Alliance for the Protection of Children Project

A Report on Haitian Cultural Models of Children, Family, Violence, and Protection

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AIR AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

Alliance for the Protection of Children Project

A Report on Haitian Cultural Models of Children, Family, Violence, and Protection

July 2017

Contents

Introduction

Project Overview

The Alliance for the Protection of Children (APC) is a 3-year U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)–supported project implemented by American Institutes for Research (AIR) to leverage local assets and strengthen the protection of children exposed to all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Lumos Foundation is a resource partner on the project, leading efforts that mitigate abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence in residential care institutions. The APC will support strategic objectives on the part of USAID and the Government of Haiti to strengthen the protection of vulnerable children. The APC will ensure that its work aligns with the National Child Protection Strategy and contributes to Objectives 3, 4, and 5, as well as to existing laws governing the protection of children in Haiti. In Year 1, we will work in partnership with the Institut du Bien-Être Social et de Recherches, Université d'Etat d'Haiti (UEH), Zanmi Lasante, Combite pour la paix et le développement, and Restavek Freedom/OPREH to establish a rigorous evidence base on which to build Year 2 and 3 pilot interventions.

The APC will collaborate with other government agencies, ministries, strategic United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNHCR, as well as community-based and local nongovernmental organizations in Haiti. We will prioritize child protection through this program; specifically, we will pilot evidence-based interventions that reduce violence against children; mitigate the trafficking and forced labor of children; protect unaccompanied and separated migrant, stateless, and displaced children; integrate street children into safer learning and care spaces; prevent the separation of children from their families; and explore alternative care and protection services. The APC has four distinct phases: (1) research, (2) design of pilot interventions, (3) implementation of pilot interventions, and (4) evaluation and learning for scale-up. The Year 1 project plan covers the first and second phases.

Report Summary

This report summarizes the findings from interviews conducted as part of a study of implicit cultural patterns of thinking underlying the way that Haitians understand, reason, and make decisions around issues related to violence against children. Anthropologists call these shared patterns of thinking "cultural models."[1] These cultural models are learned beginning early in life as the brain forms synaptic connections from a child's experience with the physical world, with other living humans and organisms, and with language.[2] Cultural models represent people's most basic "common sense" of the world—in this case, assumptions about concepts such as childhood, families, and violence.

---

[1] Shore, B. (1996). *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
[2] Holland, D., & Quinn, N. (Eds.). (1987). *Cultural models in language and thought*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cultural models are stable and widely shared patterns of thinking that guide reasoning and decisions that people within a culture make every day.[3] Although aspects of cultural models found in Haiti may be found elsewhere in the world, the particular configuration of models is unique, based on the specific interaction of historical events, structural factors, environmental and political contexts, and deep cultural beliefs in Haiti.[4] A growing number of scientists and practitioners have found that exploring this deep level of cultural understanding can be valuable for designing effective campaigns that change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors on a variety of issues,[5] including work in Haiti on HIV[6] and health care more generally.[7]

The APC project is focused on the design of evidence-based pilot interventions that will leverage local assets and strengthen child protection efforts in Haiti. To do this, we committed to investigate the problem of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children using several different research methods; a cultural models approach is one of several unique lenses for data collection that highlights local understandings. We understood from the outset that Haitian communities were weary of research, and rightly so as there are a multitude of academic studies on Haiti's unique historical, cultural, social, and economic challenges. However, this is the first cultural models study that examines the most basic underpinnings of cultural beliefs about violence and children in Haiti in this way.

The goal of this cultural models research was to better understand the underlying patterns of how Haitians think about children and how they develop, children's role(s) within a broader family and community, opportunities for children, violence in all of its forms, and child protection. This research was not intended to direct decisions about the most pressing problems to address with pilot interventions but rather to create effective communications and outreach campaigns once those pressing problems and potential solutions are decided upon by stakeholders using the other research methods from this project. In addition, this map of cultural models will serve as a guide for developing a specific behavior change communications (BCC) pilot intervention following the priorities outlined by the APC and stakeholder partners. *In order for a BCC intervention to be effective at changing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, it must start by systematically mapping the cultural understandings of the audience. This report provides that foundational understanding so that BCC interventions can be designed in culturally appropriate ways to increase protection of vulnerable children.*

After briefly discussing the methods used to collect the data, the report maps the cultural models as they relate to seven orienting questions. Each cultural model is explained and illustrated with some representative excerpts from interviews. Finally, the report concludes with some notes about how this data can be used for improving communication and outreach in general.

