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Ki moun mwen ye? : Who am I? : factors associated with cultural identity formation in first generation Haitian Americans

Joan V. Monplaisir
Smith College

Joan Valdey Monplaisir
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the factors associated with cultural identity formation among first generation Haitian Americans (FGHA) born in the United States between 1975 and 1990. The purpose of this study is to inform clinical social work practice with immigrants and their families in a range of areas including the experience of cultural identity development and the process and effects of acculturation in the U.S.

Audiotaped in-person and telephone semi-structured interviews elicited participant perceptions of, and connection to, a range of aspects of Haitian culture. Participants' experience of dominant U.S. cultural views of Haiti and the Haitian people, understanding of factors associated with their parents' immigration, and early familial, neighborhood and school experiences were also explored. Study findings add to the current literature on factors associated with ethnic identity formation for Haitian Americans in the areas of family structure, proximity to familial immigrants, Haitian community immersion, and the experience of oppression in a historical context of U.S. policy development regarding Haiti and Haitian immigration.

A snowball sampling method was employed to recruit a sample of 12 FGHA (male = 4; female = 8; mean age = 26). Participants gave voice to an experience that has rarely had an opportunity to be heard. Qualitative analysis of transcribed interviews revealed the emergence of two overarching themes characterizing participants' cultural identity formation as FGHA: "not

Haitian enough/not American enough" and "resilience, coping, and strengthening cultural identity." Implications of these findings for practice, policy, and research are discussed.

KI MOUN MWEN YE?

WHO AM I? FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION

IN FIRST GENERATION HAITIAN AMERICANS

A project based upon an independent investigation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Joan Valdey Monplaisir

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

For immigrants and their children, formation of a cultural identity in a dominant culture different from their own can pose quite a challenge. Aspects of the culture of origin, including language, food, music/dance, and dress, can be difficult to maintain for children born in the United States to immigrant parents.

The term "first generation" is frequently used in the literature to describe individuals who were born in another country and emigrated to the U.S., while "second generation" is used to describe a child born in the U.S. to immigrant parents (Rothe, Pumariega, & Sabagh, 2011; Portes & Hao, 2002; Zhou, 1997). For the purposes of this study "first generation Haitian American (FGHA)" refers to individuals whose parents were born in Haiti and emigrated to the U.S., and who are among the first generation in their family-of-origin to be born and raised in the United States.

The purpose of this study is to inform clinical social work practice with immigrants and their children experiencing cultural identity formation and acculturation in the U.S. The field of social work is in need of more culturally informed literature, particularly with regard to the ethnicities represented among immigrant populations of color. While current literature does explore ethnic identity formation for Haitian Americans, it does not explicitly examine what factors contribute to FGHA identifying as Haitian, Haitian-American, African-American, or Black and how/why their identity may evolve over time. The literature also does not collectively

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address factors such as birth order of FGHA, proximity of familial immigrants, Haitian community immersion, and internalized oppression in a Haitian/U.S. historical, social, political, and economic context. This study explored the impact of these as well as other factors in cultural identity development among first generation Haitian Americans, providing an opportunity for participants to voice perceptions of this experience that have previously been unheard.

In addition, this study specifically explored the factors that affect cultural identity formation in FGHA born 1975 through 1990, their experience with acculturation, and how the social, political, and economic experience of their immigrant parents in Haiti and in the U.S. impacts their cultural identity. This time period was chosen because many Haitians emigrated to the U.S. during the dictatorships of Francois Duvalier and successor son Jean-Claude Duvalier "papa doc" and "baby doc" (1957-1986) (Linstroth, Hall, Douge-Prosper, & Hiller, 2009). The political landscape in Haiti during this time period was corrupt and the economy left much to be desired. This knowledge provides a historical, political, and economic context of the conditions in Haiti that forced many Haitians to migrate. These intolerable conditions are further explored in the literature review. During this time period as well, the U.S. created immigration policies specifically to limit immigration from Haiti; Operation Able Manner and Operation Able Sentry (Shellman & Stewart, 2007). Some U.S. policies were created to negatively affect Haiti's economy by restricting trade of goods between Haiti and the U.S. while also showing favor for other countries surrounding Haiti. The CDC released a report that stigmatized and scapegoated Haitians as being "AIDS carriers" (Santana & Dancy, 2000). All these noted events provide historical, social, and political contexts for Haitian immigrants and their children being raised

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during this time period. It was the interest of this researcher to explore whether, and in what ways, this historical backdrop presents as a factor in FGHA cultural identity development.

This study builds on the extant literature and adds to the social work knowledge base in the area of practice and research with immigrant populations. This topic will interest and inform a variety of peoples from the Caribbean as well as immigrants in general who have children experiencing the acculturation process in America. Study findings are also relevant for immigrant parents who may have expectations for their child to identify with their ethnic identity of origin. For some FGHA who have struggled with their biculturalism, knowing that others have experienced similar situations can provide a joining opportunity and help clarify how confusing it can be to navigate this cultural hybridity during the various developmental stages.

Analysis of participant responses revealed overarching themes which connected participant experiences in similar ways, with implications for social work practice, policy, and future research of first generation Haitian American cultural identity development. It is hoped that findings from interviews with FGHA will provide clinical social workers and others in the helping professions new insight into personal experiences with the process of acculturation, including the ways in which racial and ethnic identity is negotiated by immigrant populations in the United States.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This is a study of first generation Haitian-American (FGHA) ethnic identity formation, with a focus on the impact of the social, political, and economic conditions experienced by Haitian immigrants both in Haiti and in the United States. This review will begin by providing an overview of Haitian American demographics. It will then present the context framing Haitian immigration to the U.S. including notable historical events that provide a backdrop to Haitian emigration from the 1950s through the 1980s as this population comprises families of origin of the population of interest. Concurrent with harsh socioeconomic and political realities facing Haitians on the island was the development of a set of U.S. policies which fostered and furthered a negative mid-set regarding Haitians and Haitian Americans.

As Haitian American identity development takes place within the larger context of the immigrant experience in the U.S., this chapter will review selected studies of factors in ethnic identity development among Haitian American and other immigrant populations of color. In this context, studies of the impact of class, gender, language acquisition, and family structure on cultural identity formation in FGHA are also reviewed.

While this study seeks to uncover the impact of this history on ethnic identity formation in this population, the study and analysis of findings will also be informed by the theoretical literature on biculturalism. Specifically, Segmented Assimilation Theory, growing out of

theories of biculturalism, will be discussed in greater depth as a lens through which study findings will be viewed.

Current Population

The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) compiled a report detailing the distribution of people with Haitian ancestry across the U.S. The Bureau defines Haitian ancestry as "the ethnic origin, descent, roots, heritage, or place of birth of the person or of the person's ancestors" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). As of 2011 there were an estimated 907,790 people of Haitian ancestry living in the U.S., and this number continues to grow. Of this number, 46.7% are male and 53.3% are female, both with a median age of 29.7 which is relatively young compared to the total U.S population median age of 36.9 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Of the Haitian population in the U.S., 38% (341,927) are enrolled in school and 35.7% are in college or graduate school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Within the Haitian population in the U.S., about 41% (370,907) are native born in the U.S. and about 59% (536,883) were foreign born. Forty percent of the foreign born Haitian population (214,753) entered the U.S. before 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Historical Dimensions of Haitian Immigration to the United States

An examination of Haitian immigration trends from the past 50 years, including discussion of the conditions leading to Haitian immigration to the U.S. over this period, is pertinent to a study of ethnic identity patterns among first generation Haitian-Americans.

Haiti's recent history, in particular the time period from 1958 to the present, has been plagued with dictatorships, genocides, and political coups (Brutus, 2009). However, Haiti was not always the coup-riddled and impoverished nation it is portrayed as being. In 1804, following a successful revolt against their French slave masters/colonizers, Haiti became the first free Black republic in the Western Hemisphere (Zephir, 2004). Despite the trouble, turmoil, and

discrimination faced by Haitians in Haiti and Haitian Americans in the U.S., this historical fact

of the first successful black-led struggle for independence is a source of pride for many Haitians

and Haitian Americans (Linstroth et al., 2009).

Much of the literature on Haitian immigrants provides a historical context for the

conditions in Haiti that forced many Haitian citizens to migrate to the United States during the

Duvalier regimes (1958-1986) which left the country in political and economic crisis. Several

authors (Brutus, 2009; Linstroth et al., 2009; Rothe et al., 2011; Shellman and Stewart, 2007)

detail the social, political, and economic oppression Haitians faced during the almost thirty-year

Duvalier regimes. Francois Duvalier, whose regime lasted from 1957 until his death in 1971,

was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude Duvalier. From 1958-1986, father and then son ran a

corrupt Haitian government in which government money was siphoned off for their personal

gain and in which Haiti's citizens were terrorized by the Duvalier's personal secret police, the

"Tonton Macoutes" (Linstroth et al., 2009).

Authors Fouron (1989) and Shellman and Stewart (2007) discuss trends in Haitian

immigration to the U.S. Whereas Fouron (1989) discusses Haitian immigration in a U.S.

context, detailing what Haitians faced in the U.S. over a period of about 30 years (1958-1986),

Shellman and Stewart (2007) discuss the factors occurring in Haiti that influenced migratory

patterns to the U.S. The latter describe the conditions in Haiti, explaining that most Haitians

emigrated to the U.S. for political and economic freedom and to seek refuge for security reasons

(Shellman & Stewart, 2007, p. 6).

Ways and means of emigrating to the U.S., reasons for leaving Haiti, and U.S. policies

affecting Haitian immigrants are all distinguishing aspects of the Haitian American experience

and, as such, form an important component of Haitian immigrants' connection to their cultural

heritage during the acculturation process in the U.S. (Rothe et al., 2011; Zephir, 2004). Depending on the atrocities they experienced and the quality of life in Haiti at the time of their emigration, Haitian immigrants' cultural connectedness could vary greatly (Fouron, 1989). Interestingly, the first large group of Haitian immigrants who left Haiti at the beginning of Papa Doc's regime (1958) was mainly well-to-do, upper class, and highly educated. This was the period of Haiti's "brain drain" (Linstroth et al., 2009). Since Papa Doc sought to rid Haiti of his opponents - which included many of the intellectuals and more opinionated upper class citizens (Zephir, 2004) - this group of powerful and influential people fled to the U.S. and Canada for political, economic, and social freedom at the start of, or early in, the regime (Shellman & Stewart, 2007).

Class distinction among Haitian immigrants is further reflected in the differences in their mode of arrival and patterns of settlement in the U.S. The more well-to-do and educated Haitians, usually of lighter skin tone (Mulattoes), arrived in planes and settled in large cities like Boston, Miami, and Chicago during the early 1960s (Zephir, 2004). The second and third groups of Haitian immigrants who arrived between the late 1960s through the 1980s, during the Duvalier dictatorships, were not so well off, of a lower class, and usually darker skin-toned, which meant they arrived in less accommodating conditions. This group of immigrants was labeled the "boat people" and were almost always intercepted during their journey, turned back, or held in detention facilities once they arrived on U.S. shores.

In the U.S., emigrating Haitians experienced policies that not only restricted immigration during the initial AIDS outbreak in the U.S. and stigmatized Haitians in the U.S. health sector in the 1980s (Linstroth et al., 2009; Santana & Dancy, 2000), but also restricted the trade of goods to Haiti in 1991 (Shellman & Stewart, 2007) and greatly affected language communication

within families (Linstroth et al., 2009; Michel, 2004; Shellman & Stewart 2007). Linstroth et al. (2009) and Shellman and Stewart (2007) discuss the restrictive U.S. immigration policies developed to reduce the number of Haitians emigrating to the U.S.: "Haitians were amongst the most heavily discriminated groups. U.S. authorities, for example, intercepted boats before they left Haitian waters, incarcerated undocumented Haitians disproportionately and disapproved political asylum requests from Haitians more than from any other national group" (Linstroth et al., 2009, p. 7).

