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# The Systemic Multigenerational Implications of Education: Second-Generation Haitian- American College Graduates' Perspectives

Daphney Farah Lundi

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American College Graduates' Perspectives

By

Daphney F. Lundi

A Dissertation Presented to the  
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**Nova Southeastern University**

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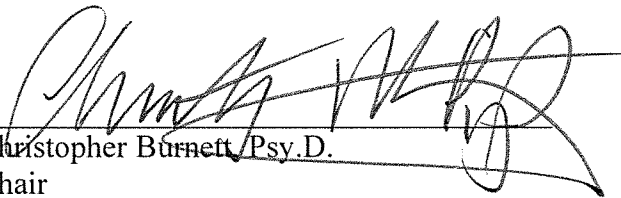
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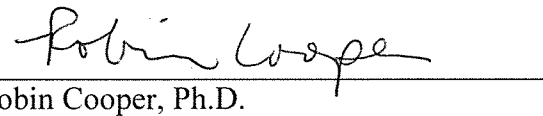
This dissertation was submitted by Daphney F. Lundi under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Philosophy in the Department of Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University.

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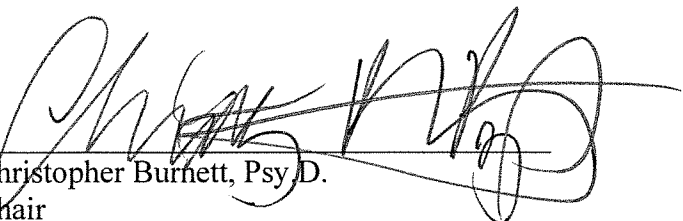
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“... In abundance of counselors there is victory.”

– Proverbs 11:14

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## Abstract

Similar to other immigrant populations in the United States, Haitians have a migratory history of escaping from political turmoil, natural disasters, and extreme poverty (Zephir, 2004). However, Haitian Americans remain one of the underserved populations in the United States.

Marginalized yet resilient, Haitian families in the U.S. continue to display strength in the face of adversity. Second-generation Haitian-American college graduates are the evidence of such strengths. There is very little research focused on second-generation Haitian-American college graduates' perspective on the possible familial influences pertaining to education. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design and Bowen's Family Systems Theory as a theoretical framework, this study explored the lived experiences of seven selected self-identified second-generation Haitian-American college graduates. The study was driven by three questions: 1. How do second-generation Haitian-American college graduates describe their cultural views on education? 2. How do these cultural views on education inform or influence Haitian families living in South Florida? 3. What are the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates regarding their family of origin's influences on them as it pertains to education? Six themes emerged as a result: Multigenerational Method of Transmission, Reminiscent Educational Dialogue, Education as Economic Protection, Expected Educational Momentum, Future Multigenerational Method of Transmission, and Broadening the Educational View. It is the hope of the researcher that this study will expand marriage and family therapists' understanding of the possible cultural/familial concerns, as well as, possible strengths and resources when working with Haitian families.

## Chapter I: Introduction

*“Éducation se puissance”*

*“Education is power”*

—Mom

Growing up, my extended Haitian family consisted of my mother, a single parent, my grandmother and her husband when they visited from Haiti, my aunt and her husband, an uncle, and my 2 cousins. The frequent conversations about education was a childhood reality in our household. Although I was academically inclined to do well in school, I often felt and resented the burden of education. For me, it was a chore or responsibility that I hoped to complete as quickly as possible. My desire for a quick exit out of education conflicted with my family’s dreams of their children becoming doctors, lawyers or engineers; these were some of the few acceptable professions in our family. The adults envisioned education and the possibility of their children acquiring one of the prestigious degrees as essential to the economic well-being of the family. This was evident when one of us, in our extended family, brought home a failing grade. The guilt of “not appreciating” or “wasting” the adults’ sacrifices was quickly placed on the offender’s shoulder. Undecided about what I should major in and not willing to be pushed into an unwanted career, I became the ultimate culprit when I dropped out of college at the age of 18. My decision would be the source of many unpleasant conversations between me and my mother.

My views on education shifted as I got older and felt, once again, the burden of ensuring the survival of my family as well as my own. New meanings arose for me in hearing stories of my family’s struggles. Particularly, stories about my grandmother’s experiences and survival from being a *restavec*, a child slave in Haiti, resonated with me (Cadet, 1998). I heard these stories before and I was disconnected with them. Now, these stories would serve as the catalyst

for my own educational endeavors to heights I had never imagined. The history of my family of origin, the history of Haiti, the sacrifices, the triumphs and the remaining struggles have led me to see education as not only essential for economic survival but has an honor, and as *puissance* (power).

As a second-generation Haitian-American college graduate, my family of origin has undoubtedly influenced my perspectives on education. Although my experiences were uniquely my own, I became curious about how other second-generation Haitian-American college graduates experienced their family of origin's educational influences. I was also interested in what can be understood about these influences, the strengths and resources of Haitian families in fostering the educational drive of their offspring, and the possible emerging factors even when faced with societal hardships. For this study, a second-generation Haitian-American was characterized as an individual who was born in the United States and who is the child of parents who were born in Haiti.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Education is an essential pathway to freedom and well-being for many second-generation Haitian Americans and their families (Nicholas & Severe, 2008). Haitian families are marginalized and underserved, yet there are signs of resiliency within Haitian communities that may be under-explored. One such sign of resiliency is second-generation Haitian-American college graduates. This study hoped to contribute to the literature pertaining to second-generation Haitian-American college graduates and their perspective on their families of origin's influence on their education, as well as, offer valuable insight into the possible systemic implications of education in Haitian families.

Furthermore, diversity issues and awareness are essential components of the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. This study may aid in informing marriage and family therapists of the familial concerns that may present themselves when counseling Haitian-American children and their families. The research may also aid in highlighting possible cultural/familial strengths and resources of Haitian families. A broader, more systemic picture of Haitian families and other marginalized groups is a possible implication.

Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design, the researcher sought to pursue an understanding of the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates and their perspectives of the systemic multigenerational implication of education within their family of origin. Three major questions drove this study:

1. How do second-generation Haitian-American college graduates describe their cultural views on education?
2. How do these cultural views on education inform or influence Haitian families living in South Florida?
3. What are the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates regarding their family of origin's influences on them as it pertains to education?

Informed by Murray Bowen's (1988) concept of multigenerational emotional processes, the systemic multigenerational implication of education is defined as the interrelationship between multiple generations of a family and their understanding of education. To establish the background and cultural context for this study, a brief historical overview of Haiti is given to highlight the implications of education for Haitian families.

## **Brief History of Haiti for Cultural Context**

The Republic of Haiti, how it is presently known, is situated in the Caribbean and shares the western-third of the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic (Brown, 2010, p. 90). Haiti's history is one of unimaginable hardships from its pre-inception to present day. This history began with the Taino Indians, a peaceful people who spoke the Arawak language and named their island Ayiti (Haiti), meaning "high country" or "mountainous" (James, 1963; Farmer, 1994). The Spanish Europeans would later rename and establish the entire island as the Hispaniola (James, 1963).

Unfortunately for Taino Indians, "the original Haitians," their discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1492 would lead to their near extinction (Farmer, 1994, p. 59-60). Louis (2011) reported that up to 1 million Taino Indians were annihilated by forced labor, disease, physical and psychological trauma (p. 891). The Taino's near extinction created a need for newly forced laborers, leading to the beginning of the human trafficking of Africans to the Hispaniola in 1517 (Farmer, 1994).

By the mid-1600s, the island's fertility, richness, and potential caught the attention of the French, and the British, thereby causing thirty years of bloody rivalry between the Spain, France and Britain (James, 1963). The 1697 Treaty of Ryswick marked the end of the rivalry with the French gaining the western part of the island they called Saint-Domingue, today's Haiti (Farmer, 1994, p. 61). With this treaty, came the increased demand for slaves from the west coast of Africa as Haiti, "the pearl of the Antilles," became world-renowned for its sugar, coffee, tobacco and indigo production capabilities (Louis, 2011, p. 891).

The ancestral roots of the Haitian people can be traced back predominantly to these Africans who were forced into slavery and into horrendous conditions; the actualization of an

evil design. Such design as the European or Atlantic slave trade, was a response to the demand for human labor in maintaining the 1700s economic boom of Saint Dominique or Haiti, not to be confused with modern-day Santo Domingo (Brown, 2010; James, 1963). It is difficult, if not impossible, for most to imagine the context in which the enslavement, torture, and denigration of a people make sense. However, men with an insatiable appetite for power and riches found slavery profitable.

