Haitian Religiousness and Children's Resilience: HTP Drawing Assessments And Parent Focus Group Themes

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Study Rationale

- Haitian children's exposure to natural disasters, human-imposed disasters, and disease outbreaks
- Children experience stress differently from adults (Mohay & Forbes, 2009)
- Children often re-enact or resolve their problems through play, drama, and art-work
- HTP pictorial assessments previously applied in international disaster settings (Sri Lanka, Dewaraja, Sato, & Ogawa, 2006; Israel, Nuttman-Shwartz, Huss, & Altman, 2010; South Africa and Northern Ireland, Rudenberg, Jansen, & Fridjhon, 1998)

Post-earthquake Haiti

- A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti in January 2010
- 3-million people affected by the quake, with the death toll estimated between 100,000-316,000 (Cavallo, Powell, & Becerra, 2010)
- 250,000 residences and 300,000 commercial buildings damaged
- 8 billion dollars in damage equal to 120% of Haiti's gross domestic product (Cavallo et al., 2010)
- 2010 outbreak of cholera followed (Cravioto, Lanata, Lantagne, & Nair, 2011)

Haiti, Today

- In 2015, Red Cross was found guilty of mismanaging ~500,000,000 dollars of donations (not one home had been built in the community in that time)
- Haiti is currently the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere (59% of Haitians live under their national poverty line of $2.44/day while 24% live under their extreme poverty line of $1.24/day)
- 2.5 million Haitians do not make enough to pay for food (World Bank, 2014)

Children of Haiti

- Haitian children face a 30% chance of dying before the age of 15
- In 2008, 50% of primary school aged children were not enrolled in school; 33% of girls (6+ yrs. old) attended school; and 50% of all children attending school were over the age for their grade level (UNICEF, 2012)
- 53% of Haitian households are headed by women; absence of husbands/fathers due to migration, death, or abandonment (Roysircar, 2013)
- 33% of urban-Haitian children live with both parents, while 20% of urban-Haitian children have neither a mother or a father
- In 2013, there were 340,000 orphans in Haiti (UNICEF, 2015)

Risk Factors for Haitian Children

As evidenced, Haitian youth face many risk factors relating to economic traumas (e.g., poverty, lack of resources, lack of education, exploitation), natural disasters (e.g., mud slides, hurricanes), human-made disasters (e.g., abuse, neglect, abandonment), health-related traumas (e.g., respiratory diseases, sickle cell) and interpersonal traumas (e.g., family dysfunction, violence)

Protective Factors For Haitian Children

- Religion & Spirituality (meaning-making of adversity; moral resistance)

- Culture (interdependence and communalism)

- Cultural Resilience (historical courage and stoicism)

- Family Values & Connectedness

- Sense of Self-Responsibility (individual agency)

The Validity of Drawings for Child Assessment

- "Drawing is a natural medium to use with children" (Handler & Thomas, 2014) and, therefore, commonly used to assess emotional and psychological states

- Pictorial assessments are perceived as less threatening and are not as vulnerable to factors of biases (e.g., fear or intimidation of child, parental perceptions) as compared to verbal assessments

- Drawings compensate for children's limited language abilities and place few restrictions on their freedom of expression (Bombi, Pinto, & Cannoni, 2007)

Rationale for Using Pictorial Assessments for International Studies

- Unlike a clinical interview, drawing assessments are not distorted in the translation process from one language to another

- The structure and composition of drawings of familiar stimuli like a house, a tree, or a person are generally the same across cultures, with stylistic differences existing between cultures (Bombi et al., 2007)

- Therefore, we expected to recognize a house, tree, and a person, but anticipated that the style of the drawing would reflect Haitian cultural contexts (e.g., the Haitian flag on a house, a tropical fruit tree, decorated doors and windows) and a value orientation of relatedness/communalism (persons holding hands) (Gernhardt et al., 2011; James, Noel, Favorite, & Jean, 2012).