---

[3] Hofstede, G. (1981). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[4] Dubois, L. (2012). *Haiti: The aftershocks of hist*ory. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

[5] Shonkoff, J., & Bales, S. (2011). Science does not speak for itself: Translating child development research for the public and its policymakers. Child Development, 82(1), 17–32.

[6] Farmer, P. (1994). AIDS-talk and the constitution of cultural models. Social Science & Medicine, 38(6), 801–809.

[7] Brodwin, P. E. (1997). Politics, practical logic, and primary health care in rural Haiti. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *11*(1), 69–88

Methods and Sampling

The cultural models findings presented below are based on 41 in-depth interviews conducted by UEH graduate anthropology students who underwent two intensive AIR-led capacity building workshops (September 2016 and January 2017) to learn about cultural model theory and to develop data collection protocols. The protocols were reviewed and approved by AIR's independent Institutional Review Board as well as Haiti's Comité National de Bioéthique to ensure the protection of human subjects.

The interviews were conducted January–March 2017 in nine localities across four departments in Haiti: Ouest, Nord-est, Sud-est, and Artibonite. Individuals were recruited for interviews to ensure a diversity along the dimensions of geography (rural, remote, peri-urban, and urban), gender (men and women), religion (Catholic, Protestant, and Vodou), age (younger adults, adults, and older adults), being primarily responsible for children or not, and being stateless or not. The interviews were specifically conducted with people who were not experts or key informants on these topics.

Each participant was interviewed in a one-on-one, semistructured session lasting 1 to 2 hours. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes or other quiet locations. Cultural model interviews were designed to elicit ways of thinking and talking about underlying issues—how children and families are defined, how childhood development happens, what opportunities exist for children, how violence and protection are conceptualized, and what could be done to better protect children. As the goal of these interviews was to uncover patterns of thinking rather than to ask participants to respond to predetermined categories and concepts, it was important to give interviewers the freedom to follow topics in the directions they deemed most appropriate. Therefore, the interviewers approached each interview with a set of areas to be covered, but were allowed to follow the order in which they were covered naturally by the participant. All interviews were conducted in Creole, audio recorded, and later transcribed directly into Creole by the interviewer. Approximately one third of the transcriptions were translated into English by professional translators for quality control on the analysis.

Interview questions were designed to elicit a large quantity of "talk" that could then be analyzed using techniques developed in cognitive and linguistic anthropology.[8] Transcripts were analyzed by UEH research leads who were accompanied by experienced AIR analysts. First, relevant excerpts were coded using an open-ended coding scheme to identify the critical topics. Second, excerpts for each topic were analyzed to reveal implicit cultural models—common assumptions, relationships, and causal patterns in thinking across individual responses. Three researchers independently analyzed the transcriptions for cultural models and then collaborated during in-person sessions in May 2017 to unite the analyses and come to agreement on the findings.

Note that as an analysis was conducted, our researchers kept attuned to any systematic differences across the sample. Did people in one group have different cultural models than people in a different group? Did older participants reason differently than younger participants? Although the analysis below notes when any demographic differences were found, for the most part, the cultural models presented below represent patterns of thinking that were shared *across*

---

[8] Quinn, N. (Ed.). (2005). *Finding culture in talk: A collection of methods*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

the wide range of demographic variables. This is intentional, as cultural models theory specifically looks for common cultural patterns at that deep, shared level of cognition. As such, when quotes are presented, they are not specifically identified with respect to the demographic profile of the single participant.

Findings

This section maps the cultural models that were identified through analysis. The cultural models are organized by the following guiding questions:

A. How are children defined?

B. How is family defined?

C. How is childhood development conceptualized?

D. What threatens childhood development?

E. How does gender affect development?

F. What constitutes violence, abuse, or neglect?

G. Who is responsible for childhood development and protection?

Oftentimes within the sample or even within an individual's own thinking, we identified conflicting cultural models. This is a normal feature of cognition, as people often have different ways of thinking about the same issue. In those cases, we noted when one model was more robust, and we described that as a **dominant model**—one that is used frequently and in a top-of-mind and automatic way. These are the ways of thinking that are triggered most readily when asked to reason about a topic. As such, if a dominant cultural model is in line with the goals of an intervention (BCC or otherwise), communications campaigns will find it easy to trigger that productive cultural model. **Recessive models**, in contrast, can be thought of as ways of thinking that are accessible to people but less frequently invoked. If the recessive model is more helpful for communicating about a particular intervention, it may require more intentional cueing. These strategies for activating different cultural models based on communications goals will be designed during the development and implementation of the pilot interventions. In the following descriptions, if a model is not described as dominant or recessive, it can be assumed to be dominant.