In 1991 the U.S. placed a second embargo on Haiti which affected the poorest sectors of the population and influenced a new wave of emigrants fleeing on boats and rafts (Linstroth et al., 2009). Historically, the first U.S.-led embargo of Haiti had occurred in February of 1806 following Haiti's successful gain of independence. The U.S., along with other slaveholding superpowers, was threatened by the "specter of a free Negro republic that owed its independence to a successful slave revolt" (Zephir, 2004, p. 44). In order for Haiti's independence to be recognized, permitting the beginning of trade with other nations, Haiti was required to pay indemnities to France, Britain, Germany, and the U.S. for these countries' nationals who lost their lives or properties during the revolution or after independence (Zephir, 2004). This depleted Haiti's liquid reserves and Haiti's President Boyer had to borrow money from other countries to pay this debt (Zephir, 2004). This set Haiti up for an endless cycle of loan repayments and debts that continues to this day and explains why this second embargo on Haiti was so detrimental to the poorest in the nation (p. 45).

In May 1992, following an increase in Haitian migration to the U.S. after a 1991 coup in Haiti, President George H. Bush changed national policy by issuing an Executive Order "directing the Coast Guard to enforce the suspension of the entry of undocumented migrants by

interdicting them at sea, and return them to their country of origin or departure." (Shellman & Stewart, 2007, p. 15). Days before leaving office, he initiated Operation Able Manner to reinforce the Coast Guard's duties of denying Haitian "migrants" access to the U.S. Upon his inauguration, President Clinton continued these policies and the enforcement of "Operation Able Manner" until late 1994 when he ended it (p. 15).

In February 2004, after a political coup in Haiti, President George W. Bush enacted "Operation Able Sentry" which was similar to Operation Able Manner (Shellman & Stewart, 2007, p. 19). George W. Bush proclaimed that the U.S. would reject any Haitian refugee that tried to reach U.S. shores (p. 3). The institution of such restrictions was unconstitutional according to the 1951 Geneva Convention's definition of political refugee; nevertheless, Bush's proclamation went unchallenged and many refugees who had legitimate asylum claims were turned back to Haiti (p. 3).

Another set of policies, affecting Haitian as well as other immigrants, has to do with the sanction of languages other than English in public usage. Portes and Hao (2002) studied monolingual and bilingual language adjustment in immigrant families in the U.S. and how it affects the family dynamic and structure. They remark that, "In no other country [other than the U.S.] studied by these authors had the transition towards monolingualism and the loss of other languages been so swift" (p. 891). These authors reference several efforts by elected officials who attempted to pass restrictive language legislation promoting English-only initiatives. One of these, S.I. Hayakawa, a U.S. Senator of Japanese origin, and leader of the organization, "U.S. English", has actively lobbied for state constitutional amendments declaring English to be the sole language of the land and directing state officials to eliminate the use of other languages in public documents and events (Unz, 1999, as cited in Portes & Hao, 2002, p. 890). The potential

impact of these policies on the immigrant family will be discussed in greater detail below; here, it is important to note that these policies were developed to target non-English speaking immigrant populations like Haitians. These policies and the set of beliefs on which they rest, also served to legitimize discriminatory practices in public institutions where Haitian Creole was not accommodated.

Also affecting Haitian emigrants and the experience of the Haitian immigrant to the U.S. was the stance taken by federal health agencies during the period 1981 to 1985 in connection with the growing AIDS epidemic in the U.S. and worldwide. The involvement of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the scapegoating of Haitians, among other marginalized groups, fostering the belief that they were to blame for bringing the HIV virus to the U.S. and causing the spread of AIDS, is well documented (Linstroth et al., 2009; Santana & Dancy, 2000). Santana and Dancy (2000) detail the effects of this situation on Haitian American women (p. 166) in their qualitative cross-sectional study using a focus group sample of 11 self- identified Haitian American women. The authors describe that during this time, Haitians were treated poorly in U. S. healthcare facilities and programs; discrimination, public ridicule, and violence against Haitians were reinforced by the actions of many institutions (Santana & Dancy, 2000). No matter what their ailment, Haitians were isolated from other patients, ignored, and/or denied services. In U. S. schools, Haitian children were also isolated and had their belongings kept separately from the other students. Haitian students were beaten, shot, and, on one occasion, burned alive (Santana & Dancy, 2000). Haitian-owned businesses in the U.S. began to fail, and, although Haitians were finally removed from the "carrier" list in the late 1980s, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continued a policy of not allowing Haitians to donate blood (Linstroth et al., 2009). The authors describe that even black families with no Haitian heritage,

but who had French last names, were evicted from their homes. Through this ordeal of violence and discrimination, the Haitian women in Santana and Darcy's (2000) study who tested positive for HIV reported that they did not disclose their HIV status due to their fear of being stigmatized because of their Haitian heritage. However, there were no accounts in Santana and Darcy's study of the Haitian participants denying their ethnicity. The Haitian American women in this study shared that the stigmatization caused them to feel rejected by the dominant society. Because of this, they experienced a great sense of self doubt, damage to self esteem and internalization of these negative messages, rejection by other Haitians if they were HIV+, and a negative effect on intimate relationships (Santana & Darcy, 2000).

In 1983, several Haitian advocacy groups and Haitian medical experts from the Haitian Medical Association brought forth a case of discrimination in an effort to remove Haitians from a stigmatizing list that also included homosexuals and IV drug users (Altman, 1983). However:

> The American officials, while conceding that more information about the disease was needed and that it had been extremely difficult for Haitians to accept the designation as an AIDS risk group, said the classification remained not only valid but also critically important (p. 1).

In 1985, Christine Russell reported in *The Washington Post* that the CDC finally removed Haitians from the at-risk of AIDS list, offering no explanation (Russell, 1985). Dr. Walter Dowdle, head of the CDC's Center for Infectious Diseases, acknowledged that placing Haitians on this list was not only discriminatory and stigmatizing in terms of individual behavior (as in IV drug use or same sex practices), but was also stigmatizing to Haitians as a people and to Haiti as a nation (Russell, 1985). As noted above, following the removal of Haitians from the list, the

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FDA continued to refuse to accept blood donations from individuals of Haitian descent (Linstroth et al., 2009).

As is evident from the foregoing discussion, U.S. policies and related discriminatory practices have had a profound impact on the Haitian immigrant experience. The effect of this experience on cultural identity formation among first generation Haitian Americans is the subject of interest of this study. The long history of negative relationship between the U.S. and Haiti may be reflected in the encounter between Haitian Americans and helping professionals, as noted by Rothe et al. (2011).

> It is not uncommon for psychiatrists to come into contact with Haitian immigrants who may initially perceive American institutions as potentially cruel and persecutory, and relate to them with fear and distrust. This fear and distrust also permeates the therapeutic relationship and oftentimes requires that the psychiatrist use tact, empathy, patience and perseverance, in order to overcome these resistances. These distorted perceptions can undermine the parents' capacity to advocate for their children in the new, host culture (p.76).

Incorporating an understanding of this long, complicated history is important for effective social work practice with Haitian immigrant parents and their families.

The Haitian-American Immigrant Experience: Gender, Religion/Spirituality, and Language

For Haitian immigrants and their first generation children, gender roles, religion, and language acquisition/maintenance are salient issues in the formation and maintenance of an ethnic identity within the larger American cultural context. For an FGHA, gender role expectations within the Haitian culture may come into conflict with one's perception of gender

role expectations in the American culture. Native ethnic language acquisition and maintenance can affect the familial, educational, and social spheres in the lives of FGHA. Living within a household where the primary language is not English can affect how FGHA learn English. The complexities surrounding bilingualism can greatly affect cultural identity formation. For Haitians and FGHAs, practicing religious customs is a way to stay connected to the native culture. The following is a review of the literature exploring the contribution of these factors to the complex process of ethnic identity formation.

Gender and language acquisition. Gender appears in the literature as a factor that affects many aspects of cultural identification. Haitian American women have been studied by several authors (Michel, 2004; Prosper, 2006; Santana & Dancy, 2000). According to Michel (2004), in Haitian culture, males and females have distinct expectations within familial and societal structure. Males are encouraged to seek higher education and branch out beyond the family setting, whereas females are expected to perform more domestic duties and tend to care taking. Portes and Hao (2002) point out that because of these proscribed cultural gender roles, language acquisition for first generation individuals may vary for males and females. Using data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), these authors undertook a study of language acquisition patterns among second generation (read: first generation) high school students, hypothesizing greater bilingual proficiency among males due to a gendered emphasis on academic achievement. However, study findings showed females with higher levels of achievement in bilingual assessments and higher levels of education (p. 893).

The acquisition of the language of the dominant culture can have large implications for cultural identity formation among FGHA. Language and customs are aspects of a culture that are transferred intergenerationally. However there can be some interruption in that transference

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when parents emigrate and raise children in a different culture with different societal norms and expectations. Because the official languages of Haiti are French and Creole, English acquisition is a task not only for Haitian immigrant parents but for their first generation Haitian American children as well. Portes and Hao (2002) provide an extensive exploration of linguistic adaptation among what is defined in this study as first generation Americans (although they refer to their study participants as "second generation"). The authors describe three different types of language outcomes: fluent bilingualism (fluency in both English and the mother tongue); limited bilingualism (incompetence in both languages, often resulting from forced and rushed English instruction with significant loss of mother language); and monolingualism (proficiency in only the mother tongue, carrying the risk of societal rejection, or proficiency in English, carrying the risk of isolation from family). Portes and Hao (2002) posit that, "Loss of the parental language entails growing estrangement from the cultural ways of the first generation and often a condescending or disrespectful attitude towards them. Accordingly, lesser family solidarity and greater conflict with parents may be expected" (p 892). Rothe et al. (2011) echo this statement and go on to state:

> Language barriers can cause a barrier in discipline and a feeling of closeness in the family as well as identifying with the culture. Interests and shared experiences decrease and the parents and the children may feel a sense of distancing that makes them feel that they are "living in different worlds." (p. 76)

Based on this literature, level of bilingual proficiency among FGHA may also be a contributing factor in family solidarity, cultural identity formation, and changes in each of these over time.

Religion and spirituality. The practice of religious customs can provide a strong bond to a cultural identity. According to Linstroth et al. (2009), although Haiti is a Christian nation,

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many Haitians have roots in - and maintain a practice of - the religion *Voudou* (commonly spelled Voodoo). In in-depth qualitative interviews with seven first and second generation Haitian Americans from South Florida, one of the participants in Linstroth et al.'s (2009) actively practices Voudou as a way of feeling connected to her homeland of Haiti.

In terms of biculturalism, issues such as language acquisition, gender roles, and spirituality/religion must be explored and navigated among the larger American cultural context and one's own family's ethnic culture. The exploration of these and many other factors contribute to the various degrees and stages of bicultural identity. There are several theories of biculturalism which address the formation of the varying states of ethnic identity. The following discussion of ethnic identity formation for first generation immigrants is followed by an overview of theories of biculturalism.