Overview of Study Design

- HTP administered to Haitian children in 2012, 2013, and 2014
- 131 Haitian Children from urban areas (65 boys; 66 girls)
- Age range 6-15 years (mean=9.1; SD=2.8)
- 44 children from Blanchard (town moderately damaged by quake), 25 from Damien (government-run farm turned into a relocation camp), and 46 from Canaan (a relocation camp on a sparse hillside and lacking basic resources)
- 16 children were from an orphanage ("The Providence")
- Participants recruited through the office of an NGO serving children in Blanchard, Canaan, and The Providence

The House-Tree-Person Test

- Commonly used with children ages 3-15 years (Bluestein, 1978)
- Clinically validated that the house reflects one's home life and familial relations, tree represents one's environmental and community connectedness, and person reveals one's conscious and unconscious representation of self, self in relation to others, and interpersonal/social attitudes (Hammer, 1997)
- Limitations: not yet standardized for children, non-clinical populations, or international research
- But, HTP assessments have been used for study of children internationally (cf. see previous references; Sweden and Tanzania, Andersson, 1995; Iran, Saneei, Bahrami, & Haghegh, 2011; Hong Kong, Li et al., 2014; Turkey, Özer; 2010; Vietnam, Yama, 1990) and in the U.S.A. (Allen & Tussey, 2012; Koppitz, 1968;Tharinger & Roberts, 2014; Tharinger & Stark, 1990)

Assessment Design Using HTP

- The present study assessed HTP drawings for adaptation and maladaptation but not psychopathology

- Culture-centered assessment of drawing contents (natural, physical, human, economic, and cultural environments, as this ecology interacts with Haitian children's experiences) as well as standard assessment of structural features (accessible house, tree-ground relationships, bare roots, holes in tree trunks, omission of body parts, and genital exposure (cf. Bluestein, 1978; Groth-Marnat, 1997; Oster & Crone, 2004)

- Adapted scoring system of presence (1) and absence (0) of drawing features, based on previous research (cf. Sri Lanka, Dewaraja et al., 2006; Thailand, Kline & Svaste-Xuto, 2006; U.S.A.. Tharinger & Stark, 1990; China, Wang et al., 2010)

Pilot Studies: Qualitative and Quantitative

- Standardized administration procedures with trained Créole translators

- Pilot qualitative study of focal points in 39 HTP drawings (n = 13, 2012 sample) for criteria development for scoring. Two prominent themes Resilience and Vulnerability.

- Pilot inter-rater reliability, Cronbach's alpha, generalizability study, factor analyses, and clinicians' judgment of mental health on 2012 sample (n= 43, 129 drawings)

- Adaptation conceptualized as Resilience (RES); maladaptation conceptualized as Vulnerability (VUL)

Definitions of Resilience and Vulnerability

- Resilience was derived from systems of home life and familial relationships, reflections on self-other interactions, interpersonal relationships, and connectedness with the environment.

- Vulnerability was evoked by an individual's intrapersonal life of negative conscious and unconscious representation of the self, self-in-relation to others, and personal-social attitudes. The individual was vulnerable without external systemic support.

Ecological-Process Conceptualization of Resilience

- Sociocultural context shapes how resilience is conceptualized and experienced, complementing an expanding literature that seeks to understand the cultural underpinnings of trauma (Pole & Triffleman, 2010). Harvey (2007) argued that resilience is influenced by individuals' and communities' complex and dynamic contexts, and as such, resilience in the face of trauma entails the negotiation of multiple domains of functioning (e.g., safety, attachment, self-cohesion, social connectivity) within these contexts. It is also important to recognize that resilience in traumatic conditions is shaped by people's cultural beliefs and understandings.