A. **How are *children* defined?**

1. **The dominant *Helpless Child* cultural model versus the recessive *Active Child* cultural model.** Haitians define being a child primarily by the inability to take care of oneself. More than a specific age range, it is that passive dependence on others that defines childhood. Children are not only unable to take care of themselves, they are also innocent blank slates without knowledge and unable to make decisions for themselves. This is especially true for babies, who are conceptualized as very young children, from birth until the time they can walk. Youths, however, are considered physically capable but still unable to make decisions for themselves and not responsible enough to take care of themselves.

    > **Participant:** *An adult can do whatever he/she chooses to. But children can't. They have to obey.*

    > **Participant:** *I would consider a child as a little angel. It's innocent; it doesn't know anything, get it? Everything it requires, I do for it.*

    Because children are defined as passive and helpless, participants described the way adults must take care of them and protect them. This pattern of thinking was top-of-mind for participants, who often described the importance of protecting children right from the very first questions in the interview.

    > **Interviewer:** *When a person speaks of children, how could you define a child, what comes to your mind?*

    > **Participant:** *In my opinion, when someone speaks of children, I see them as a baby not knowing what to do. You have to be there to protect it.*

    > —

    > **Participant:** *Children aren't capable of reasoning, while old folks aren't capable of working. So, one is obligated to protect both of them. Children and the elderly should be protected.*

    Although the Helpless Child cultural model dominated the way people defined children, there were times when children's initiative came to the foreground. Most importantly, children were seen as active when they took intentional steps to leave a home if things were not going well. In those cases, people explained that children could take matters into their own hands and put themselves in a different living situation.

    > **Participant:** *They leave when they want to. Because the way things are, some kids leave at 10, 7, 8. They just pick up and leave.*

    > —

    > **Participant:** *Sometimes they may take responsibility for themselves, and sometimes things have been turning bad for them and they go to the Dominican Republic.*

2. **The *Utilitarian* cultural model.** Participants in our research described children in terms of the utility that they could bring. Most commonly, participants described children as an investment for old age. As parents grow older, they are unable to take care of themselves and their grown adult children take on that responsibility. In addition, children are valued for the work they can do for the household and for taking care of any sick adults; in this way, the model was associated with the Active Child cultural model described above.

> *Participant: You want to have a baby for the future. People struggle to have a child for the future when you can't go on any longer. He/she can go fetch gallons of water for you, and do a lot of other things as well. That is why we have kids, to help us when we are crippled. Someday, your child will get you water so you can bathe, will harvest the potatoes for you to eat. This is important.*

> —

> *Participant: A person wants to have a baby, because you want someone to help you in the future.… A baby is your back-up plan for later on. So, you would like to have a baby to replace you in the future, to take care of you, to inherit what you'll leave behind, understand?*

3. **The *Children are Joy* cultural model.** Existing alongside the Utilitarian model (both were considered dominant), children were sometimes described simply for the joy that they bring to a family and a home. Children were described as gifts from God who not only were important parts of a family but also were the defining concept of family. In fact, participants often said that it was impossible for a couple to be happy without a child.

> *Participant: If I have a child, I will rejoice, I'll be happy, because having a child is a major gift from God, that is why I'll always be happy, I'll always be…very happy for me.*

> —

> *Participant: There is no joy, no cheerfulness in the house without at least a child.*

B. How is *family* defined?

1. **The *Children Make the Family* cultural model.** Interview participants explicitly and implicitly defined children as the very basis for family. When a man and woman live on their own, they form a home, but it is not considered a family until there is a child. Without a child, there will likely be tension and discord between the couple. Haitians cannot consider family life without children.

> *Participant: Because she needs a baby. If you have a husband and have no children for him then you are not a family; there will be division in your household.*

> —

> *Participant: Once they create the household, then there will be children; the household will become a family.*

2. **The *Nuclear Family* cultural model.** Participants conceptualized the primary unit of a family as a mother, a father, and a child (or children). Extended family with blood ties such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins only loosely formed part of the family concept. The mother was considered essential, both explicitly and implicitly in the way that people reasoned about the tasks she does and the work she does to hold the family together. The father was described as a key part of the family, although his presence was more complicated as he was often associated with violence and neglect. Parents were described as having ultimate authority and responsibility over their children, and it was assumed that no one else would care for a child the same way that the family would.