Ethnic Identity and Acculturation among First Generation Immigrants

As the literature on ethnic identity and acculturation among first and second generation immigrants is vast, this review will focus, wherever possible, on the literature specific to Haitian Americans and the ways in which they navigate their bicultural identity. A salient aspect of ethnic identity formation among this group, as well as among other immigrant populations of color, is the navigation of racial differentiation as it affects cultural identification. The following discussion of racial differentiation among Blacks in America, including African Americans, Africans, Caribbean Blacks, Afro Latinos, examines how racial discrimination in America can affect ethnic identity formation in FGHA. Immigrant parents' socioeconomic class in their native country, compared to their class and social status in the U.S., is also discussed as a possible factor in FGHA cultural identity. Several of the authors included in this review discuss

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the saliency of class, age, and exposure to Haitian culture in the U.S., and the processes of assimilation and acculturation.

Authors Linstroth et al. (2009), Rothe et al. (2011), and Waters (1994) discuss cultural identity formation issues among FGHA. Waters' (1994) qualitative study of identity development among 83 adolescent second generation [read: first generation] West Indians and Haitians in Black America in New York City, offers an important perspective for clinical social workers who may not be familiar with the various cultures of the countries in the Caribbean. Waters differentiates among the many ethnicities within the Black racial umbrella and explores identity formation in first and second generation Haitian Americans, among other cultures, especially in relation to their parents' cultural identity (1994). According to Waters, racial discrimination and limited opportunity play a role in the identity formation of first and second generation Haitian Americans. She suggests that for second generation youngsters, class also plays a role in the tendency to differentiate themselves from their parents' ethnic culture/identity: that is, they want it known that they are not from the same place as the other poor blacks from their culture-of-origin, identifying instead with African Americans (p. 803). They also experience peer pressure to value American cultural norms because they have had negative experiences with the immigrant culture of struggling and hard work. There are those, however, who are in the lower class and turn to their ethnic identities as a source of pride and a way of feeling part of a group. In Levitt's (2009) qualitative study on second generation (read: first generation) immigrants, immigrant parents' feelings about and identification with their culture and the immigrant experience can directly affect their children's identification with their cultural heritage.

The research carried out by Linstroth et al. (2009) looked at identity issues with self-identified Haitian immigrants and children of Haitian immigrants in South Florida. These authors found several factors that can influence cultural identity, such as social class, age, place of birth, and direct exposure to Haitian culture. Their findings differ from those of Waters (1994) in that higher socioeconomic class was associated with pride in Haitian heritage; those from the higher socioeconomic class found no reason to hide who they are. In terms of age, the younger interviewees in both the first and second generation group succumbed to peer pressure and were more likely to try and pass for American (Linstroth et al., 2009).

Rothe, Pumariega, & Sabagh (2011) write about the acculturation process for many ethnic groups, including Haitian Americans. These authors explain that, for second generation adolescents (read: first generation), the processes of assimilation and acculturation "often present a formidable developmental challenge that can place the adolescent at risk for negative mental health outcomes, or can lead to resiliency, psychological growth and enrichment of the personality structure" (p 72). As these authors suggest, because Haitians have extended collectivistic family styles, it would be important to include the impact of extended family members on FGHA cultural development in this study. The inclusion of extended family members in family therapy sessions would also be a relevant implication for social work practice with immigrant populations.

Although Rothe et al. (2011) discuss cultural identity issues in second generation Americans across several immigrant groups including Haitians, they also delve into the process of acculturation which contributes to an understanding of cultural identity formation, as expressed in second generation Americans. Their discussion of acculturation and acculturative

dissonance echoes the research of Levitt (2009) and Zhou (1997), discussed in greater detail below.

Levitt's (2009) research about children of immigrants and the impact of being raised in a transnational environment is important in informing work with immigrant communities. The author explains that, "When children are brought up in households that are regularly influenced by people, objects, practices and know-how from their ancestral homes, they are socialised into its norms and values and they learn how to negotiate its institutions" (Levitt, 2009, p.1225). Although Levitt does not discuss Haitians in particular, she speaks to the factors that influence the ways in which second generation immigrants relate to their parents' culture. She finds that, "rather than being caught between the pressure both to Americanise and to preserve homeland traditions, the children of immigrants create a complex set of practices of their own" (Levitt, 2009, p.1239). According to Levitt, exactly when this creation occurs varies by cultural/ethnic group. Levitt found that there was more transnational activity among Dominican, West Indian and South American participants. More women than men, participants with co-ethnic spouses, people who preferred speaking a language other than English and frequent listeners to ethnic media were more likely to engage in transnational practices (Levitt, 2009). Levitt also notes the saliency of class and suggests that those who are of higher class with more social/ethnic capital (for example, fluency in more than one language) are more likely to identify with their parents' culture.

Theories of Biculturalism

Theories of biculturalism, describing the process of navigating ethnic identity between one's family's native culture and the larger dominant culture, are discussed extensively in the literature. A central tenet of theories of biculturalism is the continuum of cultural identity; that

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is, rather than occupying a fixed position, cultural/ethnic identity is conceptualized as being located along a spectrum and dependent on a host of factors.

To begin the discussion of the theory of biculturalism, one must begin with the theories of ethnic identity formation; that is, how one develops an identity of self in reference to a group. Most of the authors discussed in this section put forward a staged model of ethnic identity development within the larger theoretical context of biculturalism. Many of the stages and models include levels of exploration of one's own cultural identity as it is compared to the dominant American culture. A stage may correspond with a period in which an individual has yet to explore his/her own identity, or it may reflect a reality in which, after both cultures have been explored, a choice has been made to identify with one culture more than another, or with both equally.

Marcia's (1980) "Identity Status Model" includes four ethnic identity statuses: diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved identity (as cited in Aikhoje, 2011 and Phinney & Ong, 2007) According to this model, an individual with a diffused identity status does not have clear feelings about their ethnic group and does not engage in exploration of this confusion (Marcia, 1980, as cited in Aikhoje, 2011, p. 17); an individual with foreclosed identity status has made a commitment to their group identity without having explored or obtained an in-depth understanding of their identity; those with moratorium identity status are uncommitted but in the process of searching (p. 17); and those with achieved identity status are said to have explored key ethnic identity issues and to have made a commitment to identify with their ethnic culture (Marcia, 1980, as cited in Phinney & Ong, 2007 p. 274). Individuals are expected to move in this linear trajectory of identity development with the goal of achieved identity being reached for

most people by adulthood. However, there can be continued exploration of identity issues through adulthood (p. 275).

In their review of the literature on the theories of biculturalism, LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) discuss the five models of second culture acquisition, of which the first three - assimilation, acculturation, and alternation - are most relevant to the population of interest. The remaining two models are less relevant to this discussion and consist in multiculturalism - ethnic identity formation with more than two cultures - and fusion - the "melting pot" effect, wherein all cultures in an area fuse, are indistinguishable in their distinctness, and form a new culture; the authors posit that the outcomes of fusion are unknown because no fusion culture has yet to be identified and/or studied (1993, p.401). According to the authors, an individual with assimilated cultural identity adjusts to their bicultural identity by fully and intentionally adopting the majority culture and rejecting their other culture which they may consider lower class. Someone who is acculturated in their ethnic identity involuntarily adopts the majority culture, usually due to external pressures such as economic survival. In the alternation model - also known as biculturalism - a person can understand, identify with, and function within two different cultures. If the two cultures are not in conflict - or, if they are, and the individual is able to resolve that conflict - and if there is an equal exposure to both cultures in the individual's environment, this model can be achieved (1993, p. 396).

Ford (2006) posits, "A person is bicultural when he or she is able to identify with two cultures and successfully function within those two cultures" (p. 3). In her qualitative study of twelve participants who self-identified as bicultural and varied by age, ethnicity, and geographic and educational background, findings yielded several themes regarding the elements that contribute to successful functioning in individuals with two ethnic identities: Parents and/or older

siblings of participants served as a model of someone who functioned successfully in a dominant culture but also maintained a strong connection to his or her family's culture of origin (p. 44); study participants endorsed regular family rituals, such as eating traditional foods and/or celebrating cultural holidays as a significant source of cultural learning (p. 46); finally, and in keeping with Linstroth et al.'s (2009) findings, the most common way participants identified with their family's culture was through religion (Ford, 2006, p.52).

Berry, Kim, Minde and Mok (1987) present a cultural identity matrix that includes the factor of internalized oppression and its role in ethnic identity development. These authors posit that biculturalism can be conceptualized using a four-quadrant matrix, with the dominant culture and one's family culture forming the axes. Similar to the models of second culture acquisition, as set forth by LaFromboise et al. (1993), Berry et al. (1987), posit that if one has a high identification with both the dominant culture and their family's ethnic culture, they are considered integrated/bi-cultural (p. 496). A person who has a high identification with the dominant culture and low identification with their ethnic culture is considered assimilated. An individual who has a high identification with their ethnic culture and a low identification with the dominant culture is considered separated. Finally, an individual who has a low identification with both the dominant culture and with their family's ethnic culture, is considered marginalized; they experience external marginalization from the dominant culture and they also experience internal marginalization/oppression from their own negative assumptions about their cultural identity (p. 496). The connection between low ethnic identification and internalized oppression is further explicated by Aikhoje (2011) who states, "A rebelling ethnic identity may be characteristic of those individuals who have internalized negative images of their ethnic group, and consequently, is entirely unidentified with their ethnic group" (p. 22).

Segmented Assimilation Theory (SAT), developed by Zhou (1997) and further explicated by Rothe et al. (2011), is a compelling theoretical framework for examining acculturation among second generation Americans, applicable to first generation Americans as well. In SAT, the process of acculturation and the effects associated with acculturation on the individual and family system are highlighted. In their further explication of SAT, Rothe et al. (2011) present key concepts such as resiliency and the psychodynamic process of migration and acculturation.

Zhou (1997) states that because many immigrant groups now reside in inner cities, those in the process of assimilation may take several divergent paths. These paths include conventional upwardly mobile assimilation, downward assimilation, and selective acculturation (Zhou, 1997). Immigrants and their children may follow the traditional model and assimilate into the white middle class, termed "upward assimilation" (p. 995). Alternatively, they might follow a less prosperous path and assimilate into the underclass. Finally, they might choose to assimilate into a tight-knit immigrant community that they have selected (p. 995).

Summary

The foregoing discussion of theories of biculturalism and ethnic identity formation among first generation immigrants has informed this research. The discussion of findings will be further guided by Marcia's (1980) Identity Status Model (as cited in Phinney & Ong, 2007) and the first three models of second culture acquisition as outlined by LaFromboise et al. (1993).

Studies included in this review used primarily qualitative methodology, purposive sampling, and semi-structured, in-person interviews and/or observation. Study questions were further informed by cultural identity theories, including theories on biculturalism and ethnic identity formation. Among the studies reviewed, only Portes and Hao's (2002) study on language used quantitative methods, including random sampling. The qualitative and purposive

sampling methods used in most of the studies presented have informed the methods of this

writer's research. It is hoped that the current study will add to the extant literature in the area of

participant knowledge and perception of Haiti's history and portrayal of Haiti and Haitians in the

mainstream media as components of ethnic identity formation.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study aimed to explore factors contributing to first generation Haitian Americans' cultural identity formation. Factors such as birth order of FGHA, proximity of familial immigrants, Haitian community immersion, and internalized oppression and resiliency in a Haitian/U.S. historical, social, political, and economic context were explored in this study. As discussed in the literature review, many of these factors have not been collectively explored in studies to date. This chapter presents the methods used in this study including study design, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Study Design and Sampling

This exploratory study utilized a qualitative design, using in-person and telephone-conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data. Participant recruitment methods consisted of a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. The use of qualitative methods offered the possibility for in-depth exploration of the meaning that FGHA make of their evolving Haitian identity.