Even in the face of such atrocities, the spirit of the Haitian people, the African descendants, refused to cease hoping. In 1791, The Haitian revolution, led by Toussaint Louverture, stunned Haiti's oppressors (Farmer, 1994). The bloody revolution would last until 1804. After the capture and death Louverture, the Haitian military, led by Jean-Jacques Dessaline, defeated Napoleon's forces, reclaimed its Indian name "Ayiti" and became the first free black republic (James, 1963, p. 370). Although these enslaved people had won their freedom, oppression would come in other forms that challenge Haiti's survival and stability until the present day.

In 1825, under the constant threat of invasion, the fragile republic agreed to pay 150 million francs in reparations to the French for their claimed loss of income, property, and its enslaved labor force (Dubois, 2004; Farmer, 1994). However, France was not the only country Haiti had to frequently pay. Farmer (1994) recounts ostracization of the first free black republic through a systematic depletion of Haiti's capital by the Germans, French, British and the United States (p. 88). These payments, along with Haiti's corrupt dictators, have had detrimental effects on Haiti's economy and infrastructure. Zéphir (2004) explains, "the heavy indemnities that Haiti was forced to pay to powerful nations in return for recognition and an end to its

isolation from global markets contributed greatly to bankrupting the country, in addition, of course, to the greed and corruption of its own heads of state” (p. 45).

As a consequence of centuries of Haiti’s foreign and domestic exploitation, poverty and political atrocities, migration to the surrounding countries has been the resolve of troubled Haitian natives seeking refuge even at the risk of death (Laguerre, 1984).

### **Migration of the “Haitian Boat People”**

According to Louis (2011), the history of Haitian presence and influence in the United States dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (p. 901). However, increased migration of Haiti’s elite and middle class started in 1958 under the brutal dictatorship of Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc). In the 70s, Papa Doc’s son, Jean-Claude Duvalier’s (Baby Doc) oppressive regime would ignite the migration of Haiti’s uneducated and poor population (Fjellman & Gladwin, 1985). The “boat people”, a title that preceded discrimination, was given to Haitians who were migrating to the United States and surrounding borders (Farmer, 1994; Zéphir, 2004, p. 78). This group of Haitian immigrants of the 70s and 80s, unlike their predecessors who also fled persecution, were Haiti’s poorest. They fled extreme poverty and the political persecution of the Duvalier regime in makeshift boats (Laguerre, 1984; Zéphir, 2004). A “Post-Duvalier” era, 1986 – 2004, was filled with a succession of presidents and military coups that further destabilized the country and led to more Haitian migration (Zéphir, 2004).

Jean-Bertrand Aristide was one such Haitian president. Under Aristide’s leadership, a political uprising and the verge of civil war led to his forced departure under the protection of U.S. forces (Zéphir, 2004). The 90s and early 2000s proved to be just as politically tumultuous as the Duvalier eras. Desperate times called for desperate measures for fleeing Haitian



immigrants. However, U.S. immigration policies towards Haitian refugees in that era offered no solace.

Between the 70s and post-Duvalier era, refugees escaping poverty, oppression and retaliation for opposing the Haitian government were unwelcomed wherever they sought safety (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1990). Those seeking refuge in the U.S. faced many barriers, such as labeling people as “economic refugees” and not “political refugees” during the time when Duvalier’s regime of the 80s was persecuting all who were in opposition to the government (Farmer, 1994, p. 118).

This labeling distinction was crucial in the justification for entry denial and deportation. In addition, Haitian asylum seekers faced harsh conditions in detention camps. Undisclosed HIV tests were administered to refugees who passed the political refugee test. This was another barrier to entry if found positive (Farmer, 1994; Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1990). Despite stigmatization, discrimination and U.S. repatriation policies of the 80s and 90s, over 225,000 Haitian born immigrants were living in the United States by 1990 (Schulz & Batalova, 2017). A 2008 census reported an estimated 535,000 Haitian born immigrants resided in the U.S. with 70% of that number residing in Florida and New York (Terrazas, 2010).

The history of Haitians migrating to the United States in hopes of economic and sociopolitical relief has led to a significant population of individuals with Haitian Ancestry living in America. According to a 2009 census report, ancestry is defined as the ethnic group(s) with which respondents identified (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu 2010). The 2009 census report, estimated 830,000 respondents in the United States identified as having Haitian Ancestry, with the largest majority living in Florida, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Connecticut (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu 2010). A large number of this group are second-generation

Haitian-Americans, those who were born in the United States and have at least one Haitian parent who migrated from Haiti.

The demographics in Florida continue to reflect an increased number of Haitian immigrant residents as U.S. immigration policies towards a 2010 post-earthquake Haiti softened. Chishti & Bergeron (2010) reports that the U.S. enacted many policies following the 2010 earthquake such as Temporary Protected Status (TPS), more lenient entry to approved visa applicants, suspended deportations, extended visas and granting work authorizations to Haitian Students.

However, the fate of Haitian TPS holders has been decided by the present U.S. administration. Nearly 60,000 Haitian TPS recipients have been asked to prepare to leave the U.S. by July 2019 (Tatum, 2017). The ramifications of this decision are yet to be measured, but one can imagine its impact on Haitian families and their U.S. born children. Understanding the migrating patterns of Haitians immigrants and U.S. policy highlights the need more research and social services for second-generation Haitian-Americans and their families in concentrated areas.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

### Haitian Immigrant Families and Acculturation

Like other migrant families, Haitian immigrants in the U.S. faced many challenges which included issues of acculturation and assimilation to their new environment (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2011). Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado (1987) define acculturation as “an adaptive process of cultural adjustment that takes individuals through several different phases changing his/her conditions of life” (p. 207). Notably, the climate of prejudice and discrimination that Haitian immigrants encountered in the United States, during and after the Duvalier years, played a major role in their acculturation process. According to Portes and Macleod (1996), the extent to which immigrant families experience “smooth process of social and psychological integration,” depends on societal reception and assistance of immigrants (p. 257).

An earlier study by Portes and Zhou (1993), distinguished the “smooth acceptance” versus “traumatic confrontation” that certain immigrant groups experienced as influencing a “segmented assimilation.” The authors explained segmented assimilation as the social class to which an immigrant group was able to acculturate to. The class acculturated into, determined the immigrant group’s upward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 82). It is well documented that Haitian immigrants of the 80s and 90s were part of the unwelcomed or “disadvantaged group” of minorities characterized by racial discrimination, poor public image and the likelihood of repatriation as “economic refugees” (Farmer, 1994, p. 118; Portes & Macleod, 1996; Zéphir, 2004, p. 79).

Furthermore, Belizaire and Fuertes (2011), characterized Haitians as a “triple minority;” race/ethnicity, immigrant and economically disadvantaged minorities (p. 95). However, some of the literature indicates that Haitian immigrant families of the 80s fared better in combating the

difficulties of migration due to the flexibility of Haitian extended family structure and the social support within the Haitian sub-community (Fjellman & Gladwin, 1985; Woldemikael, 1989).

Portes and MacLeod (1996) identified this closed community structure as a form of social capital in the Haitian community.

Nevertheless, unfavorable “context of reception” and the lack of government assistance played an adverse role in the how Haitian immigrants were received and their ability to adapt smoothly to a new culture (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & MacLeod, 1996). Starting with the migratory patterns of Haitians seeking asylum and economic relief in the 80s and 90s, this minority group has experienced unique stigmatization and prejudice in the United States.

Nevertheless, Haitian Americans have succeeded in becoming an intricate part of the American fabric.

### **Haitian Families and Education**

The significance of education for Haitian families is emphasized in the literature. Nicholas & Severe (2008) reports education has a pathway to economic success for Haitian families in America. Haitian children usually understand the significance of an education in the context of their families’ expectation. This expectation is rooted in the pride and hope of Haitian families (Desire, 2007). Nicholas et al (2008) explain, “children, therefore, are not only a source of economic security for parents but also vehicles for social advancement of the family; it is a parent’s pride to send a child to college, and the status of the family rises with the child’s accomplishments” (p. 241). Such high hopes and expectation are often in conflict with Haitian parents’ perception of urban public schools in areas where most live (Nicholas & Severe, 2008). Zéphir (2004) explains that Haitian parents, sometimes choose to have their children finish preliminary to early high school years in Haiti (p. 150). This option is not always viable for all

Haitian families. In times of political turbulence, economic instability or natural disasters, parents who have children in Haiti and are able, will either send for them or send them out of Haiti. According to Desir (2007) the “sending context” delineates the sociopolitical turmoil, in which Haitian immigrant students were sent out of their country between 1991 and 1994 (p. 74). Furthermore, Desir (2007) explains, “students have been targets of political attacks in Haitian history” (p. 84). The Haitian government or political insurgents during different political eras would oppress students by stifling their access to education as a means of retaining political power (Desir, 2007; Zéphir, 2004). It is out of these contexts that many students found themselves in American inner-city public school systems.