> *Participant: Yes cousins, they aren't really part of a family. It's mostly a mother, a father, and children.*

> —

> *Participant: I see sometimes parents passing away and their kids having to live with their aunts or a family member. These children go through so much that it would be preferable for them not to be on this earth. These people usually honor their children but treat severely those children that do not have nor a mother, neither a father. That is the reason why I say that the only family members are the mom, the dad, and the children. The others cannot be counted like family; they are not family members.*

3. **The *Restavek Is Not Family* cultural model.** When participants considered all the children living in a house, for the most part restavek children were not discussed and were certainly not considered part of the family or household. Occasionally there was explicit talk that children in domesticity were treated more poorly than other children in a home and that this unequal treatment was a problem.

> *Participant: Children in domesticity, in my opinion, are more problematic. They are most miserable. How could one imagine a child living in domesticity somewhere is not properly fed while food is wasting in the house?*

> —

> *Participant: If the parents have the economical capacity and decide to not feed the [restavek] children on time, it is a form of violence. You require the [restavek] child to wake up at 4:00 a.m. to prepare food, put water in the rest room, clean the car. Your son goes to school and he stays at home.*

C. **How is childhood development conceptualized?**

1. **The *Compartmentalized Stages* cultural model.** Participants largely conceptualized development as happening in compartmentalized stages in which different types of development dominate thinking. In the first stage, before children went to school, physical development of the body was the sole consideration. Participants talked about children learning to crawl, walk, and move their bodies. Once children reached school age, participants focused on learning and going to school. When children reached puberty age, participants once again focused on physical development and its influence on gender and sexual relations. The focus on physical development for young children led participants to prioritize health as a factor for good development in the early years, and because of issues of hunger and malnutrition, this emphasis on the physical carried over as vital into the school years as well.

   > **Participant:** *For example, you have a child at home, a baby, get it? It starts out by crawling on all fours, then it develops. Then it didn't know how to speak, it starts by saying momma, dadda, that also is development. After saying momma and dadda, then you can send the child to school, a daycare, kindergarten, so it can start with its education, do you understand?*
   > --
   > **Participant:** *If you don't eat, nothing will happen. Eating is important in life. They might not say school, because eating comes first. If you don't eat, you can't stand on your feet.*

2. **The *Parents Mold Children* cultural model.** Participants explained that children start as blank slates with no knowledge and no reasoning capacity and that adults have to fill them and mold them. The underlying metaphors were of the children as blank canvasses, containers that need to be filled, or recorders of information. It is important to note the child's passivity in this conceptualization of learning.

   > **Participant:** *Children are like blank cassette tapes.*
   >
   > —
   >
   > **Participant:** *You said that adult has the reasoning capacity, but children don't have any reasoning capacity. Because, anything a child wants to do, they have to help him to do it, they have to teach him how to do it. A child is like a computer; he has to record all the data to improve his future.*

   Participants assumed not only that children start from zero but also that there was direct causality between parent actions and children's behavior. For that reason, children had to be closely monitored and controlled to keep them on a good development track. Freedom of time or action was a direct threat to this control and would inherently lead to misbehavior.

   > **Participant:** *If a child misbehaves with an adult, the latter must take action against the former to straighten that child out.*
   >
   > —

> *Participant: If a child is well behaved and does as it is told, I don't see a reason why a child would get in trouble with an adult.*

3. **The *School Is the Only Way* cultural model.** Participants saw school as essential for a child's development. School was seen as the only way to learn a profession, be useful in society, and make a life for oneself for the future. Participants saw not going to school as leading to being stuck in the same circumstances—for that child, for that child's family, and even by extension for the country. School was considered expensive, however, and therefore a significant challenge for families. Participants not only discussed the cost of tuition but also mentioned the costs of school uniforms and shoes.

> *Participant: If the child doesn't go to school, it won't be able to develop.... You have to help the child's development by sending it to school, to help it with a trade or if it is a girl teach her to sew or anything.*
>
> —
>
> *Participant: The difficult choices are such that someone may register a child for school, thinking he will find the money to pay, but when the time comes he doesn't have the money. That creates a problem.... At times, the ladies sell their bodies in order to pay for their children's school.*

School was most top-of-mind when participants talked about possible ways to improve the situation for children in Haiti. They cited examples of people who were able to send children to school as one solution that was actually having a positive effect. The positive effect was considered to be the school itself but also the fact that children were kept busy and not left idle during the day.