Result 1: Strength and Directionality of Interscale Correlations

- Three Measures: **HTP rating indexes: RES and VUL**; **Child Report of Posttraumatic Symptoms (CROPS) (Greenwald & Rubin, 1999).**

- RES and VUL significant negative Pearson correlation ($r = -.66$, $p < 0.01$)

- RES and CROPS moderately low negative Pearson correlation ($r = -.36$, $p < 0.05$)

- VUL and CROPS moderately positive Pearson correlation ($r = .31$; $p < 0.05$)

- RES and VUL were culturally adapted measures for Haitian children, CROPS was a U.S. measure of child trauma; translated in Créole; but contents not adapted.

Interrater Reliability

- Raters were different each year.
- The inter-rater reliability of RES and VUL was assessed using the intra-class correlation (ICC) because for each child participant every rater for that year scored the participant's drawings.
- RES had 88% of the items over all three years above the cutoff of ICC = 0.4. VUL had 92% of the items over all the years above ICC = 0.4. ICC scores for both indexes were all fair or better in 2013 and 2014.

Group Differences on RES and VUL

- A multivariate regression analysis and appropriate post hoc analyses were performed to examine patterns in RES and VUL scores among children based on their age, gender, year that the child was in the study, and location: Canaan, Blanchard, Damien, and the Providence Orphanage.

- This multivariate regression model was significant ($F_{2, 118}$ = 5.17, p-value = .007). The R-squared values, 42.4% and 28.2% for RES and VUL, respectively, indicated that the model explained a moderate amount of the variance.

Means, SDs, Cronbach's Alpha, and Intra-class Correlations for RES and VUL

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and coefficient alphas of Resilience (RES) and Vulnerability (VUL) in the Assessment of Haitian Children's House-Tree-Person (HTP) Drawings

	Mean (SD) of Resilience and Vulnerability Index Scores										Coefficient Alpha
		Gender			Location				Sample Year		
	Overall	Males	Females	Blanchard	Canaan	Damien	Orphanage	2012	2013	2014	
RES	6.38 (3.1)	6.94 (2.9)	5.84 (3.2)	5.83 (3.2)	7.13 (2.6)	7.04 (3.4)	6.29 (3.8)	7.11 (3.0)	6.92 (2.7)	5.50 (3.3)	0.83
VUL	3.20 (2.2)	3.31 (2.2)	3.09 (2.2)	3.27 (2.0)	3.01 (2.0)	3.51 (2.6)	3.09 (2.6)	2.69 (2.0)	2.86 (2.3)	3.82 (2.2)	0.74
N	131	65	66	44	46	25	16	43	34	54	-

Note. Average Intra Class Correlation Coefficient of Items for Interrater Reliability, 2012-2014: RES = 0. 63; VUL = 0. 67. Coefficient alphas by Year: RES = 0. 73 ('12), 0.84 ('13), 0.76 ('14); VUL = 0.70 ('12), 0.79 ('13), 0.74 ('14).

Result 2: Age Accounts for Changes in RES and VUL scores

- Younger Haitian children had significantly lower RES scores and higher VUL scores than older Haitian children

- Between 2012, 2013, & 2014, quality of drawings improved with age, resulting in higher RES scores and lower VUL scores with yearly increase in age

- No definitive conclusions about RES and VUL can be made about preschool Haitian children due to psychosocial, cognitive, and drawing capacities associated with developmental age

Result 3: Gender Differences on RES

- Haitian girls had lower RES scores than Haitian boys

- Haitian girls and women show they experience many systemic and relational forms of oppression (Justesen & Verner, 2007; World Bank, 2011)

- Literature about sex differences in children's reactions to disasters are mixed

- Gender roles may vary by culture, religion, and social class

Result 4: Resilience of Canaan Across Time

- Drawings were fairly standard across townships (Canaan, Blanchard, Damien, The Providence)
- The longer the Canaan children were exposed to adversity, the higher their RES scores were relative to children of other townships/settings
- Consider the Haitian religious orientation of moral resistance, courage, and stoicism (Afolayan, 2015; Nicolas, DeSilva, Grey, & Gonzalez-Eastep, 2006; Roysircar, 2013; Schwartz, 2012) to understand increasing Resilience of the Canaan children
- Providence orphanage children felt insecure increasingly, even though they were cared for and attended school