### **Low Socioeconomic Status as an Educational Barrier for Haitian Families**

It is common knowledge that an education improves one’s chances for economic stability in the United States. For Haitian immigrants, a quality education has significant implications for the entire extended family, including those still living in Haiti (Fjellman & Gladwin, 1985, p. 305; Nicholas et al, 2008, p. 241). Although many Haitian parents strive to educate themselves and their children, Haitian students and their families still face potentially paralyzing educational barriers in the United States. According to the literature, low SES of minority immigrant families had an impact on children’s educational outcomes (De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Pong & Landale, 2012). Based on the 2009 survey by American Community Survey Briefs, 19.6% of the Haitian population was living in poverty compared to the 14.3% of the total population who were living in poverty (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu, 2010, p. 3).

Many Haitian immigrant parents are themselves uneducated and work for minimum wage jobs placing them in the low SES category. For this group, working for minimum wage is an improvement to the life that they left behind in Haiti; they came to the U.S. without formal

schooling or sufficient skills (Stepick & Portes, 1986). In a study involving Haitian youth in Miami-Dade, Stepick, Stepick, Eugene, Teed and Labissiere (2001) describe parents' education and work experience as "human capital" affecting their adaptation in America and the educational outcome of their offspring (p. 232 - 233). This description and the current statistics on the Haitian population's overall economic status supports Baum and Flores (2011) claim that Haitian immigrants, in relation to some Black-immigrant groups, face more difficulties to college enrollment (P. 182). According to Buchanan, Albert, and Beaulieu (2010), "among Haitians 25 years and over, 18 percent of both males and females had a bachelor's degree or more, compared with 28 percent of males and 27 percent of females in the total population" (p. 2).

In addition, the 2009 survey showed more Haitians in the labor force compared to the rest of the population; however, they average much less in yearly earnings (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu, 2010, p. 2). However, some Haitians immigrant families focus on the employment opportunities afforded to them in the U.S., otherwise absent from their native country (Fjellman & Gladwin, 1985; Woldemikael, 1989).

A respondent in a study by Fjellman & Gladwin (1985) explains, "What we are here is for the job" regardless if it is a "demeaning" minimum-wage job (p. 236). This sentiment is still shared in certain Haitian circles. Nevertheless, the academic and income correlation, based on the statistics, may be an influential factor in second-generation Haitian American students' decisions regarding higher education. In their study, Wells and Lynch (2012) found low-economic students' delay in college entry may be linked to their perception regarding the cost of college, thereby seeking employment as an alternate option (p. 688). These findings and statistics have significant implications for second-generation Haitian Americans in low SES homes.

### **Other Educational Barriers Affecting Haitian Families**

In addition to low SES, there are other educational barriers affecting Haitian students. According to Giles (1990), Haitian families in American school systems faced educational barriers such as poor parent-school relationship. The poor relationship between Haitian parents and schools were often because of low parental involvement due to fear of deportation, lack of English proficiency, long parental work schedule, low parent involvement in children's homework, and prejudices from peers and teachers (Giles, 1990, p. 318). These barriers are particularly troublesome for Haitian immigrants because they are less likely than other immigrant groups to receive government and social support, which the literature links to low SES, acculturation difficulties, and social acceptance (De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Pong & Landale, 2012).

The literature also emphasizes discrimination as a factor in Haitian students and families' educational barriers. For instance, Haitians who migrated to Florida in the 1980s and 90s reported a history of ostracization and mistreatment in schools (Zephir, 2004, p. 83). Other forms of discrimination and prejudice were in sharp contrast to immigration policies for Cuban and Haitian refugees (De Feyter & Winsler, 2009, p. 428). Inevitably, discriminatory policies and the public image of Haitian refugees led to negative social reception affecting Haitian immigrant students including second-generation Haitian students. Portes and MacLeod (1996) explain that the "context of reception," meaning how an immigrant group is received in their host community, whether favorably or unfavorably, plays a significant role in an immigrant group's socioeconomic status and their children's school performance (p. 257). Their study linked immigrants' context of reception to their children's academic performance (Portes & MacLeod, 1996, p. 271). Portes and MacLeod (1996) further explain that "early differences in the arrival

and modes of incorporation of immigrants can have decisive consequences both for their own future and that of their American descendants” (p. 271). Discriminatory policies and practices impede the educational progress and upward mobility of Haitian communities, yet there are signs of hope as some Haitian Americans succeed at passing the college graduation threshold.

### **Family Influence on Minority College Students’ Academic Success**

A number of studies have pointed to the familial influence factor in the academic success of minority college students. In a focus group study, family support was identified as one of the major themes contributing to the success of African American and Latino community college students (Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). In a qualitative study by Herndon and Hirt (2004) focusing on the relationship between Black college students and their families, the authors concluded that families, including extended families, were instrumental in fostering college success. Herndon and Hirt (2004) explain that “the family is a conduit for educational attainment...” in its ability to serve as a foundational source for academic achievement (p. 491). The authors place emphasis on the influential aspects of a family in cultivating and nurturing academic potential. The meaning of education, its conception for minority college students, can be traced to familial influences in many cases.

In another qualitative study, family or home communities is identified as one of the discrete factors in Black participants’ motivation to pursue a Ph.D. in engineering (McGee et al., 2016). In a study review of the literature focusing on Black women’s college success, Winkle-Wagner (2014) found that hidden in the literature, was the role relationships played in encouraging educational attainment. Specifically, the quality of the relationship between Black women and their parents were among the types of relationships influencing college success



(Winkle-Wagner, 2014). Likewise, Black men participants in a qualitative study attributed their academic success to their families (Flowers III, 2015).

A study by Morales (2010) focusing on the academic resiliency of low SES urban student of color in college, found 80% of the participants reported that their parents' high expectations, amongst other factors, influenced their academic resilience (p. 169). However, the main factor for participants was their families' influence. Morales (2010) writes, "...though work ethic, persistence, and internal locus of control were strong in relative isolation, when combined with participants perceptions of their family members' commitments and struggles, they became more powerful" (p. 169). In another study that looked at the importance of three macro social factors influencing minority students' aspirations in the field of social work, family was one of the key macro factors (Paat, 2017).

Not all the studies found family influences to be a major factor in minority students' college success. Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005), in a longitudinal study, found personal motivation was a predictor of academic success in first-generation ethnic minority college students. However, Dennis et al (2005) reported participants' endorsement of both individualistic and collectivist as factors of motivation for attending college. Individualistic motives are characterized by personal reasons for attending college, while collectivist motives are based on family expectations (Dennis et al, 2005, p. 224 – 225). Systemically, one could argue that education in the context of family is relational regardless of what motivates its attainment.

### **Second-Generation Haitian-American College Students and Families**

Currently, there is very little research on the descendants of Haitian immigrants and the reasons influencing their post-secondary educational achievements. In a study by Carbonell,

Philossaint, Kijai, and Bailey (2011), the authors looked at Haitian-American women college students. Haitian-American women included in this study were those born in the United States and those born in Haiti. The study found several factors that contributed the participants' college education attainment. In line with the literature was family support as one of those major factors (Carbonell et al, 2011).

An earlier study on the factors contributing to the success of disadvantaged second-generation Haitians in South Florida also found family's influence as a factor in academic success (Konczal & Haller, 2008). Although the authors found Haitians were more likely to fare worst in terms of poverty rates and experiences of discrimination, consistent with the literature, second-generation Haitians in their study also reported the importance of the close-knit Haitian family or community. Haitian communities and families often serve as a support barrier against social ills; described by most Haitians as "lakou" (Desir, 2011; Konczal & Haller, 2008; Nicholas et al, 2008). The lakou can also be a launching pad for Haitian children wanting to leave the nest in pursuit of success (Konczal & Haller, 2008). In their research, Nicholas, Stepick, and Stepick (2008) looked at second-generation Haitian American high school students' pathways to academic success despite challenges and disadvantages. The researchers found that the parent-child relationship and a sense of family obligation were key in this groups' achievements. The authors write, "The Haitian children who succeed against all odds are motivated by a strong desire to please their parents and inverse fear that they will disappoint them" (Nicholas, Stepick, & Stepick, 2008, p. 238).

None of these studies, however, look at second-generation Haitian-American college graduates' understanding of education through their family of origin's multigenerational perspectives and its implications. There may be a possible multigenerational connection

between Haitian families and their offspring in potentializing some to succeed at attaining a college degree. The systemic implications may contribute to how the Haitian family unit functions, at times, as the driving force despite socioeconomic or sociopolitical barriers. Konczal and Haller (2008), in a last statement, elude to a possible connection between individuals, families' influence and emotional reactions in propelling some second-generation Americans to achieving success in face of challenges:

The inertia of everyday life and the threat of disapproval can only be overcome when really significant others intervene or when traumatic events provoke a strong emotional rejection of one's surroundings. Paradoxically, emotions can lead to rationality, allowing at least some second-generation youth to break away from near-certain downward assimilation (p. 175).

