1995; Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Graham & Meadows, 1967; Prince, 1968; Roth, 1970; Thrasher & Anderson, 1988). Among the defining features of the depressed children seen in the clinical setting were premature demands by parents for their child's affection and gratitude and parental discouragement of their child's expressions of despondency (daCosta, 1976).

Clinicians also have suggested that another moderating variable in children's adaptation to their life in the host country is the age at which they reunite with their parents; they generally agree that adjustment is less stressful for younger than for older children (Baptiste et al., 1997a, 1997b; Christiansen et al., 1982; Douglin, 1995; Prince, 1968). From an examination of the number of cases of separation-reunion that required mental health intervention, Elliston (1985) concluded that children in the early to mid-teen years were particularly predisposed to experiencing stress and that behavioral problems were characteristic of older children. The particular difficulties of older children appear to be related to the unique developmental tasks of adolescence (e.g., identity formation, establishment of autonomy). Conflicts may flare around issues of identity and independence (Christiansen et al., 1982; Douglin, 1995; Lashley, 2000). During adolescence the development of intimate relations with peers is also important. Children who emigrate at a stage when peer conformity and belonging is crucial to their identity and who had established a comfortable social niche in their home country may oppose emigration and once in the new

country "agitate" to return home, resulting in conflicts with parents (Baptiste et al., 1997b).

In addition to age, the presence of siblings born to parents in the new country or of new spouses may complicate reunion. Having strangers present in the home may add to the child's discomfort (Cayonne, 1982). The emigrant child may feel separated from the family unit (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). He or she may have to contend with preferential treatment by parents of the children born in the host country, feelings of jealousy toward new siblings, and sibling conflicts over cultural differences. Furthermore, the emigrant child may be rejected by the stepparent or, conversely, he or she may reject the stepparent's authority (Douglin, 1995; Graham & Meadows, 1967; Prince, 1968). The new arrival may come to feel unwanted and become distrustful and resentful of family members (Douglin, 1995). Strained relations between the child and new family members may contribute to the failure of reunion.

Present Study

Clinical observations have clearly identified serial migration as a factor underlying psychological difficulties experienced by some of the children of Caribbean immigrants. Given that Canada is an increasingly attractive destination for Afro-Caribbean migrants (Roth, 1970), that those from the English-speaking islands tend to settle in and around Toronto (Coelho, 1988), and that serial migration will likely continue to be an economic necessity for a significant number of these immigrants, we conducted a study in the Toronto area, which is the largest center of Caribbean migration. As is evident from the preceding discussion of clinical observations, separation and subsequent reunion with parents have the potential to contribute to internalized and externalized disorders in children, as well as in estrangement from their parents. Currently, there is little empirical research on the psychological experiences of Afro-Caribbean immi-

grants in Canada, specifically as it relates to the experience of serial migration. While a number of potential factors (e.g., length of separation) have been raised by clinicians as problematic in this experience, these factors have not been carefully examined in a non-clinical sample.

The present study is an attempt to remedy the situation by providing current information about the impact of serial migration on children's relationship with significant adults in their lives, on their sense of self-worth, and on their behavior as well as about risk and resiliency factors. A retrospective design was used to assess the perceptions of the now adult children of Caribbean immigrants. On the basis of clinical observations that were gleaned from the available literature, the following hypotheses were tested.

Hypothesis 1. Compared with the periods preceding and subsequent to it, reunification was expected to be associated with the highest levels of family and child distress. More specifically, family cohesion, children's compliance with parental rules, and children's self-esteem were all expected to be lowest during the period of reunification as opposed to other times in a family's history.

Hypothesis 2. The greater the length of separation between children and their parents, the greater would be the perceived difficulties in their relationship (i.e., identification with the parent, conformity to the parent, and family cohesion).

Hypothesis 3. Children who were older at the time of family reunification would report greater relationship difficulties than younger children.

Hypothesis 4. Children who reunited with new family members (stepparent, new or stepsiblings) would report greater difficulties in their family relationships than children who were reunited with their original families.