Vulnerability of Blanchard, Damien, and The Providence Orphanage

- The literature states that degree of exposure to a natural disaster, extent of damage, and witnessing the death or injury of another individual or a perceived threat to self are risk factors of PTSD (Mohay & Forbes, 2009). These vulnerabilities common for Haitian children may explain the decreasing RES scores and increasing VUL scores over time for the Blanchard, Damien, and Providence children. For the Canaan children, their VUL scores did not change much over time.
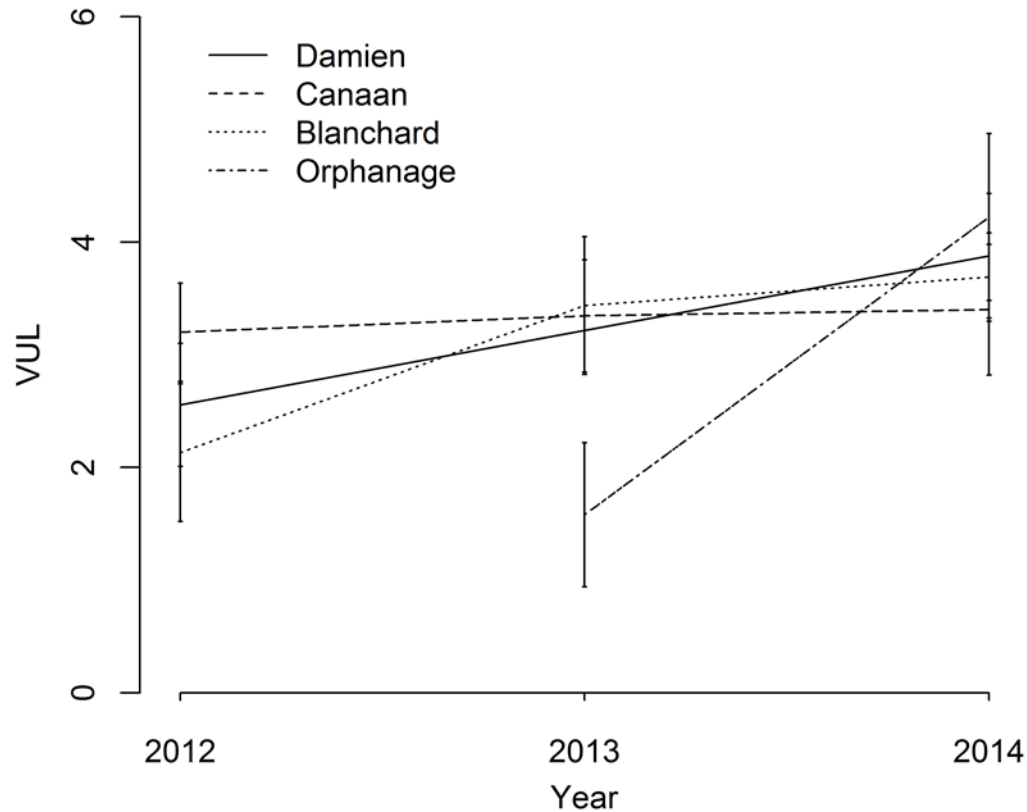
Township Resilience Across Time