> *Participant: Some children from around here go to school, and the only person who tries to support kids in this department, especially in Marchand Dessalines, is Gracis Delva.*
>
> *Interviewer: What does he do for the children?*
>
> *Participant: He has a foundation, where he pays for school for 1,400 children.*
>
> —
>
> *Participant: The idea of school, church, they often do the same. Pay for the children's school. Give them all what they need. There is a gentleman, the brother of the owner of this house—he lives overseas—since 2006 he's been paying for about 30 kids. He is spending his own money to pay their school, buy their uniforms, pay for the children's formation, all of them.*

4. **The *Environment Matters* cultural model.** Participants considered the general environment to be critical for child development. They emphasized such factors as cleanliness and appropriateness as well as general lack of tension and conflict. Although there was not clear reasoning as to why these factors were important, participants generally associated them with being able to positively or negatively influence development.

> *Participant: Because, let me tell you, you can't raise a child in an environment that isn't proper, that isn't clean, where people say inappropriate things, and believe that the child will develop well.*
>
> —
>
> *Participant: His dad and his mom are always fighting at home. One knocking the other with glasses and kicks, stick-strike and calling out insults…. All this will disturb the mind of the child and destroy it.*

5. **The *Basic Needs* cultural model**. When probed about child needs, participants focused on the very basics—a roof over their heads, food to eat, and school. Participants also implicitly assumed that this is also what children want—and that they are sad if these basic needs are not met. Participants did not, however, describe much more complexity with regard to a child's emotional needs or personal growth needs.

> *Participant: I always see some [children] feeling badly when talking about their parents not being able to pay the tuition. They want to go to school but they can't.*
>
> —
>
> *Participant: The fundamental needs of a child…put him in school, feed him, give him what he needs. Ensure that he sleeps well; do not let him sleep on the floor. Anytime you let your child sleep on the floor, this is like treating him like an animal. For instance, if he visits somebody else, he notices that this other person sleeps on a bed. He will feel bad about sleeping on the ground, you know.*

D.   What threatens childhood development?

1. **The *Lack of Resources* cultural model.** Parents' inability to provide the appropriate nutrition, health care, and schooling for children threatens good development. Participants described that children simply have needs that the parents cannot meet, leading to malnutrition, lack of hygiene, and lack of schooling. This leads to participants' general assessment of the situation that children do not have opportunities to develop well and thrive.

> *Participant: Well, some people can't take their child to the hospital when he/she is sick. They don't have the means to. They can't even pay for a pill if necessary; they have to administer natural medicine with leaves. Some people just don't have the means for it.*
>
> —
>
> *Participant: No, the majority of children have problems finding a place to stay, they have a lack of education, they can't go to school, and their parents can't feed them.*

2. **The *Bad Parents* cultural model.** This specific cultural model is not about parents lacking resources; rather, it is about parents perceived to be making bad decisions, not prioritizing their children, and placing their children in inappropriate situations. This model is typically invoked to talk about fathers—fathers who drink too much alcohol or abuse other drugs, fathers who bring their children to inappropriate clubs, fathers who may throw children out of the house for economic reasons, or fathers who neglect their children. All these are described as having a negative effect on child development.

> **Participant:** *Let's take the example of a child who is neglected by his/her father. This affects the child in a lot of ways, especially if that child's mother can't meet all of his/her needs. While both parents should be concerned with the child, the father leaves all of the responsibility to the mother. That affects the child in so many ways.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *I think that the majority of parents in Martissant act violently towards their children. I think most of them beat their children especially; some of them while beating them curse them out. You find that a lot.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *When as a parent you do not take charge of your responsibility and you leave everything, you do not control like a real parent, you drink alcohol in front of your children, this will negatively influence your child's behavior.*

3. **The *Violence Scars the Body and Mind* cultural model.** Participants talked about violence leaving scars on a child's memory, like it leaves scars on their body. These mental scars can make them fearful or mistrust others. The fact that participants clearly see violence as having lasting impacts for all ages of children conflicts somewhat with the idea that parents must physically punish their children as behavior correction. It points to the fine line by which Haitians deem physical punishment acceptable or not— whether it is justified and whether it is excessively harsh.