Because this is an exploratory study on a specific ethnic group, this researcher did not recruit for diversity in terms of ethnic identity. However, because there is an interest in a range of factors affecting the acculturation process, this researcher reached out to a range of local cultural organizations and, additionally, used a snowball technique to recruit a sample diverse in

life experience and sociodemographic characteristics, including, but not limited to age, gender, education, and occupation.

Inclusion criteria included self-identification as first generation Haitian American, defined as being born and raised in the U.S. and the children of Haitian immigrants who were born in Haiti and emigrated to the U.S. Also, because this study is concerned with the influence of historical events occurring during their parents' emigration to the U.S., as well as U.S. policies developed during their lifetime, participants must have been age 22 through 38 (birth years 1975 through 1990) at the time of the interview. Participants must have spent most of their lives (defined as more than half of their lives) in the U.S. Access to a phone or computer for internet usage to enable communication via email, and ability to read and communicate in English were also necessary for participation.

Desired sample size for this research was achieved at 12 participants. One in-person interview was held with a participant in Baltimore, Maryland. The remaining 11 interviews were held by telephone with participants from New York and Connecticut. As Baltimore was a new setting for this researcher, a snowball sampling technique was used beginning with three casual acquaintances of the researcher who have strong contacts with the Haitian community in Baltimore; the researcher requested that they provide the researcher with introductions to potential participants. One of these acquaintances had connections to a local church with a largely Haitian Americans congregation; another worked with social service providers in Baltimore City; and the third recommended the study to several close friends who met criteria for participation. In addition, the researcher sought out local religious and lay organizations that catered to the Haitian, or more broadly Caribbean, population. The researcher reached out to several local Haitian organizations and churches in Maryland and Washington DC by telephone

and email (Appendix B) explaining the importance of participation and purpose of the study. Through this correspondence, the researcher asked that the administrators of the organization let others who might meet the study criteria know about the study and assist with the search for participants. Finally, the researcher advertised on various social networking sites (Appendix C) and posted fliers (Appendix E) in local businesses such as cafes, campus student centers, and African restaurants.

These efforts yielded only one local participant, recruited through the initial snowball effort. The researcher then obtained approval to expand recruitment efforts to other areas of the northeastern U.S. where the researcher had established contacts in the Haitian community. The researcher then re-posted recruitment materials (Appendix D) on social media sites and provided fliers for posting with religious and lay organizations with Haitian and Haitian American membership. The researcher also called upon personal and professional contacts within the Haitian community in the greater metropolitan New York City and requested their help with recruitment efforts through use of a snowball method. This expansion of recruitment efforts – specifically, the use of a snowball method – proved crucial to obtaining the remaining eleven participants necessary for an ideal sample size; the extensive recruitment efforts through organizations and other neighborhood-based posting sites yielded no participants.

Data Collection

Potential participants who learned of the study through snowball method contacted the researcher by email to express their interest in participating in the study. They then received an email from the researcher (Appendix F) thanking them for their interest, asking them to confirm their eligibility, and also asking them for their mailing address so they could be sent the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A). Only one interview was conducted in person and the

Informed Consent Form was provided to the participant in person, prior to the interview, so that they could read it and ask any questions if necessary before signing it. For the remaining interviews, conducted over the phone, participants were mailed the form along with a return-addressed stamped envelope. Upon receipt of the returned signed Informed Consent Form, the researcher scheduled interview times with participants. The interviewer provided all participants with a signed copy of the Informed Consent Form signed by both the researcher and participant.

The in-person interview was conducted in a semi-private, quiet area of a local campus student center, suggested by the participant. For the eleven remaining phone interviews, care was taken to ensure confidentiality; the researcher carried out the interview in the privacy of her home with no one else present. For telephone interviews, the researcher's phone was set to speaker phone function and the interview was recorded on a digital recorder. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour in length.

The interview instrument (Appendix G) was designed to collect both demographic and qualitative data. Demographic data included the participants' ethnicity, age, sex, geographic location, employment/occupation, parents' occupational status, family-of-origin structure, and description, by racial/ethnic diversity and class status, of childhood and current neighborhood. For qualitative data, the researcher used open-ended questions with probes. Questions included their experience of being a first generation Haitian American, their relationship to Haitian traditions, religion, language, and values, the ways in which their Haitian identity may have changed over time and their perceptions of the reasons for this change, how they dealt with challenges associated with their Haitian identity, and what role their Haitian-born relatives and their experiences played in this development. Interview questions were concise and specific,

however clarification was provided for participants as requested. The entire interview was recorded on a digital recorder and each interview was transcribed by the researcher.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 12 participants, 8 identified as female and 4 identified as male. The mean age of participants was 26.2 and the median age was 27 (range = 22-28). One participant resided locally in Maryland while the other 11 participants resided in different areas of the northeastern region of the U.S.

Data Analysis

Transcriptions of the interviews were used to fully analyze the data. The interviews were transcribed by the interviewer and the data was analyzed using open coding, with similarities and differences noted by the researcher as the data was being coded. Open coding was selected as a method of analysis in order to obtain well-rounded information from the research. Trends and themes in the data were organized into categories using a spreadsheet. The data was further organized into overarching themes and sub-themes, presented as salient findings. Demographic data was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics.

The following chapter will present the findings of the qualitative analysis. Overarching themes that emerged from data analysis will be explicated and further illustrated through selected transcript material.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The primary purpose of this study is to answer the question: In what ways do the social, political, and economic conditions experienced by both Haitian immigrants and first generation Haitian Americans (FGHA) impact the cultural identity development of FGHA. This chapter will present findings of an exploratory study of the experiences and perspectives of a sample (N=12) of FGHA, beginning with a summary of the demographics study participants. The chapter will then present findings related to the study question in the following areas: participant proximity to other Haitians growing up and currently; participant family structure; participant knowledge of Haitian history and U.S. political history regarding Haitian immigration; participant experiences in Haiti; messages received about Haitians through media, school and home; and what being Haitian means to participants. Analysis of participant responses regarding the development and expression of Haitian American identity and their experience of being first generation Haitian American in the home, in their social circles, and traveling to Haiti revealed two overarching themes: "not Haitian enough/not American enough" and "resilience, coping, and strengthening cultural and self identity." Discussion of the first overarching theme will include explication of sub-themes such as "interactions with Haitian-born relatives"; "skin color"; birth order/family composition"; "language proficiency"; "external messages"; "generational struggles"; "journey to Haiti", and "knowledge of U.S. policies." Discussion of the second overarching theme will include explication of sub-themes and factors noted by

participants as closely associated with Haitian American cultural identity, including: "shifting sands"; "ki moun mwen ye"; and "empowerment through history." Illustrative quotes will be used throughout.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Demographic data sought in this study included participant age, gender, occupation, and neighborhood class and racial/ethnic makeup currently and growing up. Table 1 illustrates participant gender, age, occupation and neighborhood description.

Of the 12 participants, 8 identified as women and 4 as men. The mean age for the sample was 26.2 (median age = 27) with slight differences in age range between female (22-28) and male (25-28) participants. All but one participant was employed at the time of interview. Although the study did not specifically collect information regarding participant education level, three of the 12 participants disclosed that were students at the time of the interview. Reported occupations of female participants spanned a variety of fields including health IT, fundraiser, teacher, retail manager, server/actress, nurse, counselor, and assistant director of a rehab facility. Of the four male participants, two reported occupations as sales representatives, one as entrepreneur, and one as personal trainer. Information about participants' occupations was sought to explore the relationship between this variable and the effect it may have on participants' cultural identity development. No pattern of association was found between this and other variables.

Information regarding parents' occupations was also sought for descriptive purposes as well as to examine the possible relationship between this variable and participant cultural identity development. A majority of participants' parents were currently employed, while three participants reported that one or both parents were retired. The participants who came from

single parent homes were raised by their mothers who were employed. For a majority of participants raised in two-parent households, both their mother and father were employed. Only one participant from a two-parent household was raised in a situation where the mother was not employed outside the home. The majority of participants' parents' occupations (n=10) were in the nursing/health field, the hospitality service industry, tailoring, security, and custodial work. Others worked for the public school bus system, in construction, and in the fundraising/grants field. The analysis showed no relationship between this and other variables of interest.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics: Gender, Age, Occupation, and Neighborhood Socioeconomic Class

Gender (n=12)	Male (n=4)		Female (n=8)	
Age				
Mean	26		26.2	
Median	25.5		27	
Range	25-28		22-28	
Occupation	Sales, Ind. Entrepreneur, Personal Trainer		IT, Rehab Mgt., Sales Mgt., Fundraising, Acting, Nursing, Counseling	
Reported Neighborhood Socioeconomic Class	**Growing Up**	**Currently**	**Growing Up**	**Currently**
"Low Income"	0	1	3	1
"Working"	0	1	2	2
"Middle"	2	1	3	3
"Upper Middle"	2	1	0	2

As seen in Table 1, all male participants reported the socioeconomic class of their neighborhood, while growing up, as either "middle" or "upper middle"; their descriptions of the neighborhoods in which they currently reside each fell into one of the four socioeconomic class categories. Most female participants (n = 8) reported having grown up in either "low income" or middle class neighborhoods, while most reported currently living in middle class neighborhoods.

Comparison of reported class status of neighborhood of origin with current neighborhood among the sample as a whole reveals the following trends: for the males, an increase in number of participants currently living in neighborhoods described as "lower income" and "working", and for females an increase in the number of participants currently living in neighborhoods described as "upper middle class". While the analysis showed no pattern of association between neighborhood socioeconomic status and participant cultural identity formation, variations in neighborhood racial/ethnic makeup did have an effect on some participants' experience as first generation Haitian Americans. This finding is discussed in greater depth below.

Neighborhood diversity: growing up. Additional demographic data collected included neighborhood racial and ethnic composition, both growing up and current. Data regarding neighborhood racial/ethnic composition was sought to explore the impact of neighborhood diversity - including proximity to other Haitians and/or exposure to Haitian culture - on cultural identity development and experience as FGHA in these neighborhoods. There were differences in earlier experiences among those who lived in racially/ethnically diverse communities compared with those who lived in less diverse communities. Some neighborhoods, for example, represented many different immigrant groups, contributing to reportedly positive experiences; in comparison, a less positive experience was reported by participants who lived in neighborhoods where they were different from all of their peers or where they might have been the only immigrant family. The experience of a participant growing up in a diverse community is illustrated in the following transcript:

> Interviewer: … how would you describe the racial and ethnic makeup of your
>
> neighborhood growing up?

Maggie: … it was pretty diverse… it was a concentration of Hispanic, West Indies, um Indian, um I think a few Asians but not too many. Yeah but it was pretty diverse.

Interviewer: And so what was your experience as a Haitian American growing up in this neighborhood?

Participant: Um I don't know. I don't feel like it was different because I had like a lot of like Haitian American friends around… I feel like especially… if I had Haitian friends or if I had Hispanic friends, we kind of all identified on some common ground with our parents being immigrants, you know? Um so I guess it was like… it never felt weird or out of place for me growing up 'cause we all… it was just like a neighborhood of immigrants like coming to America and you were the first born… So, you know, I didn't feel different….