Figure 1. Estimated marginal means of resilience (RES) score for each location by year, with 95% confidence intervals.
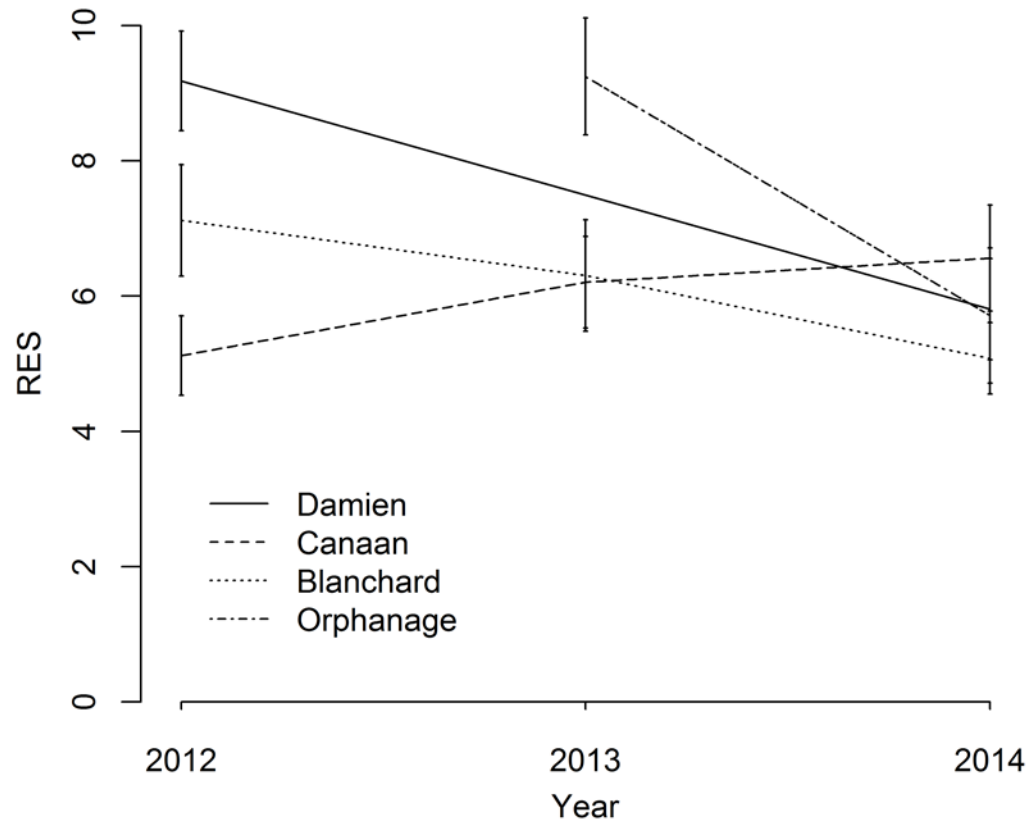
Township Vulnerability Across Time

Figure 2. Estimated marginal means of vulnerability (VUL) score for each location by year with 95% confidence intervals.

Result 5: Score Differences of Individual Children

- 53% of children had higher RES than VUL scores that were not due to measurement error or chance

- 7% had statistically significant differences, all of which fell in the same direction: VUL scores were greater than RES scores

- Children who show higher VUL than RES scores could benefit from a resilience-based trauma counseling model

Implications for Politicians and Policy Makers

- Resilience as an outcome of how child's attitudes/skills interact productively with family, natural, physical, economic, cultural, religious, and social environments

- Significant strong inverse relationship between RES and VUL suggests that systemic factors of resilience include larger societal interventions (e.g., reductions of disparity in health and psychological care, building of houses with provision of mortgages, consistent nutritive food and clean water, free secondary school education, high quality education, governmental support for the employment of parents and caregivers, etc.)

Multidimensional Scaling (MDS)