Method

Participants

We used a convenience sampling approach to recruit a sample of 48 participants (20 men, 28 women) from the greater Toronto area. Initial contacts were made at an informal conference on the topic of family reunification hosted by the Caribbean Youth Project in Toronto. Further contacts were made through word-of-mouth. Given the personal nature of these contacts, the response rate was very high (approximately 80%). The mean age of the sample was 26.93 years ($SD = 8.0$). The mean age of the sample was 4.94 years ($SD = 3.37$) at separation and 14.43 at reunion ($SD = 2.68$). All but 2 of the participants were born in the Caribbean, with the largest percentages having once resided in Jamaica (33.3%) or Dominica (18.8%). The 2 non-Caribbean-born participants were continental Africans. It was assumed that the separation-reunion process would be equally salient for Caribbean- or African-born participants. The participants had the common experience of being separated from their parents when their parents immigrated to Canada ($n = 45$), the United States ($n = 2$), or France ($n = 1$). At the time of the study, all of the participants resided in Canada, and the majority had Canadian citizenship or landed immigrant status (77.3%).

The majority of participants were left behind by their mother (71%), although some were left behind by both parents (25%) or by their father (4%). While in the home country, 48% were cared for by their grandmother, 25% by both grandparents, and 17% by an aunt or uncle; other participants were left in the care of a sibling, father, or neighbor. In general, participants were reunited with the parent(s) who left them behind; 73% were reunited with their mother, 21% with both parents, and 6% with their father. Upon their arrival in their new country, 58% of the participants encountered new family members such as a stepparent or stepsiblings. The sample sizes associated

with these different demographic histories (who left the child behind, who cared for him or her, who they were reunited with) were not large enough to warrant further analyses.

Procedure and Measures

Following a standard informed-consent protocol, in which anonymity of responses was assured, participants were presented with a number of measures, most of which asked for retrospective and current accounts of their psychological experiences. Three time periods were critical for our retrospective design. The first was the perceptions of their caregiver and themselves during the period of separation. The second was perceptions of the self and the parent(s) after reunification; for this time period, participants were asked to think about reunification 1 year after they had arrived. A 1-year period was assumed to be a sufficient amount of time for early adjustments to take place and for a relationship to be reestablished with the parent(s). Little information exists concerning the time it takes for relationships to develop and settle after reunion, but it was believed that events in the first year post reunion would be a crucial time period for family relations. Finally, current perceptions of the self and the family were taken to provide a point of comparison for our retrospective measures. A retrospective analysis was required given the impossibility of contacting respondents at separation and reunion. Means, standard deviations, and internal consistency estimates for all measures are provided in Table 1, where it can be seen that acceptable levels of reliability were achieved with Cronbach alphas exceeding .90.

PARENTAL IDENTIFICATION. Bowerman and Bahr's (1973) eight-item Parental Identification Scale (e.g., "How much did you depend on this parent for advice and guidance?") measured the degree to which participants identified with the person(s) in whose care they were left when their parent(s) migrated (*caregiver identification*), with their parent(s)

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	α
Age at separation (years)	4.94	3.37	47	
Age at reunion (years)	14.40	2.68	45	
Length of separation (years)	9.36	3.57	45	
Identification				
Caregiver	3.59	1.10	47	.97
Parent at reunion	2.46	1.28	48	.98
Parent current	2.53	1.36	48	.98
Self-esteem time				
Separation	4.36	0.68	48	.91
Reunion	3.65	0.93	48	.94
Current	4.44	0.53	48	.94
Conformity				
Separation	3.50	0.90	48	.91
Reunion	2.73	1.18	48	.95
Deviance: reunion	0.32	0.42	48	.94
Cohesion: current	2.70	1.16	48	.95

1 year after reunification in the host country (*reunion identification*), and at present (*current identification*). Items were rated using a 5-point scale (from *not at all* to *completely*), and a higher score indicated a more positive relationship with the caregiver/parent(s).

SELF-ESTEEM. Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item scale was used. Participants rated their self-esteem at three points in time: prior to reunification with their parent(s) in the host country (*separation*), 1 year after being reunited with their parent(s) in the host country (*reunion*), and at present (*current*). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*), and a higher score was indicative of a higher level of self-esteem.