More explicit, are the theories of Dr. Murray Bowen regarding the family as a reciprocally connected "emotional unit or an emotional system" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 50). Bowen would argue, however, emotions lead to reactivity instead of rationality (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen family systems theory, as it relates to second-generation Haitian Americans' family/educational perspectives, offers a lens to view the Haitian family as an "emotional unit" and education as one possible "anxiety binder" through multiple generations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 119). Although Bowen's Family Systems Theory tends to focus on these processes as explaining problematic interactions, this study is interested in the possibility of Haitian family educational influences on second-generation Haitian American college graduates as strengths and resources.

## **A Bowen Family Systems Theory Lens**

Murray Bowen, the founder of Bowen's family systems, theorized that families function as the natural systems that they are (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). From this evolutionary stance, Bowen's family systems theory believes "...human behavior is significantly regulated by the same natural processes that regulate the behavior of all other living things" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 3). Meaning, these natural processes or life forces in humans and families, as described by Kerr and Bowen (1988), are naturally occurring "without human intervention" (p. 24). Not to be confused with systems theory, Bowen's family systems theory focuses on the synergy between forces in a family system (Bowen, 1976). From this theoretical stance, individuals in a family do not behave independently from one another but are reciprocally dependent.

In Bowen's family systems theory, family processes and interactions can be viewed as predictable based on the interactions between two systems; the "feeling system" and "intellectual system" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 30). The feeling system in Bowen's theory is not the same as emotions and it is assumed to be part of all living systems (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The thinking system in Bowen's theory is said to only apply to human beings because of their unique ability "...to know, to understand, and to communicate complex ideas..." (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 31). Bowen postulates many concepts explaining individual and family processes as they relate to feeling and intellectual systems, and their interplay. Amongst these are Individuality and Togetherness, Differentiation of Self, Chronic Anxiety and Multigenerational Transmission Processes. For the purpose of this study, these are the concepts that are discussed and explored.

## **Individuality and Togetherness**

Bowen's theory posits the family unit is not simply a group of individuals behaving independently of each other. Rather, the family is best understood as an interdependent emotional system with predetermined roles and functions. Kerr & Bowen (1988) write, "People are born into and occupy functioning positions in a family, positions that have an important influence on many aspects of their biological, psychological, and social functioning" (p. 50). Friedman (1991) offers this explanation, "A family emotional system includes the members' thoughts, feelings, emotions, fantasies, associations, and past connections, individually and together. It includes their physical makeup, genetic heritage, and current metabolic states" (p. 144). Furthermore, the emotional system or unit and its members interact reciprocally in contributing to the "emotional field" that determines family members' positions (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 55). Consequently, the emotional connections and reactivity between family members plays a role in family members "individuality and togetherness" or an emotional interaction that is "regulated by the interplay of a force that inclines people to follow their own directives, to be independent (individuality), and a force that inclines them to respond to directives from others, to be connected (togetherness)" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 61). The question then is whether one is capable of a distinct "self" or "differentiation of self" within the context of a family's "emotional system" without a reactive inclination towards individuality or togetherness (Bowen, 1976).

## **Differentiation of Self**

Bowen defines differentiation of self as an individual's "...degree of fusion, or differentiation, between emotional and intellectual functioning" or the ability to maintain a distinct self, capable of "intellectual functioning" that is not ruled by the emotional system (Bowen, 1976, p. 65). Kerr and Bowen (1988) further explain, "The more differentiated a self,

the more a person can be an individual *while in emotional contact with the group*" (p. 94). Thus, differentiation is not a disconnection or disengagement from the family unit, rather it is the ability to self-govern in the emotional unit or the ability "to be fairly autonomous in [one's] emotional functioning" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 94). Individuals in the family can have a self that is distinct from the family as a whole while being in touch or aware of the family's needs. According to Bowen's theory, the degree to which individuals and families demonstrate differentiation varies depending on times of stress or family crisis (Bowen, 1976). Naturally, in difficult times anxiety tends to be high in families. The authors write, "When anxiety is high, people can become more reactive and less thoughtful; *system* functioning is prone to decline. The anxiety destabilizes individuals and increases the relationship focus" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 99). There is a tendency for less differentiation when anxiety and emotional reactivity is high. However, Bowen's theory would consider the individual's or family's level of differentiation in determining the level of adaptability to a stressor or stressors pertaining to family functioning (Bowen, 1976). Using a Bowenian lens, how do we understand individuals and families in terms of Chronic Anxiety?

### **Chronic Anxiety**

In Bowen's framework, chronic anxiety is not the persistent worrying or fear about a situation or thing (Friedman, 1991). Bowen (1976) views chronic anxiety as being useful in determining an individual's or relationship system's level of differentiation (p. 65). Friedman (1991) further explains, Bowen's concept of chronic anxiety as an "emotional and physical reactivity shared by all protoplasm, the responses that are automatic rather than mediated by the cortex" (p. 140). Based on Friedman's (1991) explanation, one is not thinking about chronic anxiety in the sense that, "I am worried," but chronic anxiety exists and is felt in the emotional

system, even through generations. Chronic anxiety, "...is transmitted from previous generations by families...and it is experienced and expressed more intensely by various individual members of our species..." depending on how prior generations directed or dealt with inherited anxiety (Friedman, 1991, p. 140).

The extent to which chronic anxiety is felt in a family system depends on the level of differentiation and varies over time or generations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Furthermore, Kerr and Bowen (1988) characterize the management of chronic anxiety as binding of anxiety through different means. Thus alcohol, drugs, illnesses, eating disorders, even success, in lower differentiated individuals or families, "are manifestations and binders of anxiety" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Binders of anxiety can manifest in different forms through multiple generations.

### **Multigenerational Transmission Processes**

Kerr and Bowen (1988) define multigenerational transmission process or multigenerational emotional processes as "an orderly and predictable relationship process that connects the functioning of family members across generations" (p. 224). The multigenerational transmission process is a key Bowenian concept in understanding family functioning in a multigenerational lens. Bowen theorizes that family beliefs and characteristics are transmitted from one generation to the next (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). McGoldrick (2011) concurs "families transmit messages that seem to prescribe behavior for generations to come. They embed in the narratives the sense they make of their lives, as well as rules for relationships and behavior" (p. 60). These transmitted messages influence levels of functioning.

Family branches through the generations will vary in their levels of functioning. Kerr and Bowen (1988) write, "Every family, given sufficient generations, tends to produce people at both functional extremes and people at most points on a continuum between these extremes" (p.

221). Bowen's theory posits the level of differentiation, thus functioning, will vary between branches of a family tree (p. 115). A multigenerational family evaluation is useful in understanding the continuum between the "emotional system" and "intellectual system" in the management of chronic anxiety through generations (Bowen, 1976). However, for Haitian families, a multigenerational family evaluation focused on education is useful in understanding how family processes inspire the educational success of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates. Effective evaluation of such processes often involves the use of a family diagram or genogram (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

### **Educational Genogram**

The family diagram or genogram is a valuable tool conceptualized by Bowen in visualizing the family emotional processes (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Friedman, 1991). Family interactions are mapped out using symbols to highlight connections and patterns across multiple generations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; McGoldrick, 2011). The genogram is also used in viewing the larger societal and cultural contexts in which a family might be embedded. For instance, family issues related to "education, financial success or failure..." expand our understanding of family interactions (McGoldrick, 2011, p. 302). Employing the use of a genogram offers a systemic lens in understanding the beliefs and relational aspects of certain familial topics such as education.

Santa Rita & Adejanju (1993) utilized an academic genogram in mapping the academic intergenerational influences of students' families. The authors found the academic genogram as an informative and systemic approach for counselors in the assessment and treatment of students' academic difficulties (Santa Rita & Adejanju, 1993). In a study utilizing a career genogram in uncovering strengths of at-risk racial/ethnic first-generation college student as



“cultural capital”, participants demonstrated improvements and confidence in their career decision-making processes (Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2012). The emphasis on strength and resources when mapping family processes can be found in a solution-oriented approach to genograms (Kuehl, 1995). As McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry (2008) suggest, “Genograms have been used...to engage families, to reframe and detoxify family issues, to unblock the system, to clarify family patterns, and to connect families to their history and thus empower them...” Empowering Haitian families was the hope of this study in employing an educational genogram.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used the systemic lens of Bowen’s family systems theory to uncover the possible familial strengths influencing second-generation Haitian-American college graduates. Bowen’s theory as it relates to multigenerational emotional processes can offer valuable insight into the propensity for some second-generation Haitian-Americans’ to excel in graduating from college in relation to their family’s influence even in unfavorable social conditions. A lot can be learned by understanding the possible systemic multigenerational implication of education within Haitian families as experienced by second-generation Haitian American college graduates.