In contrast is the following quote from a participant whose family was the only immigrant family in this neighborhood while growing up:

Um in that neighborhood, we were mostly living in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. So we were few and far between. It was rare for black people to be in that neighborhood… my second childhood home, we lived in a strictly Jewish neighborhood. Everybody, just about everybody there was Jewish. Made things a bit difficult, a bit different… Honestly I really didn't have much status in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood diversity: current. Participants were also asked about the racial/ethnic composition of their current neighborhoods. Most participants (n=9) reported currently living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods and having had overall positive experiences as Haitian Americans living in these neighborhoods. Participants who currently reside in less ethnically diverse neighborhoods had ambivalent sentiments towards their experiences as Haitian

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Americans in their neighborhoods. They reported that their ethnic identities are neither positively nor negatively singled out, nor is their ethnicity particularly recognized by other members of the community. These participants did not consider their ethnic identities to be a factor in having either a positive or negative experience of their neighborhood environment. For the few participants who currently live in ethnically diverse neighborhoods where Haitians are the minority, these participants have expressed a certain nostalgia and yearning for exposure to Haitians and Haitian culture:

> …it's a very Dominican neighborhood… But one of the things that I really kind of grew to love was that the food, Dominican food, is very similar to Haitian food… if I was craving something from home, I could just go to the [*local restaurant*] and get like the rice and the beans and the steak and the onions… they do it very similarly… So I left home at 20 and made my own way… now I just kind of miss things that are Haitian. Like if I hear someone on the train or walking down the street speaking Creole, I try to listen and see if I understand everything. I just kind of wanna like um hold on to it, you know.

Family-of-origin structure. Because of the writer's interest in the effect of family composition, proximity to extended family, and birth order on cultural identity formation, information was sought in this area. Participants were asked about their family structure growing up, including with whom they lived and how many siblings they had. Participants were also asked to describe their relationship with Haitian born relatives to learn more about the nature of their exposure to Haitian culture through these relatives. Five participants were raised in single parent households. No differences were found in patterns of cultural identity development by participant household structure, whether they were raised in two parent

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households, single parent households, or with many Haitian born relatives in the household..

Only one participant identified as an only child. Six participants identified as the oldest sibling in the household. Of those six, three were the first born of their siblings and three came from blended families and had much older siblings who were born in Haiti. However, they did not live with these siblings growing up and so were considered the oldest child in the household. One participant had an older Haitian-born sibling and was the first child to be born in America, but was not considered oldest because he lived with his older Haitian born sister growing up. Analysis revealed participant birth order as an important factor in their experience of cultural identity development; discussion of this factor is included in the thematic section that follows.

Differences in expressiveness by gender. Although this information was not intentionally sought, differences were noted by gender in how participants responded to interview questions: Male participants were generally less expansive in their responses than female participants. The lack of expressiveness limited, to some degree, the amount of information that was obtained about male participants' experiences. It is possible that this finding reflects differences in male expressive style in general, or that those who elected to participate in the interview were naturally less expressive. It is also possible that male participants had different feelings about being interviewed by a female, which resulted in a lack of comfort in expression. As participants had no knowledge of the interviewer's racial/ethnic identity, it is also possible that lack of knowledge in this regard particularly affected the comfort level of male participants. Finally, it is possible that the impact of identity issues, or the impact of cultural gender expectations for male participants, were greater than for female participants and thus more difficult to talk about. Further discussion of the implication of this finding for future research is included in the final chapter.

Not Haitian Enough/Not American Enough

Analysis of participant responses in the broad area encompassing aspects of their experience as FGHA revealed an overarching theme that can be described as [an experience of being] "not Haitian enough/not American enough." This theme runs through several different aspects of participant experiences with Haitian culture - including relationships with family and other individuals born in Haiti, consideration of skin color, birth order and family composition, and Creole language acquisition and proficiency - as well as with the larger American culture - including interactions with non-Haitian peers, and in neighborhood and institutional settings - all contributing to their cultural identity development as FGHA.

Interactions with Haitian-born relatives/others. Participants discussed their feelings of difference in the context of relationships with both immediate and extended family members who had been born in Haiti, as well as with those with whom they interacted when visiting Haiti.

Two participants referred to Haitian-born Haitians as "actual" Haitians and all participants commented on how being born in America was perceived by these Haitians as not Haitian enough. The following quote is representative of the feelings that all participants shared about Haitian-born people's perception of them as American-born FGHA:

If I go to Haiti too, when I go to Haiti they call me American. It's kind of confusing. Like they'll say blan [Translation: literally means White person but refers to English speaker, Westerner]. Even though I'm like, I'm Haitian. They're like no you're blan, like you're blan American. Like that. Like blan nwa (Translation: Black American).

One other participant expressed:

But when I would go to Haiti, then they'll be like no you're not Haitian, you're an American. Well Haitians in Haiti… the ones that were born and raised there, they don't consider me Haitian. They consider me an American.

Not all participants had been to Haiti, yet they all shared similar experiences with Haitian-born Haitians and non-Haitians alike who currently reside in America. From participant response, this experience centered around participants identifying as Haitian:

When people normally say, were you born in Haiti? No I wasn't born in Haiti. So they're like, so you were born here? I'm like, yeah I was born here. So they're like, so you're American. I'm like, yeah I am American, I was born on American soil, but I consider myself Haitian.

Another participant shared:

Then someone would ask you okay where your parents are from, where were you born? And I'd say oh well I was born here. I was born in New York. And they'd say, 'Oh no, you're not Haitian, you're American'. So, but then obviously I have the Haitian background from both parents so I consider myself Haitian.

Skin color. This overarching theme was also present in participants' discussion of the issue of skin complexion/gradation, which two participants raised in relation to cultural identity development. This factor was more of an issue for the two participants who disclosed that they were light in skin tone. They explained their experience of being doubted by others when they revealed they were of Haitian descent. This doubt came from Haitians and non Haitians alike. These two participants described their frustration with others' ignorance of Haiti's color diversity in that somehow their lighter skin complexion did not qualify them to be true Haitians. One of the participants stated, "Um I guess everyone always thinks like I'm Hispanic or… because like

my family's just fair skinned individuals so that's always been like a thing of contention for me… It like annoys me most of the time". The other participant stated, "But it's also understanding like the color dynamics…'Oh you don't *look* Haitian'…And that would kinda like piss me off too." One of these participants shared comments made by their mother who, in Haiti, is considered of the *grimmel* category (meaning, of fair skin, lighter fine hair and light colored eyes):

> Like my mom would be like 'Oh no you're not really *grimmel* because your hair is like
>
> this'… if you're hair is straight and you have color in your eyes, then you know… My
>
> mom always told me I had bad hair.

Birth order/family composition. Exposure to Haitian culture from parents and language acquisition appeared stronger among participants who were first born, the oldest of the siblings in the household growing up, or the only child:

> So, and I've noticed that, that's kind of the thing in most of the Haitian family. Like the
>
> older sibling will speak more Creole than the younger sibling and I think... that the older
>
> sibling usually ends up speaking for the younger sibling when they're younger. So the
>
> younger sibling never really needs to learn it.

The five participants who were not first-born, oldest, or only children noted that their older siblings spoke better Creole and knew more about Haitian history than they did. "Oh I still got a lot of learning to do but…my [older] brother helped me out a lot… he took what he learned and poured it into me." For a few participants, this was because their older siblings were born in Haiti while they were the first to be born in America:

> I took to speaking Creole to my parents on my own…My [younger] brother speaks
>
> English… and incorporates Creole…His Creole is not the greatest but he

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understands…my sister, she was born in Haiti…she is pure blood Haitian. She speaks

Creole and all of that.

For the participants who were the oldest in the household, they noted that their younger

siblings were not as "in touch" with their Haitian side as they were. One participant said, "But

then my younger brother, I feel he understands but like he's not really in tune with his Haitian

culture." Another explained:

My brother, he responds in English… he's four years younger than I am…Yeah he

doesn't really respond in Creole…Like he sounds so funny and he tries so hard to speak it

fluently. Yeah, but it's not for him.

Proficiency in Creole language. In terms of language acquisition, many participants

recognized that they did not feel Haitian enough until they mastered the Creole language to the

standards of Haitian-born Haitians. Two participants shared their path to mastering Creole.

Well I sound American when I speak Creole… And I want to speak flawlessly, like

fluently. Like I can speak it fluently but I sound American. So I don't wanna sound

American when I speak Creole. I wanna sound Haitian when I speak Creole.

Brooklyn College is one of the only schools who have like a modern Creole course. So

then I took that course and I began learning how to write and speaking proper and

grammar, and stuff like that. Yes as I got older, I got more into my Haitian side and I

don't know I guess I just embrace it now.

External messages. To explore the possible impact of messages received from the

dominant culture on participant cultural identity development, participants were asked about

what messages they received about Haitians and Haitian Americans when they were growing up.

All participants shared their experience with the negative image of Haiti portrayed in the media,

as well as both subtle and overtly negative messages they received from the media, school, and the outside world in general, during their formative years growing up in the 1990s. All but one participant shared the experience of being taunted in school just because they were Haitian; interestingly, this participant was the only one who lived outside of the northeastern region of the U.S. The significance of these external messages is that although the participants were born in the United States and, therefore, American, they were not received as American enough in the eyes of their peers. The following are examples of negative messages that served to create a distance between participants and their non-Haitian American peers include: "We're vicious, we're killers, we do Voodoo… never really heard anything nice about Haiti,"; "Haitians were poor people... Haitians couldn't dress…."; "Haitian men carried AIDS or like it came from Haiti.…"; and "Haitians smelled bad, Haitians do Voodoo… It was like oh you have nappy hair, you must be from Haiti."

Participants described an overall image of Haiti and, by association, Haitians, as being poor, vicious, unhygienic, unfashionable, and mostly known for engaging in Voodoo practices. Because of these negative messages, many participants shared that they were ashamed of admitting their Haitian heritage. One participant said, "I used to lie and say I wasn't [Haitian]… lot of kids around my time here made it difficult for other Haitians". Another participant shared, "When I was in elementary school, I was really embarrassed to say that I was Haitian. And the reason why because we were always teased and made fun." One participant actually adopted a different name from the one given at birth in an effort to minimize teasing from others based on the cultural association of the name:

> [*Americanized name*] is actually my middle name. My first name is [*birth name*] and
>
> [*birth name*] is so Haitian of a first name… So when they hear the name, I used to be

teased all the time… So I used to tell my mother, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it, please

change it to my middle name.

In reflecting on the taunts they had received at school, most participants indicated feeling

that these comments were most likely a consequence of the immaturity of their peers at the time;

they indicated that most of the teasing and comments pointing up their peers' ignorance ceased

after junior high school. However five participants shared that even into adulthood and

currently, they continue to receive insulting comments about their Haitian heritage. One

participant shared the following, about such an incident:

> …she's like, I've never met a Haitian person like you. I was like, what do you mean a
>
> Haitian person like me? She was like, you're so pretty. And I was like, what does that
>
> mean? She was like, Haitian people don't usually look like that.

Participants' knowledge of their culture helped to mediate their reaction and, to some

extent, insulated them from the degrading effects of negative messages about Haiti and Haitians.

One participant said:

> So… from society, I always got 'Haiti is poor' and 'All Haitians do is Voodoo' and I
>
> believed that for a long time, but my parents were always there refuting those arguments
>
> saying that, well, there are very nice places in Haiti.

Although some spoke of not readily admitting they were Haitian or Haitian American, the

same participants also spoke of their outraged reactions towards those messages. "Uh my

reaction was just like, what?! That's ignorant and crazy… it's such a generalized statement, an

ignorant statement…" While some participants rejected those statements/messages, based on

their responses, it appears that some participants internalized these negative messages and have

tried to justify them. "I find that the real immigrant Haitians they always wore like plaid,

slippers/sandals no matter what kind of weather was outside. Got a pair of fucking sandals, feet

all ashy, you know."