ADOLESCENT CONFORMITY. This eight-item scale (e.g., "If this caregiver wanted me to go to a different school, then I would go to the school that he/she wanted me to attend") taken from Atakan (1984) solicited information about the degree to which participants conformed to their caregiver's wishes and instructions in the home country (*separation*) and to that of their parent(s) after the first year of reunification (*reunion*). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (from *strongly*

disagree to strongly agree), and a higher score indicated greater agreement with the norms and expectations of the caregiver.

DEVIANCE. This 43-item scale adapted from Moffitt and Silva (1988) measured the frequency with which participants engaged in a number of deviant behaviors in the first year after reuniting with their parents. Items like "skipped school" were rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*three or more times*). A higher score indicated more frequent engagement in delinquent behaviors.

FAMILY ADAPTABILITY AND COHESION. This 10-item scale (e.g., "My parent[s] and I are supportive of each other during difficult times") adapted from Maynard and Olson (1987) assessed the participants' current relationship with their parent(s). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (from *almost never* to *almost always*), and higher scores indicated greater perceived family cohesion.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES. Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire seeking information about a number of factors, including gender, parental migration pattern, type of caregiver, position among siblings (only child, eldest child, or youngest child), parental reunification pattern (who reunited with child, mother or both parents), migration with siblings (yes or no), and family structure on reunification.

In addition to the measures described earlier, respondents were given the option at the end of the questionnaire of adding any comments or information that they would like to share regarding their experiences of being separated and later reunited with their parent(s). This descriptive information was used to place respondents' experiences in context.

Results

Effects of Time: Mean Differences

To test Hypothesis 1, which was that the period of reunification would be associated

with greater evidence of difficulty, we conducted a series of repeated measures analyses of variance comparing the different time periods (separation, reunification, or current). Significant effects of time were found for all measures: parental identification, $F(2, 92) = 25.31, p < .001$; self-esteem; $F(2, 94) = 28.60, p < .001$; and conformity, $F(1, 47) = 23.72, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons ($p < .01$) revealed that participants indicated stronger identification with their caregivers ($M = 3.59$) than they did with their parents either at reunification ($M = 2.50$) or currently ($M = 2.56$). With respect to self-esteem, it was found as predicted that participants had lower levels of self-esteem when reuniting with their parents ($M = 3.65$) compared with their current level of self-esteem ($M = 4.44$) and their level of self-esteem with their caregiver during separation ($M = 4.36$). Finally, participants reported exhibiting greater conformity to their caregivers ($M = 3.50$) than they did to their parents at reunification ($M = 2.73$).

Separation Time and Age Effects: Correlational Analyses

Correlational analyses were conducted to test hypotheses relating to the length of separation (Hypothesis 2) and the age at reunification (Hypothesis 3). These correlations are presented in Table 2. It can be seen that there was considerable support for the hypothesis that the greater the length of separation between children and their parents, the greater would be the perceived difficulties in their relationship. A longer period of separation was significantly related to less identification with the parent and less conformity to the parent at the time of reunification. In addition, respondents who experienced a longer period of separation were less likely to currently identify with their parents and reported less family cohesion.

The hypothesis that children who are older at reunification would exhibit more problems with their parents received some support with the measure of conformity.

TABLE 2 Correlations Between Age-Related Variables and Criterion Variables

Variable	Length of separation	Age at reunion
Identification		
Caregiver	-.22	-.37*
Parent at reunion	-.44**	-.21
Parent current	-.38**	-.17
Self-esteem		
Separation	.21	-.14
Reunion	-.04	.14
Current	.11	.03
Conformity		
Caregiver	-.04	-.28†
Parent at reunion	-.38*	-.29*
Deviance	.03	.01
Family cohesion	-.36*	-.20

† $p < .07$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Children who were older at reunification were less likely to conform to the wishes of their parents at reunification; they were also less likely to conform to the wishes of their caregivers in the Caribbean. Age at reunion, however, was not predictive of the degree of past or current identification with parents.