As Kerr and Bowen (1988) explain it, “A person’s family of origin has the potential to be both a resource and a support system...The family of origin is a resource for learning more about oneself” or in this case, second-generation Haitian American college graduates (p. 275). It is through this multigenerational lens that this study sought to explore the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates in relation to these possible systemic multigenerational implications. An interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to understand and interpret these lived experiences.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### Problem Statement

The meaning of education for, and the experiences of, second-generation Haitian-American college graduates remain relatively underexplored in the literature. Much of the literature highlights issues plaguing Haitian families. The statistics seem to depict a grim outlook of Haitian families and their offspring living in South Florida (Buchanan, Albert, & Beaulieu 2010). This grim outlook is characterized by economic hardships, Haitian students' academic difficulties and low college graduation rates (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Baum & Flores, 2011). Yet, second-generation Haitian-American college graduates offer an alternative narrative. This study explored this alternative narrative through participants' multigenerational conversations about education. This study sought to address the gap in the literature regarding second-generation Haitian-American college graduates and their perspectives on the multigenerational influences on their education. Multigenerational Haitian families' emotional processes regarding education through the eyes of their offspring was the focus of this research. Additionally, the study offers possible strengths and resources that could be drawn from participants' alternative narratives and their multigenerational processes surrounding education. As previously discussed, three major questions drove this study:

1. How do second-generation Haitian-American college graduates describe their cultural views on education?
2. How do these cultural views on education inform or influence Haitian families living in South Florida?
3. What are the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates regarding their family of origin's influences on them as it pertains to education?

This study explored these experiences and meanings through qualitative method inquiry. The research questions and findings are addressed in chapter four.

Smith (2003) notes the purpose of the qualitative method is “exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants” (p. 2). The researcher in a qualitative study conducts diligent exploration of multiple data sources, organizing and interpreting its emerging themes (Creswell, 2013). According to Smith (2003), a qualitative researcher’s interpretation of participants’ perceptions and understanding of a phenomenon is done in comprehensive accounts. In phenomenology, these comprehensive accounts serve as the description of the participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). This study sought to understand and interpret the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates through an exploration of the systemic multigenerational family influences on them pertaining to education.

### **Phenomenology**

Moustakas (1994) explains a phenomenon as “what appears in the consciousness...comes from the Greek *phaemesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (p. 26). Considered a primary figure in the concept of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009; Giorgi, & Giorgi, 2003), Edmund Husserl disapproved of science that excluded human experience and meaning (Husserl, 1997). For Husserl, human experiences are phenomena that one can only truly capture or describe through the concept of “*epoche*” or “*bracketing*” whereby the researcher suspends or sets aside his or her foreknowledge, experiences and/or prejudices (Husserl, 1997, p. 78 – 79). These ideas led to Husserl’s concept of transcendental phenomenology which “...adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). As Husserl (1970) called it, the

“transcendental ego” achieved through epoche or bracketing (p. 210). Martin Heidegger, a Husserl student, took issue with the concept of bracketing (LeVasseur, 2003; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). Heidegger believed that it was not possible for a researcher to set aside foreknowledge, experiences, and judgments because of what he called the human *Dasein* or “being-in-the-world” or existence (LeVasseur, 2003; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). In a letter critiquing Husserl, Heidegger (1927) writes,

Somatology’s and pure psychology’s ‘one-sided’ treatment [of the psychophysical] are possible only on the basis of the concrete wholeness of the human being, and this wholeness as such is what primarily determines the human being’s mode of being. The [notion of the] ‘pure psychic’ has arisen without the slightest regard for the ontology of the whole human being... (p. 138).

Heidegger argues against Husserl’s transcendental philosophy or bracketing in achieving a “pure psychology” (1977). Heidegger posits that consciousness cannot be separated from the “wholeness of the human being.” *Dasein* is always present; we, as the whole being, are “always thrown into the world” with our presuppositions (LeVasseur, 2003). For Heidegger, a hermeneutic or interpretative approach to phenomenology was better suited. He believed the researcher was an active participant in the investigative inquiry, a principle of the hermeneutic circle theory. According to Heidegger’s theoretical perspective, presuppositions or prior knowledge, unlike Husserl’s attempt at suspending them, added value to interpretations of phenomena (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009).

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

The origin of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) can be found in the discipline of hermeneutics and Heidegger’s view of embracing the “*Dasein*,” “factual existence”

and “factual life” as existing in fact or “being there” (Eatough, & Smith, 2011). Eatough and Smith (2011) explain, “IPA explicitly attends to a ‘hermeneutics of factual life through a method which asserts that events and objects we are directed towards are to be understood by investigating how they are experienced and given meaning by the individual” (p. 3). Deriving from the Greek word *hermeneusin*, hermeneutics means to understand or to interpret (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). IPA is interested in making sense of, highlighting and interpreting the participants’ subjective experiences; the essence of hermeneutics (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Furthermore, the hermeneutic circle, as explained by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), is the integrative circular relationship between parts and wholes, between the observer and observed, the interviewer and interviewee, the data and the researcher, the experience and the context. Although immersed in hermeneutic principles, IPA also practices certain elements of Husserl’s concept of bracketing (Eatough, & Smith, 2011). The interpretative process for Heidegger, as noted earlier, involves the inclusion of the researcher’s foreknowledge, without the possibility of bracketing one’s experiences in research. However, IPA attempts a partial bracketing (Smith et al, 2009). LeVasseur (2003) explains such bracketing is possible when researchers become curious. Curiosity supposes the possibility of something unknown. In IPA, an attempted bracketing is done through a curious reflection of the essence of an experience or by suspending preconceptions (Smith et al, 2009). Subsequently, bracketing in this manner leads to the possibility of new meanings; a process referred to as the opening of the hermeneutic circle (Eatough, & Smith, 2011; LeVasseur, 2003).

Consequently, the researcher chose Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for its inclusive nature of “*Dasein*” and hermeneutic concepts which acknowledges the researcher’s

prior knowledge as an integrative part of the research (Eatough & Smith, 2011). Additionally, bracketing in this qualitative design allows for a reflective processing of researcher assumptions and bias as part of the meaning-making process. Furthermore, IPA steers away from explaining or theorizing the participants' experiences. In IPA, the focus is on "how individuals are perceiving [a] particular situation...how they are making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53). The researcher was interested in how second-generation Haitian-American college graduates make sense of their family of origin's influences on them regarding education. IPA's idiographic structure in attaining a thorough analysis of individuals' experiences was an epistemological fit for this study (Smith et al, 2009).

### **Sample**

According to Smith (2008), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is idiographic in its focus on individual perspectives or experiences; participants should be selected purposefully. Therefore, detailed analysis of participants' perspective on a phenomenon requires a small sample size (Smith et al, 2009). In a study using IPA design to understand how a sense of calling is related to the career change process, the authors recruited eight individuals through a "snowballing" method in which emails, personal networks, social media, flyers and cash rewards were used (Ahn et al, 2017; Smith et al, 2009). Homogeneity of the sample group is also essential in IPA, restricting researchers to an area or community for whom the study in question is significant or meaningful (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

This study recruited selected, self-identified second-generation Haitian-American college graduates in South Florida, the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. Sample selection was based on qualifying criteria. The qualifying criteria were second-generation Haitian-Americans who were born in the United States, whose parents were born in

and migrated from Haiti. Participants were between the ages of 20 – 35, except for one female participant who was 36 at the time of the interview. Participants were also required to have a minimum of a bachelors' degree. Using a “snowballing” strategy, participants were recruited by flyers, social media, researcher's personal networks, and referrals by participants (Smith et al, 2009).

### **Procedure**

Establishing ethical safeguards in research procedures is essential to the principle of non-maleficence, to do no harm to participants. Smith et al (2009) share an ethical guideline for conducting qualitative research centered on informed consent, anonymity and the participants' right to withdraw. In accordance with these guidelines, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for conducting research, American Psychological Association's (APA) code of conduct, and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy's (AAMFT) code of ethics, this study took every precaution to ensure the safety of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Ethical consideration was an ongoing process throughout the data collection (Smith et al, 2009).

Asking participants to share their experiences in the context of their family of origin can bring to the forefront unpleasant memories or difficult topics, causing unexpected emotional reactions. To further ensure the safety of the participants, the researcher provided participants with a counseling referral list. The referral list can be found in Appendix D.