Another participant remarked:

> They're like, oh you're Haitian? You don't look Haitian. You look really good. I'm like,
>
> how is a Haitian supposed to look? I can understand where they're coming from with
>
> that. I can understand why they say that. Because a lot of times, let's be real.

Generational struggles. Many participants spoke of the clash they felt between being

raised according to their parents' Haitian values and the American values that they were learning

about and acquiring outside the home. This was mainly true for female participants. Four

participants spoke of having experienced extraordinarily strict parenting, especially compared to

their American counterparts. One participant said, "I didn't make choices. I didn't make

options. I was told what school I was gonna go to and what major I was gonna pick up."

Another said:

> I think the major thing that I had an issue with was how strict my parents were… it's
>
> really hard when you're in 6th and all you wanna do is go to slumber party and you can't,
>
> you know what I mean?

While they spoke of how difficult it was growing up with this level of strictness, many

participants also expressed appreciation for that experience. One participant shared, "While

you're there and going through it, it's like awful. But you appreciate it later down the line… I

appreciated having that strict upbringing and like being really, you know made to concentrate on

my studies." Another said, "I'm so happy that my mom was so strict with me growing up.

Because if she was not, Lord knows where I would've ended up." However, one participant

remarked that this experience had created in them a bitterness towards their Haitian culture:

I just grew an animosity for our culture in general. Like I hated everything about it…growing up I was just miserable I like hated being at home. My parents were very suffocating, you know. Like I think I've always resisted um kind of like the culture of being Haitian like. I just hated how strict my parents were. And I felt like I couldn't breathe in my house. Like uh you weren't allowed to be an individual. You uh your parents set a rule and you just follow it blindly.

Both male and female participants spoke of the difficulty they experienced living up to the gender norms and expectations from Haitian culture. Three participants experienced their parents' expectations as too high and somewhat outdated compared to American ideals. One of these – a female participant – remarked, "Haitians tend to be a little stricter with the females. There are things that you can and cannot do whereas the males, the boys will have a little bit more privileges." Another female participant remarked:

"She would tell me, 'Oh you have to serve your dad.' And I would be like, why?... in school I learned that women have rights so everyone is equal. She would teach me like, 'Oh you have to take care of the house, you have to learn how to cook.' And I used to always be against it because I was like, why do I have to? Why can't I choose to do these things?... she was always comparing me to the girls in Haiti… she tried to make me take care of my brothers. I'm like no this is America, I want to do my own thing."

The male participant shared:

"Being the first born son is… comes with a lot of um I guess you can say um high hopes from everybody… even though my sister was 5 years older, everybody kinda looks towards me to make things happen. And I'm like, I really can't make things happen. So

it kinda brings in a feeling of disappointment from the people who have the high hopes, you know… Yeah I carry that pretty heavy."

Important to highlight in terms of generational/cultural struggles is one participant's experience of intolerance towards non-heterosexual orientations in Haitian culture. This message of intolerance was made clear to this participant. This participant identified as gay and their mother's abhorrence to homosexuality played a major role in how this participant felt about the Haitian culture and their Haitian heritage:

I'm also gay… and well in terms of like Haitian-ness like that is not allowed… to my mom like it is literally the worst thing that you could ever do or be in the entire world… Like being Haitian was more of a term that I kind of had to overcome, you know. That sounds awful 'cause you know I do appreciate my culture but it's just kind of always been like uh something that's always held me down, you know.

Journey to Haiti. Participants were asked if they had ever been to Haiti and, if they had, to speak about their experience as a Haitian American in Haiti. The purpose of this question was to explore participant perceptions of their treatment by the Haitian born population based on their having been born in America, and the impact of this experience on their cultural identity development. Nine participants went to Haiti at some point in their lifetime; six of these were old enough at the time of their visit to have retained clear memories of their experience in Haiti. Overall, these participants had positive experiences in Haiti. One participant spoke of the many sites they had visited in Haiti:

I went to the museum, I went to the fort, I went to different parts of Haiti just sightseeing. I went to different beaches and just visiting and learning. I was like, wow this is great.

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They always try to downplay Haiti and it's like, no it has much more culture and stuff

like that than people portray.

Another participant spoke of their connection with nature while in Haiti:

I was in the country and I'd seen farms and cows, climbing mountains, going into the

river, going to the beach, eating mangoes, climbing up trees with my cousins. I just

embraced these things and I fell in love with it.

Participants who had never visited Haiti, or who had not been to Haiti since they were

toddlers, were asked if they had plans to visit Haiti. Two of these participants shared their harsh

realization of Haiti's poverty. For them, the challenge of facing that poverty and relating it to the

condition of their parent's lives before coming to the United States, were factors in their

hesitation to travel to Haiti. One participant expressed apprehension at the idea of visiting Haiti:

Apprehension is that I think I'm going to have difficulty seeing poverty, like overt

poverty in the way that I'm expecting it… I feel like it would hit home seeing there are

people who look like me and sound like me but not living like me.

Another participant shared:

Um when I found out that it [Haiti] was considered a third world country, I was kind of

shocked… I never would've imagined my parents coming from a third world country… I

can't even imagine what it's like to not have running water, to come home from school

and not have anything to eat like it's just, it's kind of hard to imagine… It was heart

wrenching for me, you know. To think that they live so um like they're so poor. And I

come from that in a way.

One participant in particular echoed their father's sentiments about why neither they nor

their father would ever go to Haiti. "I think if they maybe were pro Haiti, I would be too… I

would never go to Haiti… I would say the same thing that my father said: 'Why would I go pay to shit outside?'"

Knowledge of U.S. policies. Participants were asked if they knew about or had had any experience with U.S. policies regarding Haitian immigration. This question sought to elicit participants' perceptions and awareness of the tumultuous history of U.S. policies against Haitian immigration and the impact of such knowledge on their cultural identity development. Many participants responded to this question mainly in terms of their own, or their immediate family's, experience with immigration, rather than on a broader policy level. Not one of the participants mentioned Operation Able Manner or any of the embargos the U.S. set upon Haiti. One participant mentioned seeing a news story about Cubans being allowed into the U.S. while Haitians were turned away. This participant did not know the reason for this or any further details about that story. Most participants knew about recent U.S. policies toward Haitian immigration following the 2011 earthquake. One participant's comment sums up the interpretation of, and response given, by most participants to this question, "Oh I never really had that problem. I don't know too much about… *Paske ou kone se just dwa'm ye* (Loose Translation: Because you know I have those rights for me) so I don't have to deal with that immigration stuff."

Resilience, Coping, & Strengthening Cultural Identity

Shifting sands. While participants spoke of the negative messages and images portrayed of Haitians and Haiti that they had experienced growing up, they also shared their perception that there had come a point where these negative sentiments had shifted and Haiti/Haitians were deemed more acceptable in American society. The majority indicated that this had occurred sometime during the late 1990's, when many of the participants were adolescents. For most

participants, the period following this shift was a time of coping, resilience and continuing journey to cultural self discovery. Eight participants spoke of non-Haitians, seemingly all of a sudden, wanting to be Haitian. One participant shared, "Now everybody wanna act like they're Haitian and they're not Haitian." Another said, "And when Haitian Flag day came… she let all the Haitians wear their flags… Even up to the ones who weren't Haitian, they were like, oh can I get a flag? I wanna wear a flag." Participants were probed further on this issue and asked what they believed had contributed to this shift. Some mentioned the positive influence of several public figures including Haitian-born Wyclef Jean from the rhythm and blues (R&B) group, "The Fugees", as well at Hillary and Bill Clinton. "I have to give it to Wyclef Jean too, the Haitian artist. He showed people that being Haitian is a beautiful thing."

In terms of prominent political figures, another participant remarked:

Political leaders…who embraced Haiti. You have the Clintons who him and his wife, they honeymooned there… And they made people start really liking Haiti and people started doing their research and started realizing like, oh this is a beautiful place.

It seemed this newfound acceptance of Haiti and Haitians gave some of the participants the freedom to declare and openly represent their Haitian heritage without fear of ridicule. Said one participant, "Times changed, being Haitian is cool now. I definitely call myself Haitian American. Epa sa'm ye? (Translation: Isn't that who I am?)" Another said, "Haiti has come to the forefront and now people are not as ignorant as they used to be. So I can say, 'Hey, I'm Haitian'… So it's easier to identify now."

Many participants spoke of their own personal transformation during this shift. They spoke of taking ownership and pride in their heritage. A new age was emerging when being

Haitian, or admitting that one was Haitian, was no longer taboo. One participant in particular spoke of their transformation as if they had taken on a whole new persona.

> But when I got to junior high school, you couldn't tell me anything. I walked around with the Haitian flag around my head. I gave myself a name, HQB which means Haitian Queen Bee… and just walked around like superwoman, you can't touch me. And if you touch me, I'm gonna beat you up. And I met other Haitians there that dressed nice, I dressed nice, they were matching, and the stereotypes that they had for Haitians wasn't true, and they had other Haitians that looked good. And pretty much my self-esteem just came up and just things was changed.

Ki moun mwen ye? (Who am I?). Participants were asked what part of Haitian culture they most identified with and why. The purpose of asking this question was to elicit participant feelings and thoughts regarding what their Haitian heritage meant to them. Initially, all participants had difficulty answering this question. They were unclear of what was being asked and many did not know how to answer a question as broad as that one. Eventually after some thought, the participants began to explain who they were through their Haitian culture. Unlike the negative messages that some participants had internalized, participants' explanations of the meaning of being Haitian American was mostly positive. This shift speaks to the discussion of participants' cultural knowledge, enabling them to transcend the impact of oppressive messages about being Haitian. One participant spoke of Haitians as being future-oriented:

> The thing about my family is that they don't think about 5 years from now. They don't think about 10 years from now. They think about 20, 30, 40 years from now. When you get older, how is it going to benefit you? What are you going to gain from it? How are your finances going to look?

One other participant spoke of Haitians' creativity, saying, "I guess I really enjoy like the art of it. And the creativity of Haitian people I always look at." Many participants spoke of Haitians as being resilient and industrious. For example, one participant said, "I think Haitians are like hustlers… And they're always like striving to… they're always trying to do better." Another said, "Haitians have their way of, you know, grinding out, and making something out of nothing." Still another said, "It's taught me not to quit. Never quit, never give up, always push forward as best you can." Two participants spoke of Haitians being culturally well-rounded and worldly. One said:

> My dad is fluent in Spanish so he always wanted to live in a Hispanic country. He always had his eyes set on Venezuela…but they ended up in the U.S… he went to school in Jamaica for a few years and then…ended up coming to New York.

The other said:

> The Haitian people in my family before coming to the States tried a little bit of island hopping… So my dad was a huge fan of Cuban music because he lived there for a few years… We listened to a lot of Bachata and Merengue. A lot of African music.

One participant spoke of the Haitian values of giving back and paying it forward:

> Everyone who came from Haiti in my family came here, found a job, got an apartment or got a house, and sent for someone else and help them until they got on their feet…You were returning the favor 'cause chances are if you came here, you came here through a marriage or you were sponsored by a church or someone helped you get here.

Many participants connected with their Haitian identify through the food. For example, one participant said, "Haitian food is so good… It was my version of comfort food. 'Cause I'm

not crazy about Mac and cheese but you give me some dried biscuits and some peanut butter, we'll talk." Another shared:

> I feel like the food just brings people together… Haitian food is like I feel like I'm sitting in Haiti… Even when I'm drinking my soup joumou like our good luck soup every year, I always think like wow the first Haitians drank this soup, as I'm drinking this… people fought for their freedom and then they all sat down with this soup and ate it. It's a custom and people have been doing it for like over 200 years.