Effects of New Family Members

The fourth hypothesis that children who reunited with new family members ($n = 28$) would report greater difficulties in their family relationships than children who were reunited with their original families ($n = 20$) was tested using a series of t tests. When compared with children from intact families, children who were reunited with new family members reported being less likely to currently identify with their parents ($M = 2.14$ vs. $M = 3.08$), $t(46) = 2.46$, $p = .02$. They were also somewhat less likely to identify with their parents at the time of reunification ($M = 2.19$ vs. $M = 2.84$), $t(46) = 1.78$, $p = .08$, and to identify with their caregivers prior to reunification ($M = 3.34$ vs. $M = 3.92$), $t(45) = 1.86$, $p = .07$. Children with new family members also reported lower current levels of family cohesion than children from intact families ($M = 2.38$ vs. $M =$

3.16), $t(46) = 2.42$, $p = .02$. Finally, children with new family members reported lower levels of self-esteem than children from intact families. This effect was significant at separation ($M = 4.19$ vs. $M = 4.60$), $t(46) = 2.18$, $p = .03$, and reunion ($M = 3.39$ vs. $M = 4.01$), $t(46) = 2.39$, $p = .02$, and was marginally significant for the current period ($M = 4.33$ vs. $M = 4.60$), $t(46) = 1.73$, $p = .08$.

Gender Effects

When all of the primary variables were compared for the effects of gender, three differences were observed, and two of these were marginal. Boys ($M = 0.53$) reported significantly higher levels of deviance than girls ($M = 0.17$) at the time of reunification, $t(46) = 3.24$, $p = .002$. Boys ($M = 2.36$) also showed a trend to be less likely than girls ($M = 2.99$) to conform to their parents at reunification, $t(46) = 1.89$, $p = .07$, and reported having lower self-esteem at that time ($M = 2.07$ vs. $M = 2.75$), $t(46) = 1.85$, $p = .07$. Gender did not interact with the length of separation or the presence of new family members in the prediction of any of our measures.

Additional Correlational Analyses

Correlational analyses were further conducted to explore the relationships between the primary measures. These correlations are presented in Table 3. Three types of relationships should be highlighted from the significant correlations. First, we can examine the particularly strong relationships. It is not surprising to find that parental identification (current and at reunion), conformity, and family cohesion measures are all highly interrelated (all $r_s \geq .65$). These correlations attest to the validity of the measures and the perceived stability of family dynamics in retrospective reports.

The second set of correlations to consider are those involving self-esteem. It can be seen that respondents who reported a stronger identification with their caregiver in the Caribbean reported higher levels of self-esteem at that time. Moreover, self-

TABLE 3 Correlations Between Primary Measures

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Identification									
1. Caregiver	—								
2. Parent at reunion	.35*	—							
3. Parent current	.35*	.92**	—						
Self-esteem time									
4. Separation	.42**	-.02	-.04	—					
5. Reunion	.17	.59**	.53**	.27	—				
6. Current	.09	.15	.16	.56**	.55**	—			
Conformity									
7. Separation	.79**	.31*	.33*	.34*	.10	.15	—		
8. Reunion	.32*	.71**	.65**	-.02	.26	.12	.47**	—	
9. Deviance: reunion	-.38**	-.35*	-.38**	-.08	-.17	-.19	-.47	-.48**	—
10. Cohesion: current	.26	.91**	.88**	-.14	.57**	.05	.30*	.71**	-.38**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

esteem at the time of reunion was related to identification with parents.

The final correlations involve the deviance measure. It should be reported at the outset that 30% of the participants reported no engagement in deviant acts and that the most frequent deviant behavior reported was truancy, with 63% skipping school at least once. Higher deviance rates were associated with lower identification with and conformity to both parents and caregivers and to lower family cohesion.

Open-Ended Responses

Three themes emerged from the analysis of open-ended responses provided by 30 of the 48 participants (62%). These nonindependent themes were identified as critical to our analyses and independently coded by two of the authors (100% agreement). The most frequently mentioned issue was about the positive bond that existed with the caregiver in the home country ($n = 11$). A strong attachment to and respect for caregivers was evident in the participants' words. They expressed appreciation to caregivers for taking care of them and for instilling in them values of hard work, faith, honesty, and respect for others.

A number of participants also reported

having a positive bonding experience with their parents after the reunion ($n = 8$). One factor raised as contributing to a positive reunion and adjustment was frequent visits by parents prior to reunion. Some participants acknowledge the hard work and sacrifices it took for parents to establish a life for them in a new country and expressed gratitude at being given the opportunity to achieve what would have been difficult in their home country. Another equally and frequently broached subject, however, was that of estrangement from parents ($n = 8$). Some participants recounted experiences with parents who were emotionally and physically unavailable. They felt unloved and unaccepted. The feelings of participants who were not nurtured by their parents when reunited can be summed up in the statement of one of the respondents: "My experience reuniting with my mother was the most horrible experience of my life. There was no nurturing, love, or acceptance."