The introspective nature of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis can be transformative or impactful to participants (Eatough & Smith, 2011). According to Creswell (2013), establishing respectful rapport is a priority in designing a qualitative study. To initiate such a rapport in this study, participants were given the opportunity to make an informed decision. For this study, what participants should expect, such as the structure of the interviews,

the limits of confidentiality and the potential outcome of the research, were detailed in an informed consent document (Smith et al, 2009). See Appendix B.

Every effort of de-identification was made in the collection of the data. De-identification procedures included beginning recordings after formal introductions, omitting participants' names or using pseudonyms for participants during note taking and data analysis. However, the nature of the study which involves committee review and future publication does not allow for complete confidentiality. Participants were made aware of these limits and offered anonymity as the best safeguard (Smith et al, 2009). Participants were also made aware of their right to withdraw at any time.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through participant interviews. These interviews were set in the context of purposeful conversations to facilitate participants' accounts of their experience (Smith et al, 2009). "A virtual map" or a guideline of pre-determined questions referred to as an interview schedule, aids IPA researchers in facilitating meaningful conversations (Smith et al). Additionally, Smith et al (2009), recommends allowing participants to choose where the interview should take place. In the manner described above, interviews were conducted by the researcher. Prior to initiating the interviews, participants were informed verbally, as well as in writing, the purpose of the study and the details regarding informed consent. Signing the informed consent form was required before interviews began.

### **Semi-structured Interview**

Smith et al (2009) recommend open interview questions to enable interviewees' perspective to emerge, limiting the researcher's bias towards an expected response. Participants in this study were asked eight open-ended questions in its investigation of second-generation



Haitian-Americans' perspective on their family of origin's understanding of education. The range of questions fit within the recommendation of six to ten open-ended questions proposed by Smith et al (2009).

1. What are your family of origin's view of education?
2. How did your family migrating to the United States influence your views on education, if at all?
3. What do you believe are the differences or similarities between your parents' and grandparents' view of education?
4. How did your family of origin's views on education influence you throughout your life?
5. What are the differences or similarities between your views and that of your parents' and grandparents'?
6. Can you remember and describe your perception of your family of origin's reaction when you obtained your degree?
7. What feelings emerged for you when you obtained your degree? What did your degree mean to you?
8. What do you imagine the future implications of education are or will be for the next generation of your family?

A semi-structured interview allowed for flexibility in the interview schedule and facilitated a deeper analysis of the essential elements of participants' responses (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith, 2008). This structure was more collaborative and inclusive of participants' involvement in the interview process. Smith and Osborn (2003) provided a guideline to accomplish a semi-structured interview:

- There is an attempt to establish rapport with the respondent.

- The ordering of questions is less important.
- The interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise.
- The interview can follow the respondent's interests or concerns.

(p. 56)

## **Recordings**

Upon receiving informed consent, the interview with participants was recorded. The nature of IPA necessitates close analysis of participants' experience in discovering possible emerging themes. Recordings are essential for data collection in IPA. Therefore, diligent efforts were made, in-line with the ethical requirements, in securing recordings and protecting the confidentiality of participants. In accordance with IPA design, a semantic record of the interview was preferred (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al, 2009). A semantic transcription of the recordings focused on important or noteworthy pauses, laughter, and other non-verbal sounds, as opposed to a prosodic transcription requiring a record of all sound and length of pauses (Smith et al, 2009, p. 74).

## **Data Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenology is an iterative process, which fosters a part/whole or a hermeneutic circle relationship between researcher and data (Smith et al; 2009). Maintaining this relationship is essential to the reflective nature of IPA. Smith et al (2009) outline six steps in the IPA process. However, these steps serve as a guide to IPA and not a mere checklist to be completed. Each step requires thoughtful analysis or processing of the data and the researcher's relationship to it (Smith et al, 2009). These steps are summarized as follows:

1. *Reading and re-reading* – This step takes place after the transcription of the first interview recording. It entails reading and re-reading the transcript, possibly while

listening to the recording of the transcript for a thorough evaluation of the data. The goal is to develop a close familiarity with the transcript.

2. *Initial noting* – This step coincides with step one. Noting in this phase involves a detailed analysis of the transcript through “exploratory commenting.” Exploratory commenting is divided into three types: Descriptive, Linguistic and Conceptual. The purpose of these comments is to provide a method of inspecting the data for analysis.
  - Descriptive comments serve to describe the content or what the participant says, such as key phrases, words or explanations used. These keywords or phrases are described to show things that are important to the participants; their lifeworld.
  - Linguistic comments serve to emphasize specific language used by the participant. Specific language can be anything worth noting such as sounds, gaps of silence, degree of articulation or hesitation, reiterations, metaphors, or idioms. For example, the phrase *head over heels* may represent a participant’s description of being in love.
  - Conceptual comments help the researcher to engage the transcription of a participant’s interview on a “more interrogative and conceptual level” (Smith et al, 2009, p. 83). Interrogating and conceptualizing the data requires a certain level of personal reflection. This entails a questioning of participants’ transcribed comments in an effort to gain understanding of what is discussed. Smith et al (2009) suggest personal reflection may be useful in making sense of or conceptualizing participants’ meanings.

3. *Developing emerging themes* – The relationship between the exploratory comments or notes and patterns are highlighted in this phase. The interrelated process between the participants' shared experiences or comments and the researcher's interpretations of are displayed in this step. The focus is turned to examining the comments themselves for emerging themes.
4. *Making connections* – This step involves the mapping of chronologically ordered themes from the previous phase. The purpose of the mapping is to see how relevant themes correlate to one another in the scope of the research question. Here we get a closer look at the individual lived experiences by the organization of emerging themes.
5. *Moving to the next case* – Completing a thorough analysis of each case before moving to the next and repeating the process is recommended. However, the challenge is bracketing the emerging themes from the previous case to allow the development of new themes. The concept of an open hermeneutic circle in fostering new meanings is demonstrated as the researcher acknowledges the unavoidable influence of prior understandings, yet resists definitive conclusions (LeVasseur, 2003).
6. *Identifying patterns across cases* – This step in IPA is usually a creative one as themes are organized across cases. The researcher seeks to find what patterns or connections exist across cases and how to categorize emerging themes. Parts in previous steps come together in a holistic interpretation of themes as in the hermeneutic circle principle.

Following the idiographic approach of IPA, the researcher sought to make sense of participants' experiences through close analysis of transcripts as recommended by Smith et al. The researcher's own assumptions inevitably influenced the interpretation of participants' lived experiences and the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the introspective nature of IPA allows for a collaboration between fore-knowledge and interpretations. "One can hold a number of conceptions and these are compared, contrasted and modified as part of the sense-making process" (Smith et al, 2009, p. 26). Bracketing served as an instrument for the researcher in being aware of one's own biases.

### **Researcher Bias**

Researcher bias is inevitable and, at best, manageable. Johnson (1997) recommends the practice of "reflexivity," which entails the active reflection of biases by the researcher. This self-analysis or introspection becomes part of the research process. As a second-generation Haitian-American college graduate, the researcher was aware of the personal biases that exist and may have been influential. The researcher's experience growing up in a Haitian household where education was often the focal point of discussions, was a factor of consideration in conducting this study. Efforts to manage such biases included, journaling or recording personal reactions after each interview, active reflection on personal reactions throughout the research process and the guidance of research supervisors (Smith et al).

Furthermore, Johnson (1997) recommends checking with participants and getting their feedback on the researcher's interpretations; a process referred to as "interpretative validity" (p. 285). The researcher practiced this collaborative procedure by asking for participants' candid reactions to interpretations and was given an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions. The researchers kept in mind the possibility of participants' hesitation in correcting misconceptions

(Johnson, 1997). The goal was to accurately represent participants and their lived experiences as much as possible; a joint effort was needed. However, the task of reflecting, checking and correcting issues related to biases and interpretation was the responsibility of the researcher.

## Chapter IV: Research Findings

### Participant Information

The researcher recruited seven participants for this study. The participants were four women and three men between the ages of 20-36. All of the participants identified as second-generation Haitian-American college graduates with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. They all lived in the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach at the time of the interview. All reported that their parents migrated from Haiti and that they were born in the United States. Using pseudonyms, Table I below provides a snapshot of the participants.

**Table I**

<b>Participant Information</b>			
<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Levels</b>
Farah	34	Female	Master's Degree / Pursuing PhD
Macie	35	Female	Bachelor's Degree
Cassandra	36	Female	Bachelor's Degree
Joselyn	30	Female	Master's Degree / Pursuing PhD
Jacque	35	Male	2 Associate Degrees & a Bachelor's Degree
Francois	30	Male	Bachelor's Degree
Moises	30	Male	Bachelor's Degree / Pursuing Master's

### Results of the Analysis

As discussed in chapter three, the researcher used the Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) steps outlined by Smith et al (2009) as a guide. Close analysis of participants' transcripts resulted in the emergence of six superordinate themes. These themes were organized using abstraction; one of the ways of organizing emergent themes identified by Smith, et al (2009). Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory as a theoretical framework and the research

questions, the researcher employed abstraction to “...identif[y] the patterns between the emergent themes...” (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 96). Like themes were categorized with a developed “super-ordinate theme” (Smith, et al. 2009). Furthermore, the themes were organized based on the Bowenian concepts discussed in the previous chapter. See Table II.