MDS allowed understanding of similarities or dissimilarities between five scales. It mapped a visual presentation of their proximities and allowed for informed judgments about dimensions. Statistically, the common space plot supports a two-dimension solution that can be perceived with different configuration. The horizontal scale, Balance of Good and Evil. represented in Figure 1 has CROPS, SC, HSS, and RES. The vertical scale, Feeling Unloved, represented in Figure 2 has CROPS and VUL.
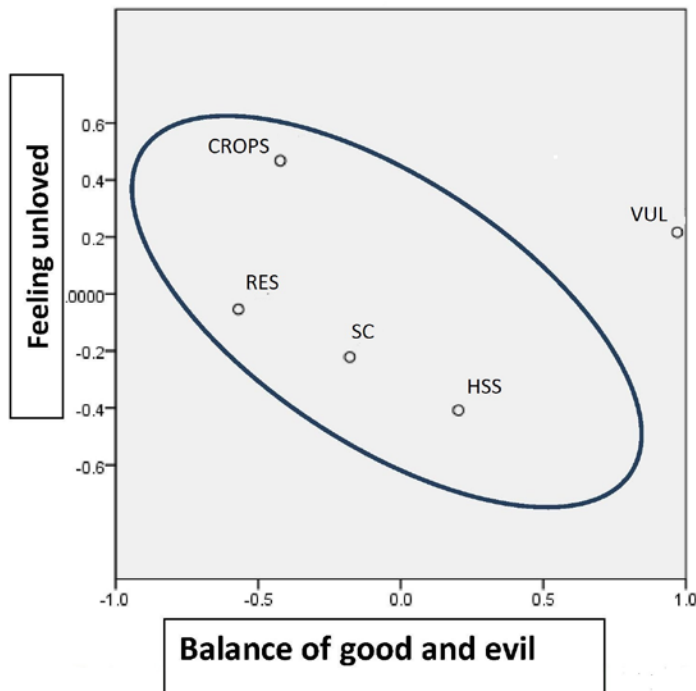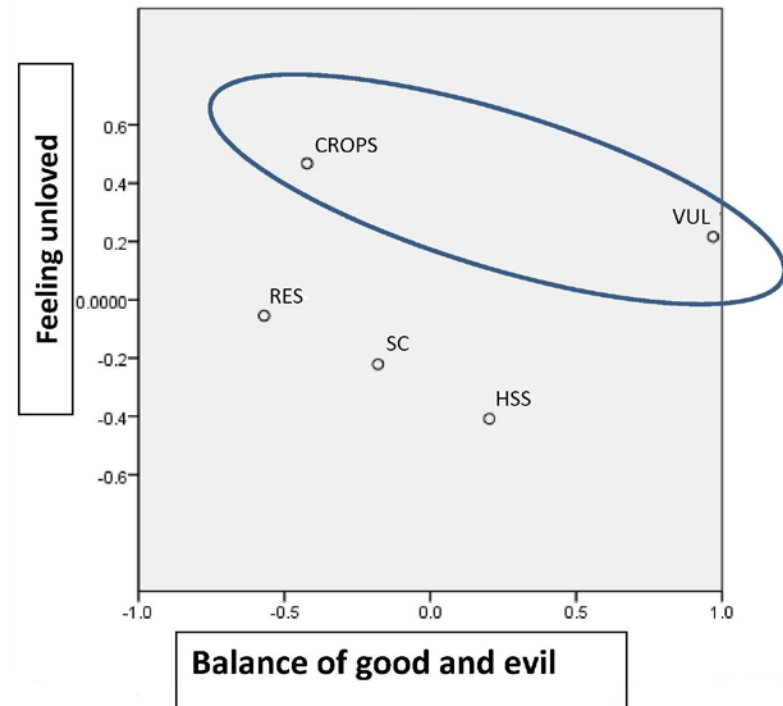
Figure 1

Figure 2

Haitian Parent-Caregiver Focus Groups

- How will Haitian parents/caregivers' reports on their attitudes towards adversity, family coping, and religiousness relate to their children's HTP Resilience and Vulnerability responses. In 2014, focus groups with the assessed children's parents and caregivers (*N*= 30; three focus groups in Blanchard-Damien, Canaan, and the Providence Orphanage) provided information. Themes of religion and spirituality ran throughout the exchanges. This presentation focuses on answers to one question:

- What role does religion and spirituality play in your life? Créole translation: Ki wòl relijyon ak espirityalite gen nan lavi w tou lejou?

- The focus groups were led by trained Haitian translators in the presence of the researchers. The conversations were tracked in handwritten Creole and English notes, audiotaped, transcribed, and translated into English by a Haitian American doctoral student of counseling psychology in the USA.

