What Kin Counts?
Child Growth & Development in Jamaica

Robin G. Nelson
Skidmore College
What Makes a Parent?
• Parenthood and biology – ovum and sperm

• Parenthood and investment – psychological, social, material investment

• Parenthood via Adoption - formal and informal fluidity of parenthood

What makes a parent?
Caretaking & Child Health in Jamaica

How do parents help to create gendered & culturally situated childhoods?

What are the implications of these relationships for child health and development?
Study Site: Mandeville, Jamaica

- **Fieldwork**: 2 Projects
  - (1) 13 months June 2004 – November 2006
  - (2) 7 months August 2010 - August 2013
Received Investment

Growth

Lived Experiences
Situated Childhoods

*Ti Moun Se Riches*

- Female Headed Households
- Gendered Spending
- House-Yard Complex & Inheritance

**Situated Childhoods**
- Decoupling Parental Investment from Parental Relationship Status
- Visiting Unions
- Conjugal Unions
- Formal Marriage

Situated Childhoods
Men & Mothers in Jamaica

- **Fieldwork:** June-July 2004; October 2005-November 2006; February 2007

- **Study Participants:** 82 Men & Women
  - Ages: 18-48 years old
  - SES, Education, employment histories, familial histories
## Demographic Information

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<th>MALES</th>
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<td>Children?</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
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<td>Work Status</td>
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<td>Car?</td>
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N = 82, Avg. age 28.2 years old
• Gendered Experiences of Childhood
  • Sargeant & Harris (1992)
  • Flinn and England (1995)
  • Chevannes (2000)

• Girls Responsibilities & Boys’ Spaces

Situated Childhoods
Alloparental Care

• **Alloparent**: a conspecific that acts as a parent for an individual that is not his/her own offspring
• Grandparents & Older siblings

• **Human alloparenting in action:**
  • Central Africa (Hewlett 1991)
    • 1 -4 month olds < 40% of time spent with parents

• **Institutional alloparenting?**
  • What kind of care is received by children in institutional settings?
Familial Alloparenting
• Necessity & reciprocity

**Ti Moun Se Moun**
• Familial Fostering
• Gendered migrations

**Situated Childhoods**
Frayed Networks

• What becomes of children whose parents and kin no longer invest?

• In what ways are children’s lives impacted by residential context and caretaking practices?
Residential Context & Child Well-Being

• **Study Sample:** 3/6 Children’s Homes in Manchester Parish

• **Study Participants:** 125 children, 4 months – 18 years of age
  • Child caretakers & community members

• **Follow up Sample:** 65/125 children & caretakers
Manchester Communities

Legend
- Communities

Surrounding Development Areas
- Alligator Pond
- Asia
- Christiana
- Cross Keys
- Mandeville
- Mile Gully
- New Port
- Porus
- Williamsfield

Residential Context & Child Well-Being
COMPARATIVE SAMPLE

- Children living w/ natal families
- N = 119
- Age: 4 months – 18 years
- Residence: Manchester Parish

Residential Context & Child Well-Being
Residential Context & Child Well-Being

Ethnographic Data

• Age
• Number of siblings
• Activities
• Dietary information
• Access to medical care
• Quality & quantity of friendships
• Psychosocial & financial support networks
Residential Context & Child Well-Being

Quality of Life Questions

P = .015

P > .05
Residential Context & Child Well-Being

Quality of Life Questions

P = 0.059  

P > 0.05
Residential Context & Child Well-Being

- Anthropometric & Biometric Measurements
  - Height/Length
  - Weight
  - Subcutaneous Fat at suprailiac, tricep, subscapular locations
  - Blood pressure
  - Mid-upper arm circumference
  - Head circumference

- 2007 WHO/NCHS Standards
Thriving Boys: Family Homes

Middle Childhood

Thriving Boys: Children’s Homes

Middle Childhood

Fieldnotes on Quality of Care
Shifting Investments: Recreation

Irie House, 2010

Pear Tree Place, 2010
Irie House 2011, 2013

Shifting Investments: Housing
Who Counts?

- **Context Matters**
  - Context of investment matters & suggests quality of investment
    - Effect strongest for younger age cohorts
    - Gendered lives of children

- **Future Analyses:**
  - Repeated measures of health for children in children’s homes
- Darcia Narveaz & Colleagues
- Skidmore College
- Bridgett Robinson
- Child Development Agency, Kingston Jamaica
- Directors and children at children’s homes in Manchester Parish, Jamaica
- Wenner Gren Foundation, University of California, Riverside, & Skidmore College