Many participants expressed their connection with Haitian music, "I just love Kompa music… it does something for me, it makes me feel good. I'm happy, I wanna dance, you know. It just puts me in a very peaceful place to dance to Kompa music." "We still blast Kompa and stuff. I love my Haitian music. That's what runs through the blood."

Empowerment through history. In an effort to explore the impact of an historical understanding of Haiti on their cultural identity development, participants were asked how and at what point they had learned this history. Most participants shared that they had learned about Haiti's history in primary and junior high school from class assignments such as projects and reports. Some participants' historical knowledge of Haiti was supplemented from other sources such as independent research or information shared by their own families. Through research and discovery of Haiti's history, as well as their own family's personal history, in many ways all the participants had developed a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. This factor contrasts with participants' lack of awareness of the history of U.S. policies regarding Haitian immigration, however this discussion is representative of a different aspect of Haitian history: While participants lacked knowledge of U.S./Haitian transnational political history, the history of which they had greater awareness referenced historical points that occurred solely within Haiti.

Many participants spoke about feeling a sense of pride when they had discovered that Haiti was the first freed African slave nation. One participant said, "So for Haitians to be the first to do that to the French, it's a very beautiful thing and says a lot about us and our culture." Another said, "Haitians were really powerful people. And I was like, you know, that's where my parents is from. And if they did it once, they can do it again. It just changed my perspective about things, you know." One participant spoke of learning about their personal family history:

> Growing up my dad would always feed me a lot about Haiti because one of our ancestors was an emperor… he [dad] always liked... to let me know that our ancestors had a big part to play in us getting our freedom.

> For one participant who identified as gay, discovering the role homosexuals play in the history of Haitian folklore was an empowering experience. "I Wikipedia-ed stuff about like Haitian culture once, just out of curiosity and uh apparently in like Haitian Voodoo, like people who practice that, homosexuals are actually revered. I didn't know that. I did not know that." One other participant identified strongly with Haiti's political history:

> I really appreciate the political history… I understand political strife and so I can really identify with a people wanting to be free and a people wanting to be self-governed and a people wanting to be governed well and be financially stable. And that's what I see when I look at Haiti and that's what I identify with.

"I've Never Done One Before"

An additional finding, independent of the themes discussed, is the impact that being interviewed had on the participants. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there was any more information that they would like to add. Many participants expressed how grateful they were to have had the opportunity to share their experience as FGHA. One participant

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stated, "I think we covered the need for this interview. It was a privilege and an honor to be asked to do this. I've never done one before. I hope you get what you need out of the interview." Another participant said:

> No problem. Honestly I'm very thankful for this interview. At first I was like what the hell am I getting myself into. But then when I spoke with you and read the letter [consent form], I was like this is really really dope. This is really great. But yeah, I'm very thankful that I even was chosen for this interview… I'm just happy to share this with someone else - my opinions, my thoughts, my story, my experiences with someone that I basically don't know.

One participant shared how healing they felt the interview was in terms of the painful experience of growing up as a FGHA, "…this is kind of like therapy… I actually always wanted to explain what it was like to grow up Haitian. 'Cause I hated it so much." One other participant expressed how the interview had inspired and motivated them to be more conscious about their identity as well as continue learn more about their culture:

> It was good. I feel like… well I know one thing, I'm gonna go research my Haitian history a little bit more in depth… And this was just like wait a minute let me identify myself in this social space in this world or whatever. And it was like okay now I'm gonna look into myself more. And I guess I'm gonna appreciate being Haitian more too.

The following chapter will discuss these findings in the context of the extant literature and bicultural theory, drawing implications for the profession in the areas of practice, policy and research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The intent of this qualitative study was to explore social, economic, political, and historical factors in cultural identity formation among first generation Haitian Americans. Through this study, participants expressed in-depth thoughts and perceptions about their own experiences as well as the experiences of their immigrant parents and of Haitians and Haitian Americans living in the U.S. and in Haiti.

This discussion will begin with a comparison of study findings and overarching themes to the extant literature on theories of biculturalism and cultural identity formation in first generation ethnic groups. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study. The discussion will continue with a focus on the most salient findings and the implications for practice, policy, and research. A summary will conclude this chapter.

Comparison of Study Findings to Literature

This study sample consisted of male and female first generation Haitian Americans who were born and raised on the east coast of the U.S. during a period when American sentiment towards Haitians reflected the sociopolitical, historical, and economic trends of the time. From the data analysis, two overarching themes emerged. The theme, "not Haitian enough, not American enough" described how many of the participants felt about their social location growing up and currently. When participants were in the company of Haitian-born Haitians, they felt that others did not consider them "true" Haitians because they were born in the U.S.

For some participants, their lack of Haitian Creole language proficiency caused them to feel "not Haitian enough" which is consistent with findings of the Portes & Hao (2002) study, indicating that loss of the parental language can create a growing estrangement from the cultural ways of the [immigrant] generation (p. 892). These participants felt disconnected from the culture but found other ways to connect to Haitian culture through Haitian customs, music, and food.

Birth order was found to play a considerable role in participants' feeling of connection to the Haitian culture. This finding is consistent with the theoretical literature on biculturalism in which Ford (2006) posits that the parent and/or older sibling often serves as a model of someone who functions successfully in a dominant culture but also maintains a strong connection to his or her family's culture of origin (p. 44).

The literature speaks of marginalized individuals who experience external oppression from the dominant culture as well as internal oppression from their own negative assumptions about their cultural identity. This was born out in the finding which identified the internalizing of oppressive messages among some of the participants; however, somewhat contrary to Aikhoje (2011) who noted that internalization of negative images may lead one to become unidentified with their ethnic group (p.22), although this study's participants internalized negative images of their ethnic group, they continued to identify with many aspects of their ethnic culture even when they did not completely identify with their ethnic group.

In keeping with this first overarching theme, many participants did not feel "American enough" because they were raised in a strictly Haitian household with Haitian values, language, and customs. They expressed being largely unaware of their "difference" from the dominant culture until they reached school and experienced persecution in the form of ostracism and insults from their non-Haitian peers. This theme of not feeling Haitian or American enough

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echoes the work of Marcia (as cited in Phinney & Ong, 2007) in his explication of the four ethnic identity statuses in the Identity Status Model of ethnic identity formation. Participants moved through a continuum of cultural identity throughout their lives. Some participants evidenced the "achieved identity status" in that they expressed confidence in identifying more with their ethnic culture than with the dominant American culture after years of exploring key identity issues. Consistent with Marcia's model, other participants evidenced the "moratorium status" involving continued exploration of identity issues in adulthood; these participants expressed current exploration/discovery of the meaning that their Haitian heritage held for them

The second overarching theme, "coping, resilience, and strengthening cultural identity", also speaks to a tenet of biculturalism theory wherein cultural identity is located along a spectrum that is dependent on a host of factors, rather than occupying a fixed position on that spectrum. Based on this study's findings, one of these factors of influence could be shifting societal sentiments towards an ethnic group. After a childhood of being ridiculed and oppressed by others for their ethnic identity, participants reported that a major social shift had occurred, along with an emerging sense of self discovery. For most, this shift had fostered in them a willingness to disclose and explore their ethnic identity, while also strengthening their cultural identity: The process of learning more about their cultural and family history, as well as connecting to cultural music, traditions, and food, engendered a sense of pride and strengthened their cultural identity over time. This finding supports the work of Ford (2006), who found that regular family rituals, such as eating traditional foods and/or celebrating cultural holidays, were a significant source of cultural learning (p.46).

The downward socioeconomic trend for male participants, both by itself and in comparison to the upward trend for female participants, is an important finding, possibly

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illustrative of issues affecting other populations of color. It is possible that increasing education and employment of women may explain this finding; or, perhaps because of cultural norms, more of the men are living with their families of origin as opposed to moving out on their own in neighborhoods of different SES classes. This, as well as other findings of difference based on gender will be discussed in greater detail in the section on implications for further research.

Implications for Future Social Work Practice, Policy, & Research

This section discusses important implications for social work practice, policy, and further research which can be drawn from the study findings.

Practice implications. In the area of practice, findings indicate the importance of being sensitive to and understanding issues of cultural identity formation in work with immigrant populations, including immigrant families with first generation children. Native language can be a connection or barrier in the therapeutic setting of social work practice. Social workers must be aware that newly emigrated parents may not be fluent in English, with the first born child carrying out the role of translator; because this role frequently falls to the first child, later-born children may feel less connected to their culture in terms of the native language.

Participants expressed how the interview itself, including the opportunity it afforded them to share their perceptions about being FGHA, was a transformative and empowering experience; this was especially the case because most participants had never before been provided this opportunity. This finding has significant implications for social work practice, demonstrating how empowering it can be to provide immigrant clients the opportunity to tell their story and be heard.

The findings regarding differences in response styles by gender has implications for practice in terms of the development of specialized approaches to work with immigrant

populations. Social workers should be aware of cultural gender expectations and how this may affect practice with immigrant clients, including the discussion of sensitive topics. Social workers should be aware of how they approach certain topics such as familial relations, cultural gender norms, child rearing responsibilities/practices and cultural meanings that may attach to their own gender. Additionally, they should be aware of who else may be in the room in terms of the impact of mixing gender and generations on clients' level of comfort responding to questions and/or speaking about the presenting issue. Findings of fewer male participants, less expansive responses from male participants, and reported cultural expectations for first generation males, all point to a need for special outreach to the immigrant male populations and males who are first generation Americans in their family unit.

Research implications. The gender difference in expressiveness found in this study has implications for future research in terms of exploring factors related to differential engagement of male participants, with the goal of encouraging full and meaningful involvement in the research process. As well, given that study participants were not informed of the researcher's cultural/racial identity, a question arose for the researcher, useful for further study, as to whether and in what ways disclosure of researcher identity may be a factor in participant response in studies of cultural identity. Similarly, the impact of gender and ethnic/racial identity of the practitioner in work with immigrant populations forms the basis for another area of future research.

The issue of colorism and color discrimination among immigrants of color is also an area for further research. A few participants shared their experience of being devalued as Haitians because of their fair skin tone. This finding argues for further research exploring the ways in

which skin shade/color impacts ethnic identity development for immigrants and first generation children of ethnic groups of color.

Lastly, efforts to obtain a sample via local community outreach efforts yielded no participants. Future research should take into account the need for extensive contact with potential recruitment sites and sources in an effort to gather an adequate sample.

Policy implications. Study findings have important implications for future policy development, particularly in the context of current sentiment towards immigrants in the U.S. This study found that most participants lacked knowledge of history of U.S. policies in regard to Haitian immigration. One possible response might be in the area of U.S. education policy, incorporating content on current and historical dimensions of U.S. immigration policy and its impact on immigrant populations, at different levels of instruction. Further, given findings demonstrating challenges for participants attending school as first generation immigrants, as well as the downward trend in reported neighborhood SES among males, another implication of findings for education policy would be the need for specialized education for immigrant populations, at either, or both, primary or secondary school levels.

Implications of findings for social welfare policy include increasing economic and educational support for immigrant families, as well as support for policies aimed at encouraging and increasing diversity at the neighborhood and community level. Some participants spoke of the diversity of their neighborhoods in terms of various other ethnic groups. The findings demonstrated that those who either currently live or grew up in ethnically diverse neighborhoods had more positive experiences as FGHA compared with those in less ethnically diverse neighborhoods. Future policy may focus on increasing opportunities for neighborhood ethnic

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integration including the increased availability of community centers and cross-cultural activities at the neighborhood level.