Discussion

In accordance with our hypotheses, serial migration was found to have negative implications for parent-child bonding as well as for the immigrant child's self-esteem and be-

havior. The time period surrounding reunion was recalled as being particularly challenging for children in terms of their relationship with significant adults and their sense of self-worth. Children's level of identification with their parents on reunion was weaker than that with their caregivers. Their caregivers were viewed as more legitimate authority figures than their parents. Moreover, time did not significantly improve the biological parent-child bond, as children perceived no differences between their current parental identification and the identification they had at the time of reunion. Even at present, children still identified more closely with their caregivers than with their parents. Gopaul-McNicol (1993) noted that prolonged separations can bring children to view their caregivers as their legitimate parents, and this can lead to considerable difficulty in establishing a wholesome parent-child relationship at reunification. This identification with caregivers may also have implications for their Black social identification in Canada (see Boatswain & Lalonde, 2000).

Our results also indicated that children's self-esteem appeared to suffer when reunited with their parents. Uncertainties associated with the new cultural and familial environment likely affected their sense of self. Given children's emotional attachment to caregivers, it is in their best interest to be able to continue that relationship post migration. Parents may be required to "share" their child's affections with the caregiver and to moderate any expectations of an easy resurrection of the parent-child bond and realize that time, patience, and great care will be necessary for reestablishment of a relationship with their child.

As predicted, lengthier separations made it more difficult for the child to identify with his or her parents or to conform to their expectations. Estrangement of children from their parents is a common occurrence of serial migration. The longer they are apart, the more tenuous the child's connection to his or her parent becomes. The emotional repercussions of protracted separa-

tions, however, may be mediated by the nature and frequency of parent-child contact prior to reunion (Douglin, 1995), and this would be an important factor to incorporate into future studies. The potential protective effect of contact is echoed in the responses of one of our respondents:

My experience wasn't as traumatic as some of my other friends who had rough times being separated from their mom/dad, and then had trouble when they came up. My mom stayed in close contact with me and my siblings and that really helped while we weren't together.

The age at which the child reunites with the parents is an important factor in the success of the reunion, although it does not appear to be as crucial as the length of time apart. Older children were not as likely to conform to their parents' wishes and directions as were younger ones when reunited, but they also were less likely to obey the desire and wishes of their caregivers in the home country. The lower conformity of older children is likely not unique to separation-reunion. The developmental task of adolescence is that of individuating from parents/authority figures and seeking independence. Given the other stresses and strains involved, however, the disregarding of parental authority may create greater conflicts and have more serious repercussions for family relations when it happens in the context of serial migration.

The addition of new members to the family unit in the absence of the child clearly had some associated problems. As predicted, children who encountered new family members reported lower levels of self-esteem, lower identification with their parents, and less closeness to their parents. As noted earlier, the immigrant child may reject or be rejected by new siblings or a step-parent. Questions of family roles and loyalty may arise (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1997). Being on the periphery of the family unit and not being able to find a way back into its core may lead to feelings of insecurity. One respondent stated, "When I came

up, my mom had a new life with this Canadian man and a new baby, my half-sister. I get along with him (sort of) but because I live on my own, I don't see them much." Preparation of the child for additional family members is crucial. Contact between new family members and the child prior to migration may help to ease tensions, mistrust, and rivalry once the whole family is together. Furthermore, the child may need reminders of parental love and affection and reassurances of his or her place in the family when reunited with parents.

While the presence of new family members appears to be a risk factor for an unsuccessful reunion, being female appears to be somewhat protective. Females seemed to have had less difficulty adjusting than males. They had somewhat higher self-esteem, slightly higher conformity rates to parents, and significantly lower engagement in deviant activities. These gender differences may be related to the fact that pre and post reunion, the majority of the children lived with their mothers; and during the separation period, the majority were taken care of by their grandmothers. Having a parental attachment figure of the same gender may ease the various transitions required throughout the separation-reunion process. Delinquency was linked to more troubled parent/caregiver-child relationships. Weak regard for parents means that children have little to lose by defying parental expectations and wishes (Evans & Davies, 1997). In the present study, those who more strongly identified with their parents were also more likely to be accommodating of parental instructions. These results speak to the need for an environment for the child both before and after reunion that is characterized by guidance, supervision, and the presence of appropriate role models.