> **Participant:** *When you hit a person, it hurts them, they feel it, it stays on their mind. Or if you've wounded them, the scar remains, or you could say something to a person and what you say…they hold it against you because it hurt them, it stays on their mind. I think those are the effects on the person.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *Yes, this may have consequence, for instance, a developing child that an adult beats up so hard that he leaves marks on his skin. He will never forget, but will continue to think that he has been beaten by such-and-such who left marks on his skin.*

4. **The *No Opportunities* cultural model.** Importantly, participants did not see opportunities for children to thrive in Haiti. While participants were hopeful that sending children to school would prepare them to attain a basic level of subsistence, they did not see opportunities for the future beyond that. Many participants were fatalistic that for many children in Haiti, even those basic opportunities to go to school did not exist. Some participants along the border areas considered crossing into the Dominican Republic as one of the only possible opportunities across the bleak landscape of possibilities.

   Participants explained that when parents do not have the ability to economically take care of their children, violent activities and gangs can attract children with the potential of economic gain. When this possibility exists, it threatens the stability of the family because children then have their own economic agency, may not accept the control of their parents, may not respect their parents and other elders, and may even leave the home to live on their own. This cultural model was especially prominent in the interviews from the Ouest and was more associated with border crossing opportunities in the Nord-est and Sud-est. In Canaan, participants specifically expressed the belief that this was a recent problem, when bandits moved to the area after the earthquake.

   > **Participant:** *First of all, I don't see any opportunities for children. The only opportunity that I'm aware of are the efforts made by those children's parents. Aside from that, the only other opportunity for children would have to be some support from the State. The State doesn't support children at all in Haiti.*
   >
   > ⸺
   >
   > **Participant:** *I don't see any opportunities, when a child, after attending the second cycle of fundamental school, has only one choice: drive a taxi.*
   >
   > ⸺
   >
   > **Participant:** *No, there is nothing. Since things turned bad, they have gone to live in the Dominican Republic.*

E. **How does gender affect development?**

1. **The *Gendered Roles and Opportunities* cultural model.** Many participants first said that there was no difference between boys and girls, aside from the physical differences. Nonetheless, when interviewers began asking about roles for children around the household, participants assumed that boys and girls would be expected to do different types of tasks to help. While girls might do the laundry and dishes, cook, and care for elders, for example, boys would be expected to get wood and water and help with the crops.

   > **Participant:** *Boys can do some things that girls can't and vice versa. If you're going to the fields to water the crops you will most likely tell a boy to come with you. It's the same thing at home, where the girl is able to take care of certain things that a boy can't. To each his/her role.*
   >
   > ⸺

> **Participant:** *But the reason why boys and girls do not have the same roles is because certain chores are maybe… for girls, do you understand? Some chores are just for girls to do.*

There were different expectations for the future opportunities in life of girls than boys. Participants fantasized that boys could grow up to be any profession, including lofty professions such as President (a hope that was overshadowed by the No Opportunities cultural model). Although some participants also expressed that girls could be anything, others expressed that largely because of pregnancy, their future occupational outcomes were more limited. These participants explicitly and implicitly expressed greater future potential for boys in the world and expectations that girls would be responsible for households.

> **Participant:** *We were raised with the idea that from the moment the boy appears, he is the leader; he starts things; he does absolutely everything. While they always say that the girls are supposed to perform housekeeping activities, do the laundry and ironing, do this and that.*

2. **The *Girls Need Strict Protection* cultural model.** Participants assumed that girls needed much more strict oversight and protection than boys once they hit puberty. This was related to pregnancy and disease from consensual sex as well as sexual assault, which was considered a serious threat. Participants assumed that once they hit puberty, boys and girls were like "matches and gas" and could not be even left in the same room together. But they also assumed that men were dangerous sexual predators and that young women needed constant protection from assault.

> **Participant:** *When the girl begins to grow and she turns 12, as a parent, you notice that her breasts are growing. You feel that she may get in trouble any time. Thus, you keep an eye on her, so that she does not talk to boys. So, that the boys do not hurt her too early. You check on her more often.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *There are even men that have committed violence against your daughter. They are raping girls. So now, you are living in fear, you are afraid for yours.*

F.   What constitutes violence, abuse, or neglect?

1. **The *Violence Is Committing Injustice* cultural model.** Participants considered violence to come in many forms—physical violence (including murder), theft, and sexual violence were most top-of-mind, followed by kidnapping, verbal violence, and other examples such as feeding one child less than another child in the household. Violence was a broad term that was defined not only by the act itself but also by whether that act was justified. For that reason, most aggression against children was considered violence, unless its purpose was to correct a child's behavior (see the Physical Correction Is Not Violence cultural model below).