Study Limitations

The small sample size, as well as the sampling methods employed, present limitations in the generalizability of findings to the total population of FGHA. Despite efforts to obtain a more diverse sample through outreach at the community level, all participants were ultimately recruited through a snowball method, with the majority being "acquaintances of acquaintances" of the researcher, in the mid-20s age group, and living in one region of the country.

The inadvertent omission of a question regarding participant education level also presented a limitation in terms of gaining a fuller understanding of the demographic characteristics of the sample, although several participants alluded to having been enrolled in higher educational programs.

Telephone, as opposed to in-person, interviews may have also impacted the flow of the interview and participant comfort level. There were several times during the telephone interviews when participant and researcher were asked to repeat what was said.

Although telephone interview participants (n=11) were unaware of the researcher's ethnic identity, the thematic analysis of interview data, as conceptualized by the author/researcher, was nonetheless affected by the author's subjectivity as a first generation Haitian American, Importantly, however, the researcher's ethnic identity and familiarity with the breadth of the Haitian American experience can also be viewed as a strength in terms of study conceptualization, instrument construction, sampling, and data analysis. As an FGHA of the same generation as participants, the researcher was able to identify nuances and cultural

references in the raw data that may have been overlooked or misunderstood by someone without this experience.

Conclusion

It is likely that many of the experiences shared by participants in this study apply, as well, to the experience of other immigrant communities of color; the expression of this shared experience underlines the significance of carrying out qualitative research with this population. This small sample of first generation Haitian Americans have given a voice to the bicultural experience during a time of cultural scapegoating. Through this interview opportunity, study participants were able to explore their own cultural social location as well as candidly express what being Haitian means to them. Access to, and incorporation of, such information adds immeasurably to the effectiveness of social work intervention with this and other immigrant populations.

Haiti has a complex and beautiful history that is only further expressed through the bicultural generation living in the U.S. These first generation individuals continue to explore their ethnic identity, navigate the difficult stages of biculturalism, and discover a resiliency and pride that has strengthened their identity. Findings of factors that contribute to the cultural identity development in first generation Haitian Americans, as identified by study participants, are helpful in informing a range of practice and policy innovations, educational opportunities, and areas for further research. In terms of cultural identity formation for first generation populations, there is still more yet to be explored. Dye mon gen mon (Beyond the mountains, there are more mountains) ~Haitian Proverb.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Joan Monplaisir and I am an MSW candidate at Smith College School for Social Work. I am currently working on a research study looking at factors that contribute to first generation Haitian Americans' acceptance of their Haitian identity. This research seeks to explore the acculturation experience and perception of the impact of social, political, and economic conditions in Haiti and in the United States on the cultural identity of this population. This study will be conducted as a thesis requirement for my Masters in Social Work with a clinical focus. The data may be used in a presentation or for possible publication.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a first generation Haitian American, born in the U.S. between and including the years 1975 to 1990, raised primarily in the U.S., and whose parents emigrated from Haiti prior to 1990. The interview will take up approximately up to one hour and will be digitally recorded. Questions will cover your experience as a first generation Haitian American, your relationship to Haitian traditions, religion, language, and values, possible changes in your Haitian identity over time, challenges associated with their Haitian identity, and the role of Haitian-born relatives and their experiences in your cultural identity development. Questions pertaining to personal information will include age, occupation, and education level.

Your risk of participation will be minimal. The interview will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. It may be that some questions may remind you of difficult memories from their past, difficulties or problems in their family, or of some loss they may have experienced. I have provided a list of local resources that you may refer to if you experience emotional distress as a result of participation in this study. By participating in this study you will have the chance to share your story and help others understand issues related to cultural identity in first generation Haitian Americans. Findings from this study will also add to the understanding among health and mental health care providers and educators, regarding background, values, challenges, and strengths of the Haitian and Haitian American community, informing their treatment and intervention with this population. There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

Every measure will be taken to maintain your confidentiality. All taped interviews will be transcribed by me. Participant names or other identifying information will be removed from any notes or transcripts. Interviews will be audiotaped and later transcribed by me, in private. Your responses will be kept separate from your name and other identifying information. Basic demographic information will be collected and reported on in general and descriptive terms to protect your identity. All data will be stored in an electronic file that is password protected. Besides myself, only the research advisor will have access to the data. Data will be separated from participant identification before it is shared with the research advisor or transcriber. The informed consent forms will be immediately stored in a locked container as this will be the only document explicitly connecting you to the study in name. Any quotes that will be used for illustrative purposes will not contain any identifying information. The information gathered (audio tapes, transcriptions, notes, and signed informed consent forms) will be kept in securely off-line on password-protected computer files and then will be locked for a period of three years,

as required by Federal guidelines. After that three-year period, all data will be destroyed when no longer needed, or kept safely stored.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study, or choose not to answer certain questions, without penalty, and information regarding your participation not be disclosed. You may contact me by telephone or email listed below, with any questions regarding the study or your participation. If you choose to withdraw from this study prior to April 1st 2013, all materials related to your interview will be immediately destroyed. Should you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study, I encourage you to call me or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

You should keep a copy of this form that for your records. Thank you so much for your participation.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Recruitment Announcement

Email

Sak ap fet! Hello I am a clinical social work graduate student and I'm looking to speak with local first generation Haitian Americans for my research thesis. If you were born and raised for more than half of your life in the United States to Haitian immigrant parents, and are age 22 to 38, then I am looking to talk to you and give you a chance to have your voice heard and tell your story. Please reply to this email if interested and I'll provide you with further information. If you're in the Baltimore/DC area or know of anyone in this area who might be interested, please spread the news and have them contact me at jmonplai@smith.edu. The interview would be face-to-face if you're local, and by phone or Skype if you live/work more than 15 miles from Baltimore City. Thank you so much for your help and interest!

Appendix C

Recruitment Announcement

Facebook

I am contacting all my friends & family with Haitian and Caribbean roots. I will also be posting this on my broader Facebook status. I need your help to spread the word about my Master's Thesis. Please pass this along to any Haitian American you know between the ages of 22-38 and living in the Baltimore, MD/ Washington, DC area. After reading the description, if you fit the criteria and would like to participate, please feel free to contact me in a separate message! Thank you so much in advance.

Hello friends! I am searching for participants for my research thesis on cultural identity formation in first generation Haitian Americans. If you were born to Haitian immigrant parents, were raised for more than half of your life in the United States and are age 22 to 38, then I'm looking to talk to you. Through my research, I want to give you a chance to have your voice heard and tell your story. Please reply to this post or inbox me on Facebook if interested and I'll provide you with further information. If you're in the Baltimore/DC area or know of anyone in this area who might be interested, please spread the news and have them contact me at jmonplai@smith.edu.   The interview would be face-to-face if you're local, and by phone or Skype if you live/work more than 15 miles from Baltimore City. Thank you so much for your help and interest! Mesi Anpil!

Appendix D

Revised Recruitment Announcement

Hello friends! NEEDED: Participants for my research Master's thesis on cultural identity formation in first generation Haitian Americans. If you were born and raised for more than half of your life in the United States to Haitian immigrant parents and are age 22-38, then I'm looking to talk to you and give you a chance to have your voice heard and tell your story. Please reply to this post or inbox me if interested and I'll provide you with further information. If you're in the Baltimore/ DC area, Metro New York City area, or know of anyone in those areas who might be interested, please spread the news and have them contact me at jmonplai@smith.edu. The 1 hour interview will be in-person and I will make efforts to travel to your location. If distance prevents an in-person interview, a telephone or Skype interview would be arranged. Thank you so much for your help and interest.

SAK AP FET?

Are you a first generation Haitian American?

Were you born between 1975-1990?

Were you raised more than half your life in the United States?

If you answered **<u>YES</u>** and are **<u>INTERESTED</u>**…

Then I would like to talk with you for my Master's Thesis:

- Tell your **story**
- Have your **voice** heard

Please reply to this post by emailing me

Jo: jmonplai@smith.edu

Mesi Anpil!

Appendix F

Email to Potential Participants

Thank you for taking the time to contact me and showing interest in this research study. Your voice and story will be a valuable contribution to this project.

Included are details of eligibility. If you meet all of these requirements, <u>please select one of the check-offs below and return this email to me by "replying" to this message with your telephone number, email, and – if necessary – your address and Skype number if you live more than 15 miles from Baltimore</u>. If you do not meet these eligibility requirements but know of someone who does and would be interested, please pass this information along.

Interviews with those who live within 15 miles of Baltimore City will be held in person in a mutually agreed upon public location. If you live more than 15 miles from Baltimore City, the interview will take place by phone or Skype. Your telephone number and Skype name (if applicable) will be important for communication and interviewing. You will also need to provide a mailing address so that you can receive an Informed Consent Form in the mail.

Thank you so much for your help. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Please review the following eligibility criteria.

Eligibility criteria:

- First Generation Haitian American defined as being born and raised in the U.S.
- Child of Haitian immigrant(s) who were born in Haiti and emigrated to the U.S. up to and including 1990.
- Between the ages of 22 and 38, with birth years 1975-1990.
- Spent most (defined as more than half) of their lives living in the U.S.
- Have access to a phone or computer with internet usage to enable communication via email.
- Able to read and communicate in English.

Please check one of the following:

_____ Yes, I meet all of the requirements for eligibility listed above and am interested in participating. I live within 15 miles of Baltimore City. My name, telephone number and email are listed below:

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

_____ Yes, I meet all of the requirements for eligibility listed above and am interested in participating. I live/work further than 15 miles from Baltimore City. My name, address, telephone number, email and Skype address are listed below:

Name: _____

Address:_____

_____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Skype Name (if applicable):_____

Research Instrument

Demographic questions:

1. How old are you?

2. How would you describe your gender?

3. What is your current employment status and what is your occupation?

4. What was/is your parents' occupation?

Open-ended questions

1. This study is about the process of cultural identity development for children of Haitian immigrants. Through this cultural identity process, I am interested in how FGHA identify themselves racially/ethnically in the U.S. amongst other Black racial/ethnic groups. How do you identify yourself ethnically/racially? Has that changed over time? If so, in what ways? If it has changed, what do you think may have contributed to this change?

2. At what time/moment or age were you first conscious about your Haitian identity?

3. How would you describe the racial/ethnic and social/economic makeup of your neighborhood growing up? What was your experience as a Haitian American growing up in this neighborhood?

4. How would you describe the racial/ethnic and social/economic makeup of your neighborhood currently? What is your experience as a Haitian American living in this neighborhood?

5. Can you tell me about your family structure growing up? Probe: With whom did you live? How many siblings do you have? In terms of birth order, where do you fall in that line of children?

6. How would you describe your relationship with your Haitian born relatives?

7. What was your experience at home growing up in a Haitian household in terms of:

    language, food, music, traditions, history? Please elaborate on each of these elements.

8. What aspects of Haitian culture do you most identify with and why?

9. What messages were you receiving about Haitians and Haitian Americans from home,

    school, work, media, etc. and how did you respond?

10. How and at what point did you learn about Haiti's history? What is your understanding

    of Haiti's history?

11. What is your knowledge of/experience with U.S. policies regarding Haitian immigration?

12. How is your Kreyol language proficiency and when did you learn it?

13. Have you visited Haiti? How would you describe your experience(s) being there

    especially compared to your experience in the United States?

14. Any other information that you'd like to add? Any questions that you might have?

Appendix H

HSR Approval Letter

SMITH COLLEGE

School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950   F (413) 585-7994

February 2, 2013

Joan Monplaisir

Dear Joan,

Thank you for making all the requested changes to your Human Subjects Review application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Marsha Kline Pruett, M.S., Ph.D., M.S.L.
Vice Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Beth Lewis, Research Advisor