In addition to gender, the quality of the relationship between the child and caregiver also appears to be a protective factor for immigrant children. The quality of the care received by the child during separation may mediate difficulties associated with reunion (Douglin, 1995). Children who are well nur-

tered physically and psychologically may have the ego strength and inner resources needed to deal with future difficulties. This suggests the need for the optimal placement to be arranged for the child in the parents' absence that meets their various physical and psychological needs.

Implications for Mental Health Service Providers

Glasgow and Gouse-Sheese (1995) have noted that mental health professionals are often ignorant of immigrant West Indian culture, family structure, and child socialization practices, and that the effects of parental absence on children resulting from serial migration often goes unacknowledged by professionals. Furthermore, insensitivity to the cultural traditions of these families can impede communication in the clinical setting (Baptiste et al., 1997a), and a lack of knowledge of family dynamics and inappropriate treatment may exacerbate existing problems (Arnold, 1997). Counselors need to appreciate the impact that separation-reunion has on children and the type of adjustments that it involves. The results of the present study suggest that many of the dilemmas that families experience will center on the parent-child relationship (e.g., the child's ability to identify with the parents, accepting parental authority). One of the primary roles of the counselor may be that of a mediator in helping the child and parent to renegotiate their roles and relationship. Effective intervention will require familiarity with risk (e.g., extended separation periods, addition of new members to the family unit) and resilience (e.g., being female) factors and their implications for separation-reunion outcomes.

It is worth reiterating at this point that not all families who have experienced serial migration will need the services of mental health workers. Many families survive the transition with the child adjusting to the new environment with relative ease (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1997). Our qualitative data, in fact, revealed that the number of respondents who indicated loy-

alty and bonding to their parents was equal to the number of respondent indicating estrangement from their parents. With well-planned and short separations, the caring for the child by loving relations, regular communication between parent and child, and updates about reunification, serial migration may have little negative residual effect on children. For many families, the distress related to immigration is short-lived, and in the long run, gains will outweigh losses (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Limitations and Future Directions

Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of the data because of the retrospective nature of some of the participants' accounts. It is possible that participants' recollection of experiences in the Caribbean is colored by intervening or current events. It is important to recognize, however, that even though recollections may not be factually accurate, it is likely respondents' perceptions of their experiences would be just as crucial to present outcomes as past actual events. Future directions in this area should include longitudinal approaches in which the impact of serial migration on family functioning can be studied on reunification and into the future. In this way, more detailed accounts of the coping strategies adopted by family members can be examined in relation to successful versus failed reunions. Finally, a cross-sectional approach would allow us to explore adjustment at different time periods in the separation-reunion process.

The small sample size of the present study also may have limited the types of factors that were examined. Although the sample was sufficiently large enough to detect significant differences and relations, we were not able to explore factors such as the number of siblings in the family and the child's location within the sibling hierarchy. Having older siblings may serve as a protective factor, whereas having younger ones can lead to stress if it requires one to act as a

caregiver. Also, having the opportunity to remain with siblings during separation and being accompanied to the new country by siblings may serve as a buffer during transitions. A larger sample also would allow us to explore the influence of family constellation factors: whether the child resided with one or both parents prior to separation, which parent(s) left the child, and which parent(s) the child reunited with.

There exists a continuity between the child's experiences while separated from parents and his or her experience when reunited. Yet, little is known about the child's life in the home country. Arnold (1997) noted that the child's relationship with extended family members in the Caribbean during separation remains largely unknown. A focus on such relationships will provide insight into the strengths or frailties that children bring with them to the new country and their relationship to the outcome of reunion.