Thematic Analysis

- The qualitative method used to analyze focus group members' discussions on the given question was Thematic Analysis, which focuses on the content of narratives. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of Thematic Analysis were followed: Phase 1, familiarizing yourself with the data; Phase 2, generating initial codes; Phase 3, searching for themes; Phase 4, reviewing themes; Phase 5, defining and naming themes; and phase 6, producing the report.

Theme I: I am here with Jesus: God will not leave you.

The theme "I am here with Jesus: God will not leave you" reflects the belief that a person can ask God anything in the name of Jesus when the person abides in Him and He abides in the person. When a person has a relationship with God, then all things are possible.

One mother spoke about abiding by Jesus.

There are moments when I feel that my sorrows will take me away. Then when a sister comes my way and says, "Sister I have not seen you. How are the children? What are your activities?" And I say, "Sister I am here with Jesus. If it wasn't for Jesus, everything would not have been good."

Theme II: You talk to God to help you.

The theme "You talk to God to help you" reflects the belief that people do not have to wait for someone to solve a challenging issue; they take the responsibility to affect their life through offering prayers to God. Also this theme includes the belief that people who are not able to address issues by themselves, they should seek a higher authority, such as elders.

One mother with no possessions used fasting in God's name to affect her life. She said,

> Also in Haiti, there is no work; there is nothing. We mostly participate in fasting (jen) because we have more time for religion than for work. Do you understand? There is nothing. That's how we deal with moments of difficulty.

Accepting help from a pastor and God is expressed in one mother's thoughts.

> You feel that the pastor reaches your wound, and you go on your knees to ask God to pardon you, to heal your wound.

Theme III: Church is an assembly: We share our problems with one another

The theme "Church, it's an assembly: We share our problems with one another at Church" represents the belief that when two or three people are gathered in the name of Jesus, Jesus will be in the assembly. The spirit of the Lord is one of liberty. There are particular holy expectations when in an assembly of God, and these expectations expand into the community.

One mother spoke about the spirit of church in her life. She said,

Church is a place that is a lot of good especially for me. Trials and tribulations try to overcome me; I have problems, and I feel tears in my eyes. Every moment that you spend at home, the problem ravages you even more. At church, you tell God to heal your wound so that God can make you stand stronger than before.

Another mother's belief shows how the spirit from church spreads into the community. She said,

No, you go to church; it is an assembly; it makes you know people; it makes you not be ashamed in public; it is possible to talk no matter what your status is in society.

Theme IV: Go you, therefore, making disciples: Hope for tomorrow

The theme "Go you, therefore, making disciples: Hope for tomorrow" represents a command for those who understand that everything is flawed and that they need to find a disciplined path through a new teaching. To accomplish this, a person should *be born again* and be receptive to a higher command. The mindset a person develops in the world has deficits and needs to be re-aligned with a higher spiritual level of thinking. The spiritual mindset is not available to humanity until a critical point when human ideology becomes exceptionally flawed.

One mother talked about how discipleship can change a person.

> If a person is becoming a bad person, as long as the person sees the path to church--meaning that the person hears the pastor's sermon. I think that the person will take a good turn. There will be true change.

Theme V: Train up a child

The theme "Train up a child" reflects the belief that when parents reach down and raise infants like their children, they are actually helping the One who helps them (i.e., God). Also within this theme is the belief that when parents "train up" a child, they are endowing themselves with qualities that they need. This training of a child makes them more humble in their attitudes; the parents take on an innocent approach like a child. As a parent, when they take on the qualities of humility, innocence, and simplicity, they are more suitable for other adult responsibilities. Parents train children just as the children bring out the best in parents.

One mother talked about her duties after she had changed through her devotion to God.

> Just like how I have changed, I can bring my child along the same religious path. So that my child can hear the sermon too and will not have bad thoughts and won't take a bad path. So my child can stay within church.