> **Participant:** *All the violence against children! There are different types of violence like taking a child and hitting his head on the wall to hurt him that is a kind of violence. Take fire and burn him, that is a type of violence.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *When you hear violence, it refers to evil, you are beating up kids, mistreating them, not feeding them, walking around with rags, not sleeping well... This is violence. The men are very evil with them by raping them. This is violence.*

2. **The *Physical Correction Is Not Violence* cultural model.** Physically beating a child as corrective punishment was not considered violence unless it was unfair or unjustified. Most participants considered physical correction to be a necessary part of parenting—molding the child to have proper behavior. Many suggested first verbally warning a child, but said that to ensure that the child obeys physical punishment was necessary.

> **Participant:** *You must not punish him severely. You must not hate him. But you can whip him.*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *I always give a warning. I don't beat them then and there. I talk to them first, I even have a second talk with them. If they misbehave a third time despite my warnings, that's when I give them a beating so they don't continue misbehaving.*

Although most participants explained that physical punishment was a necessary part of parenting, several participants reacted against this idea, saying that parents should talk with their children to correct their behavior and asserting that parents who beat their children to punish them are committing abuse.

> **Participant:** *The child must be punished, not spanking or beating the child or speaking badly to him. You punish him by saying, "No, you cannot go out today."*
>
> —
>
> **Participant:** *No one is entitled to treat [children] as they please. Some parents treat their child any way they want, they beat them and even burn them. I believe the State should arrest these parents.*

3. **The *Men Are Violent* cultural model.** In discussions about violence and abuse, participants overwhelmingly discussed the perpetrators as males. Males were considered inherently violent and dangerous. This was especially true when discussing sexual assault against women.

> **Participant:** *The husband sometimes beats the woman, slap her, breaks her teeth, breaks her head. He does not care to know if the woman is able. She may wake up and cannot do house chores, she cannot wash. When he comes back to the house he does not find anything on the table, so he beats up the woman. On top of that, he takes advantage of her. If she does not want, he will still insist and force her to have sex with him. You understand that all that is violence.*

Men were also described as the primary perpetrators of violence against children, including physical and sexual assault. Men were even considered dangerous toward their own children, including physical beatings or separating children from mothers.

> **Participant:** *What I consider to be violent is when the man is violent. Sometimes he might beat them terribly, understand? Whenever you break a child's arm, that is violence. If you hit the child in sensitive/vital places, that is violence.*

> —

> **Participant:** *He took the child who was 2 months old, he took him and gave it away. He went on to say that he found the baby in the woods because a mom abandoned it on a garbage pile. He gave it away in an orphanage. Many children are living in orphanages, their parents are alive, their moms are alive, but the dad, being wicked, does that.*

4. **The *Neglect Is Shirking Responsibility* cultural model.** Slightly differently from the way participants conceptualized violence and abuse, neglect and negligence were considered to be a shirking of an individual's responsibility. With regard to children, it was most often referenced in relation to fathers not paying for their children appropriately or parents in general not putting in the effort to raise children appropriately. In some cases, the neglect was considered directly responsible for violence.

> **Participant:** *When your son who [was] supposed to come back from school at 7:00 pm came in at 11:00 pm and you never say anything to him, as parent, you are negligent.*

> —

> **Participant:** *Yes, there are different form of neglect. Many children have been raped because of their parents. There are certain times to ask a child to run errands; there are times not to. Being neglectful can make you forget that.*

Similarly, abandonment was considered a shirking of responsibility, only a more extreme form of negligence that might be a total abdication of responsibility. This was considered to have serious consequences for the child's development.

> **Participant:** *You have a child, and you never provide education, food, nothing. You just leave it up to the woman you impregnated to take care of and raise the child. That is abandoning the child.*

> —

> **Participant:** *Let's take the case of an abandoned child; that's a big case. That child may grow up to become anything, a delinquent, a thief. When you abandon a child, that child must now direct itself in society and could be led to bad places.*

G. Who is responsible for childhood development and protection?

1. **The dominant *Just the Parents* cultural model versus the recessive *All Adults* cultural model.** Participants emphasized that parents alone are responsible for childhood development and protection. This is logically related to the Nuclear Family cultural model in which the nuclear family of children, mother, and father is considered the primary family unit.

    > **Participant:** *The good development of a child is the responsibility of his dad and his mom. If we were in a country where the State is reliable, the State could assist us too, but the State is not reliable. Thus, the mom and the dad are responsible for the development of the child.*

    This cultural model also includes thinking that only the parents can be trusted to protect children. When children live with anyone other than the parents, there is skepticism that those people will protect the child. In fact, they may be the primary ones who abuse the child.