Furthermore, parents' own adjustment post separation and post reunion will no doubt affect children's well-being. While in the new country, parents may experience feelings of anxiety and guilt related to leaving their children behind. In the new country, issues of employment, discrimination, and acculturation may create stress and affect the amount and type of contact that parents are able to maintain with their children. For example, it has been found that West Indian Canadians are viewed less favorably than Euro Canadians (Berry & Kalin, 1995) and that Blacks in Toronto are more likely to perceive group-based discrimination in employment than individuals from White immigrant groups (Dion & Kawakami, 1996). These and other parental factors are no doubt crucial in determining the eventual outcomes of serial migration and should be examined in future studies.

Future studies of adjustment to separation-reunion in the wider societal context are called for. Children's adjustment to the family occurs in the wider context of adjustment to a new society. Problems in one sphere can exacerbate problems in the

other. The context of the school, for example, is an especially important focus for future study. Adjustment difficulties among children of serial migration can be manifested in poor school performance (Adams, 2000). Furthermore, it is often due to behavioral difficulties in the school setting that the child and his or her family comes to the attention of the mental health professional (Prince, 1968).

Finally, the separation of family members because of migration is a general phenomenon that is not limited to African Caribbeans. It occurred at the turn of the 20th century when individuals of European background immigrated to the United States (Robles & Watkins, 1993). Post-World War II migration in Europe also was characterized by family separation and subsequent reunion (Kofman, 1999). More recently, the immigration of Mexican and Central American ethnic groups to the United States also tends to be characterized by separation of families (Kanaiaupuni, 2000; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001). Thus it is likely that the difficulties arising from family separation experienced by Afro-Caribbeans also are common to other ethnic groups whose migration is characterized by a serial pattern, although recent research by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2002) suggests that there may be differences in the experiences of these groups.

References

- Adams, C. J. (2000). Integrating children into families separated by migration: A Caribbean-American case study. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 9, 19-27.
- Arnold, E. (1997). Issues of reunification of migrant West Indian children in the United Kingdom. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. Brown (Eds.), *Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups* (pp. 243-258). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Atakan, S. A. (1984). Perceived parental power, parental behavior and adolescent conformity to parents (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1984). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 45, 1687.
- Baptiste, D. A., Jr., Hardy, K. V., & Lewis, L. (1997a). Clinical practice with Caribbean immigrant families in the United States: The intersection of emigration, immigration, culture and race. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. Brown (Eds.), *Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups* (pp. 275-303). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Baptiste, D. A., Jr., Hardy, K. V., & Lewis, L. (1997b). Family therapy with English Caribbean immigrant families in the United States: Issues of emigration, immigration, culture, and race. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 19, 337-359.
- Berry, J. W., & Kalin, R. (1995). Multicultural and ethnic attitudes in Canada: An overview of the 1991 National Survey. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 27, 301-320.
- Bhugra, D., Mallett, R., & Leff, J. (1999). Schizophrenia and African-Caribbeans: A conceptual model of aetiology. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 11, 145-152.
- Boatswain, S. J., & Lalonde, R. N. (2000). Social identity and preferred ethnic/racial labels for Blacks in Canada. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 26, 216-234.
- Bowerman, C. E., & Bahr, S. J. (1973). Conjugal power and adolescent identification with parents. *Sociometry*, 36, 366-377.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment* (2nd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Burke, A. W. (1980). Family stress and the precipitation of psychiatric disorder: A comparative study among immigrant West Indian and native British patients in Birmingham. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 26, 35-40.
- Cayonne, J. (1982). Immigrant pupil rage in liminality: A West Indian consideration. *T.E.S.L. Talk*, 13(3), 44-55.
- Christiansen, J. M., Thornley-Brown, A., & Robinson, J. A. (1982). *West Indians in Toronto: Implications for helping professionals*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto.
- Coelho, E. (with the Caribbean Student Resource Book Committee). (1988). *Caribbean students in Canadian schools: Book 1*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Carib-Can.
- Crawford-Brown, C. (1997). The impact of parent-child socialization on the develop-