**Table II**

<b>Emergent Themes</b>		
<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Bowenian Concepts</b>	<b>Subordinate Themes</b>
Multigenerational Method of Transmission	Multigenerational Transmission Processes	-Education instilled -Education ingrained -Education imparted -Emphasized
Reminiscent Educational Dialogue	Individuality and Togetherness	-Past conversations with parents -Past conversation with grandparents
Education as Economic Protection	Chronic Anxiety	-Rest and Relief -Financial opportunity and security
Expected Educational Momentum	Chronic Anxiety	-Do more! -Be better! -Gender Expectations
Future Multigenerational Method of Transmission	Multigenerational Transmission Processes	-Harder on the next generation -No choice for the next generation
Broadening the Educational View	Differentiation of self	- Entrepreneurship and other options

Table III illustrates the recurrence of superordinate themes in the data. Illustrating the recurrence of themes “indicates whether the super-ordinate theme is present for each participant and then calculates whether it is therefore prevalent on over half of the cases” (p. 107).

According to Smith, et al (2009) there are no specific rules pertaining to what counts as a recurrence of a theme. However, “a super-ordinate theme expressed at a broad level is likely to



have more instances in the corpus...” (p. 107). For this study, all the superordinate themes are present in at least six of the interviews.

**Table III**

<b>Recurring Themes</b>							
<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Farah</b>	<b>Macie</b>	<b>Casandra</b>	<b>Joselyn</b>	<b>Jacque</b>	<b>Francois</b>	<b>Moises</b>
Multigenerational Method of Transmission	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Reminiscent Educational Dialogue	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education as Economic Protection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Expected Educational Momentum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Future Multigenerational Method of Transmission	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Broadening the Educational View	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### **Multigenerational Method of Transmission**

The participants’ family beliefs about education can be characterized as transmitted from one generation to the next as described by Bowen’s multigenerational transmission process (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Six of the participants described the concept of education as something that was ingrained, instilled, imparted or emphasized by their family of origin. Although one participant did not use a specific term to describe the transmission of the concept of education, there was a clear sense that he held passed down educational values. These synonyms or closely related adjectives used by the other participants portrayed a sense that they viewed education as

being a part of them; these ideas were passed down by their parents, grandparents or extended family. The following excerpts depict the participants' perception of how they received their understanding of education from their family of origin.

**Education instilled.** When asked to describe their family of origin's view on education, both Jacque and Casandra described education as being instilled. Casandra's excerpt:

*Researcher:* Can you describe your family of origin view on education or of education?

*Casandra:* Well, from my perspective, their view on education was it's essential. They believed that you needed an education to...you know...to be successful in life. To value education, you know... to take advantage of education.

*Researcher:* And how did you know that was their view? What drove that home for you?

*Casandra:* Because they *instilled* it and reminded us constantly.

Jacque had a similar response depicting education as being instilled in him. Jacque's excerpt:

*Researcher:* Can you describe your family of origin view on education or of education?

*Jacque:* [long pause] I mean the...they're...my family's view on education is...it's very important. They have *instilled* in us to go as far as we can. Their views...you know...help us to understand the...their education which is very limited. And so, they would help us to understand how far we need to go...as far as we can with regards to educating ourselves further along than high school.

Later in the interview, Jacque also used "instilled" to reiterate how his grandparents influenced his educational views when they interacted with one another.

*Jacque:* So, I think it, it...kinda is in that arena where...there wasn't, like I said, a lot, a lot of interaction, but when there was interaction, there were conversations about ...you know...education that was *instilled*, really *instilled* in us, constantly.

**Education ingrained.** In describing her family of origin's view of education, Joselyn depicts education as being ingrained. Joselyn's excerpt:

*Joselyn:* I would say that my...both of my parents placed very high value on education. [Pause] from when I was born, my entire life, education has always been, like, *ingrained* in me as one of the most important things that you could ever pursue.

Joselyn, later in the interview, further clarified the significance of education for her in the following excerpt:

*Joselyn:* .... the conversations whether it was with friends, or with my friends' parents or with my family, it was always about education, education, education. "You need to study, you need to do good in school. You don't go to school for friends, you don't go to school for boys, you go to school to learn." Like, you had these...you know...you have these things that were *ingrained* in your mind.

**Education imparted.** For Moises, the multigenerational transmission regarding the message about education was received as an impartation. Moises' excerpt:

*Researcher:* How did your family migrating to the United States influence your views on education, if at all?

*Moises:* .... they knew the only way that we're gonna even be able to ...you know...make a little bit of more money and provide for us in a better way was to get an education. So, they *imparted* that same thing on us, where they, they had to struggle a lot and through that struggle they made it imperative that we knew how important having a good education was.

**Education emphasized.** Francois and Macie expressed education as being emphasized when asked to describe their family of origin's view of education. Francois' excerpt:

*François:* Overall my family...I mean like most Haitian families, has a strong *emphasis* on education. They value education very highly on the spectrum of, I guess, importance. So ...you know...when you're raised in a Haitian household, that's one of the most important things to...to the families, your education your grades, your scores, what your major is, etc. etc. Throughout her interview, Macie repeatedly expresses the idea of education being emphasized by her family of origin. The following are excerpts from Macie's interview:

*Macie:* My family's view on education is very important. Both my parents are from Haiti. My mom is from the city of North Saint Louis, but in Creole, they call it Sain Louis de Nò, Haiti. And my father is from [pause] born in Haiti, all in the northern region. My mom came here when she was 27 and my dad has been here since he was about 17. He went to Miami Northwestern, so my dad became a little bit more Americanized. And he did high school here and then he did...he didn't have money to do college, but he did vocational school. And um, he always *emphasized* education being important...

When asked about her family's migration to the United States as it relates to education and their influence, Macie reiterates her family's strong emphasis on education.

*Researcher:* Okay. How did your family migrating to the United States influence your views on education, if at all?

*Macie:* [Hesitation] ummmm...Their migrating here [deep breath] always *emphasized* education, education. That, I mean, that's like a lot of Haitians, that's all they care about; it's make sure you get an education...

The similarities of how the participants received the message about education are noteworthy as it highlights familial/cultural dialogue of education as a possible strength within Haitian families living in South Florida. Although Farah, one of the participants, did not utilize a

specific word to express how she received her family's message about education, she shared that "education was always a part of the conversation" in her family. Farah's statement and the other participants' perceived methods of how they received the message of about education are examples of the multigenerational influence of education within their families.

### **Reminiscent Educational Dialogue**

The concept of "individuality and togetherness" in families posits that there is an emotional interchange between family members to be independent or to be dependent on one another (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen's concept of "individuality and togetherness" was highlighted as all the participants took part in what seemed to be reminiscent educational dialogues during different parts of their interviews. These dialogues centered on past conversations with parents and grandparents about education. The participants' decisions regarding their education were reported as being influenced by these past dialogues. The decision to go to college and get a degree was not solely self-motivated based on these reminiscent educational dialogues.

**Past conversations with parent(s).** Conversations with parent(s) about education was a common theme throughout the interviews. For instance, Farah shared a memorable conversation with her mother surrounding college. In the following excerpt Farah shares a comedic moment between her and her mother when she decided to run away to college:

*Farah:* School was always a driving motivation. Matter-of-fact, I remember sitting in my umm.... I remember "A Different World" came out...honey I was in the 4th grade, I remember it so vividly, so I remember going to fourth grade, coming home and I saw Whitley Gilbert and Dwayne at the pit. I made up in my mind I was going to college, I even at one point ran away...took some plastic bags (laughing) and I put them in my room...started putting stuff...I

took one plastic bag, started putting all my stuff in the bag and told my mom I was running away. She said, “to where?” “I said to college.” She came with another bag...she was like “you don’t have enough bags” (loud laughter)...

*Researcher:* (Laughing) So running away is okay, as long as you’re going to college?

*Farah:* Yeah, as long as you were going to college, she was fine with it.

**Past conversation with grandparents.** Casandra also shared a past conversation that was instrumental in her motivation to complete college. In the following excerpts, Casandra remembers a conversation with her grandmother and its impact:

*Researcher:* Do you perceive any difference between your views and your grandparents’ view on education?

*Casandra:* Actually...well my grandma has supported me. She never told me what to do. She was like if it’s something that you want to do, go ahead and do it “just don’t embarrass me”, she’d say (translating in Creole) “pi ga’ou fem waunt” [laughter].