    > **Participant:** *You may not have the means to take care of your child so you send him to live at someone's house. They may act in a mean way with this kid, mistreating him. Even at the house [where] he stays, he can be mistreated.*
    >
    > —
    >
    > **Participant:** *Sometimes, when people take in children that aren't theirs, they tend to abuse those children. They beat them and act differently toward them than toward their own children. They protect theirs but abuse the others.*

    Although it was more recessive, participants occasionally expressed that it was really all adults that should be responsible for a child's development and especially for their protection. Among "all adults," teachers were singled out as specifically responsible, but participants considered it to be true of anyone in the locality.

    > **Participant:** *There is a park for children to play, but when comes a certain time, you find girls and boys in the park up to their mischief, so through word of mouth we all know that when a certain time comes, we prevent the children from going over there. Everyone is on the same page, if they see a child going over there past a certain time, they let that child know that he/she shouldn't be going over there at that time. They are always opposed and so is everyone in the area.*
    >
    > —
    >
    > **Participant:** *Everyone protects the children. If, for example, I see a child about to cross a street, even if that child isn't mine, and I see a motorcycle about to hit him/her, I can start shouting to try to prevent it from happening. Same thing would happen if it were my boys. Someone would do the same. Each of us looks out for each other. Everyone.*

2. **The *Skepticism of the State* cultural model.** Participants explicitly and implicitly expressed that the State should be responsible for child development and protection, through education, security, monitoring and identification services, health, and criminal justice. However, participants expressed that the State was not fulfilling this role and that they had little hope that the State would step in to fulfill the role.

> **Participant:** *The State! The State should play a role, but it doesn't, understand? The State is in the streets 24/7, people are loitering in the streets, they are dirty, cleaning cars; the authorities do not notice them and don't place them somewhere to take care of them. I see them cleaning cars for money, but a child has no business being there. They don't go to school. They say they don't have parents. Their mother has passed away and they have to take to the streets and find something to do to bring home. It's as if they have to assume the role of the adult. In Haiti, the State isn't accountable for the children.*

> —

> **Participant:** *Even the police, when they pass by, might notice a child getting beaten up and not intervene…. The State has nothing to do with matters of protection.*

Conclusion

The findings reveal the patterns of thinking underlying the way that Haitians think about issues related to children, families, opportunities, violence, and prevention. The mapping of the cultural models provides critical formative research that can be used to more effectively plan for strategic communications and outreach to improve outcomes for children in Haiti. This mapping will be of strategic value following input from the co-interpretation[SM] workshop, specifically when thinking about BCC interventions and ways of messaging related to child protection.

When communicators understand the cultural models in people's minds, they can be strategic in the way they design messages and campaigns through framing. Starting with the desired outcomes, communicators can hypothesize how their messages are likely to trigger certain cultural models. They can then determine whether a given cultural model is in line with that message. If so, that model can be targeted. If the model is dominant, little reframing needs to happen. If the model is recessive, care must be taken to avoid the more problematic dominant cultural model while triggering the recessive model. There are some situations in which a communicator wants to convey a message about a specific idea that is entirely unknown to the audience. When that happens, we say that there is a "cognitive hole" and then suggest communications tools fill in the hole for message recipients.

When communicators frame their message content strategically and choose the right messengers, audiences form new ways of understanding how social issues work and how they can be improved, use new cognitive pathways for making decisions, increase their support for programs and policies, and become more engaged with campaigns or movements. The approach has been used successfully to strategize communications and to effect behavior change in a wide range of countries and across wide-ranging issues.

ABOUT AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

Established in 1946, with headquarters in Washington, D.C.,
American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent,
nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral
and social science research and delivers technical assistance
both domestically and internationally. As one of the largest
behavioral and social science research organizations in the
world, AIR is committed to empowering communities and
institutions with innovative solutions to the most critical
challenges in education, health, workforce, and international
development.

AIR®
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3835
202.403.5000
www.air.org

Making Research Relevant

LOCATIONS

Domestic

Washington, D.C.

Atlanta, GA

Austin, TX

Baltimore, MD

Cayce, SC

Chapel Hill, NC

Chicago, IL

Columbus, OH

Frederick, MD

Honolulu, HI

Indianapolis, IN

Metairie, LA

Naperville, IL

New York, NY

Rockville, MD

Sacramento, CA

San Mateo, CA

Waltham, MA

International

Ethiopia

Haiti

Honduras

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Zambia