- ment of conduct disorder in Jamaican male adolescents. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. Brown (Eds.), *Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups* (pp. 205–222). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- daCosta, G. A. (1976). Counselling and the Black child. *T.E.S.L. Talk*, 7(1), 63–69.
- Dion, K. L., & Kawakami, K. (1996). Ethnicity and perceived discrimination in Toronto: Another look at the personal/group discrimination discrepancy. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 28, 203–213.
- Douglas, M. (1995). *Family separation and reunion: Its impact on the adjustment of Caribbean immigrant youth*. Unpublished manuscript, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, Canada.
- Elliston, I. (1985). Counselling West Indian immigrants: Issues and answers. In R. J. Samuda & A. Wolfgang (Eds.), *Intercultural counselling and assessment: Global perspectives* (pp. 203–214). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Hogrefe.
- Evans, H., & Davies, R. (1997). Overview of issues in childhood socialization in the Caribbean. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. Brown (Eds.), *Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups* (pp. 1–24). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Glasgow, G. F., & Gouse-Sheese, J. (1995). Themes of rejection and abandonment in group work with Caribbean adolescents. *Social Work With Groups*, 17, 3–27.
- Gmelch, G. (1992). *Double passage: The lives of Caribbean migrants abroad and back home*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gopaul-McNicol, S. (1993). *Working with West Indian families*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Gopaul-McNicol, S. (1998). Caribbean families: Social and emotional problems. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 7, 55–73.
- Gopaul-McNicol, S., & Brice-Baker, J. (1997). Caribbean Americans. In S. Friedman (Ed.), *Cultural issues in the treatment of anxiety* (pp. 81–98). New York: Guilford Press.
- Graham, P. J., & Meadows, C. E. (1967). Psychiatric disorder in the children of West Indian immigrants. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 8, 105–116.
- Kanaiaupuni, S. M. (2000). Reframing the migration question: An analysis of men, women, and gender in Mexico. *Social Forces*, 78, 1311–1347.
- Kofman, E. (1999). Female “birds of passage” a decade later: Gender and immigration in the European Union. *International Migration Review*, 33, 269–299.
- Lashley, M. (2000). The unrecognized social stressors of migration and reunification in Caribbean families. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 37, 201–215.
- Leo-Rhynie, E. A. (1997). Class, race, and gender issues in child rearing in the Caribbean. In J. L. Roopnarine & J. Brown (Eds.), *Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups* (pp. 25–55). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Maynard, P. E., & Olson, D. H. (1987). Circumplex model of family systems: A treatment tool in family counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 65, 502–504.
- Moffit, T. E., & Silva, P. A. (1988). Self-reported delinquency: Results from an instrument for New Zealand. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 21, 227–240.
- Nicol, A. R. (1971). Psychiatric disorder in the children of Caribbean immigrants. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 12, 273–287.
- Orellana, M., Thorne, B., Chee, A., & Lam, W. (2001). Transnational childhoods: The participation of children in processes of family migration. *Social Problems*, 48, 572–591.
- Prince, G. S. (1968). Emotional problems of children reunited with their migrant families in Britain. *Maternal and Child Care*, 4, 239–240.
- Robles, A., & Watkins, S. C. (1993). Immigration and family separation in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century. *Journal of Family History*, 18, 191–211.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Roth, J. (1970). *West Indians in Toronto: The students and the schools*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: MERS Learner Characteristics Committee, Board of Education for the Borough of York.
- Satzewich, V. (1989). Racism and Canadian immigration policy: The government’s view of Caribbean migration, 1962–1966. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 21, 77–97.
- Sewell-Coker, B., Hamilton-Collins, J., & Fein, E. (1985). Social work practice with West Indian immigrants. *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work*, 66, 563–568.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2001). *Children of immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Suárez-Orozco, C., Todorova, I. L. G., & Louie, J. (2002). Making up for lost time: The experience of separation and reunification among immigrant families. *Family Process, 41*, 625–643.
- Thomas-Hope, E. M. (1992). *Explanation in Caribbean migration: Perception and the image: Jamaica, Barbados, St. Vincent*. London: Macmillan Caribbean.
- Thrasher, S., & Anderson, G. (1988). The West Indian family: Treatment challenges. *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work, 69*, 171–176.
- Winks, R. W. (1997). *The Blacks in Canada: A history* (2nd ed.). Montreal, Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.

E-Mail Notification of Your Latest Issue Online!

Would you like to know when the next issue of your favorite APA journal will be available online? This service is now available to you. Sign up at <http://watson.apa.org/notify/> and you will be notified by e-mail when issues of interest to you become available!