*Casandra:* Because you know when you’re in college, it gets to that point where like, (makes grunting sound), “I can’t do it...do it anymore.” But I remember hearing my grandma’s voice in my head, her saying like, “don’t embarrass me.” Because she supported me, she believed in me, I believed in myself. And even when I wanted to quit, I didn’t...I would’ve quit if it was just for me, but because my grandma supported me, she believed in me, I didn’t wanna embarrass her.

Jacque shares his memories of conversations with a recently deceased grandmother and one who travels back and forth from Haiti in the following excerpt:

*Jacque:* And they would ask us, “hey, what...what are you doing now?” ...you know... “what grade are you in?” ...you know... “what do you wanna be when you get older?” ...those

types of conversations. And a...so even with my grandmother on my mom's side, who...still visits...and she's here six months out of the year, I talk to her, I see her all the time.

These types of conversations were also central in Joselyn's educational upbringing as she remembers it:

*Joselyn:* ...for me I felt like the conversations whether it was with friends, or with my friends' parents or with my family, it was always about education, education, education. "You need to study, you need to do good in school. You don't go to school for friends, you don't go to school for boys, you go to school to learn." Like, you had these...you know, you have these things that were ingrained in your mind.

For the participants, these reminiscent dialogues were instrumental in their perceptions of education and their educational endeavors. Although there is a level of autonomy in the participants' decision to college, the "togetherness" factor cannot be ignored. Even the intrinsic motive of wanting to run away to college or the motivation to complete college was influenced by participants' educational dialogues with parents or grandparents. Interestingly, these conversations seemed to carry a present-tense, as though happening in the interviews themselves. As the participants shared their reminiscent educational dialogues, it was as though parents or grandparents were present in the room as well.

### **Education as Economic Protection**

Immigrants coming to America in hopes of a better life is not a novel concept. Likewise, the participants shared similar reasons for their family's migration to the United States. These reasons are often rooted in hopes of economic security. All the participants shared, to an extent, that education as a protection against financial difficulty as the motive behind their parents' educational requirements for their children. Haiti's history of economic instability and the

participants perceived parental push of education can be explained by Bowen's concept of chronic anxiety. Chronic anxiety surrounding education is displayed in the participants' family's emotional system as they recount familial messages about education.

**Rest and Relief.** One of the messages that Farah received about education was that it was "a way out of poverty." Similarly, Moises received the message that education was something that he and his siblings could "always fall back on." Both Farah and Moises perceived that their parents were either resting or were relieved once they received their degrees. Responding to a question about her reasons for pursuing additional degrees, Farah shared the following:

*Farah:* I think for our generation, it hasn't been enough to just get a degree. Where, with my family...for my parents, it's been like, okay, "you got your degree." *And they've been resting.* Similarly, Moises shared his perception of his family's reaction after obtaining his degree.

Moises' excerpt:

*Researcher:* Can you remember and describe your perception of how your family reacted when you obtained your degree?

*Moises:* I think it was more *relief* [chuckles] than excitement...I don't believe my parents didn't think I was gonna get a degree or graduate or anything like that. I feel like they always had confidence and they were happy, but again, it wasn't something like where I felt like they were just super excited. It was just like, "okay, well, this step is completed, you did what you were supposed to do." *And it's like, relief, "this child's ...you know...situation is taken care of."*

There is a sense that the emotional reactivity surrounding their children obtaining degrees was alleviated for Farah's and Moises' parents. This sense of relief or rest may be a representation of chronic anxiety as it was perceived by the participants.



**Financial opportunity and stability.** Economic opportunity and stability remained a focal point throughout the interviews. Some of the participants shared their parents' views on the importance of education in establishing financial stability, while others understood this message more so by their parents' examples. For instance, in his response to a question about his family of origin's view on education, Jacque describes witnessing their financial struggle as a motivational force in his pursuit of education.

*Researcher:* How did your family of origin's views on education influence, influence you throughout your life?

*Jacque:* ...So, that influence...I mean, *looking at them struggling ...you know...when it comes to non-high-paying jobs* and I was just like...you know... "I can't, I can't be that" ...you know...not that I'm better, obviously. But again, here's an opportunity for me to do by being here and them helping me to understand I need to push forward to gain as much education as possible.

Additionally, some of the participants shared their parents' views of education as an economic protection in ensuring financial opportunity and security. At times parental concerns disqualified certain career paths due to perceived economic instability. The participants' parental concerns are not just persistent worries or fears about their children's economic status, but can be described as Bowen's concept of chronic anxiety in the emotional reactivity determining the course of action of the participants, such as repeatedly changing majors. The following excerpts demonstrate this point:

*Farah:* ...I would never forget like, I wanted to go to art school...actually. I want to go to school to be an artist. And after high school and my parents were like, you know...they went back and forth...like, "*...it isn't secure, there's no job security,*" So I decided to go ahead and go

get my undergrad at the traditional school. *I changed my major seven times, finally landing on something.*

Macie shares a similar experience:

*Macie:* ...my dad always emphasized follow your dream but sometimes they have your dreams for you. Like, “oh I don’t want you being a...like”...you know...Haitian...most Haitians...you know...the top four careers are nursing, doctor, engineer or lawyer [laughter]. So, anything outside of that, they have a hard time...

*Researcher:* So, “follow your dream, but the dream that I have for you?”

*Macie:* Yes, basically [laughs]. [Repeating] the dream that I have for you. And anything outside of that is like, is very difficult for them because one thing I know, they... at least from my parents’ point of view, they want to make sure your *future is secure; you have that security of an education.*

Later in the interview, Macie shares her struggles in finding the right career fit because of her parents’ difficulty with nontraditional fields.

*Macie:* I went to community college first. I didn’t go straight to a university because I felt like I wasn’t ready and I don’t wanna flunk out. So, I was like let me go to community college first. Let me see how I can handle it first before, you know, I move on to a university. And I was basically flunking, like, political science, no; then I change it to English, no; then I change it to social studies, sociology; then I change it again to psychology and then [pause] then...*I change it like six times and the final one was mass communication.*

Francois also reported switching majors five times although he did not express his parents’ educational views were a motive. However, in the following excerpt we get a sense that economic factors were important to his mother:

*Francois:* She...she believed as though the more degrees you have, *the better income opportunity that you possess*; more importantly, the more the world takes you seriously.

Cassandra's course of action involved avoiding attending college immediately after high school to decide on a career path. She eventually chose to attend film school. In the excerpt below, Cassandra explains her mother's difficulty in accepting her career choice which was centered around economic concerns:

*Cassandra:* ...what I went to school for, for Haitians, that's very unorthodox... you know...they like to play it safe. They like to do the nursing thing and... so, because what she wanted me to do, like... most Haitians want you to do something that's safe like...well I'm not gonna say most Haitians, but my mom...wanted me to do something that was safe like, being a nurse or whatever.

*Researcher:* And when you say safe, safe as in what? .... like...what part of being a nurse was safe for them?

*Cassandra:* Because...like, *the money...you can always get a job as a nurse. There's security in being a nurse.* Hospitals are always hiring, people are always sick, people are always dying (chuckles). You know...you don't need anything else, you need uh...you need to go to a hospital.

These excerpts illustrate how chronic anxiety may be a driving force behind the participants' educational decisions and their parents' motives. Given Haiti's historical context, present and past U.S. sociopolitical context of discrimination, parental reactions, and influences on education may stem from a sense of awareness. This awareness may be an understanding of the importance of education in ensuring offspring's economic survival. The emotional reactivity,

such as feeling relief or feeling the pressure to change majors are possible manifestations of transmitted chronic anxiety through multiple generations.

### **Expected Educational Momentum**

There is a sense of an expected educational momentum for the participants and the next generation of their family. All the participants expressed the idea of wanting more education, being expected to do more than the previous generation or expecting the next generation to do more or to be better. From a Bowenian perspective, one can speculate that there is an inherited emotional reactivity or chronic anxiety around the concept of education in the participants' families or emotional systems (Friedman, 1991). The chronic anxiety over education appears to manifest generationally through the concept of "doing more."

**Do more.** There is an expectation that the next generation should do more, educationally, than the previous. In the following excerpt, Farah emphasizes a need to do more based on knowing her family's history and her parents' accomplishments:

*Farah:* ...you know in Haitian families, you kinda...you know your parents'.... your history, to some degree. You know your history. And I think what it's done...me knowing the history, I think it's always been that... so what am I gonna do differently? Like, if my father and my mom graduated high school and they are CNAs and he was a taxi driver, *I need to do more than that. I gotta do more for... I gotta do more.*

Similarly, Jacque shares his parents' expectation of more in the following excerpt:

*Jacque:* ...So they helped me to understand that...you know...they even said it many times, "*you need to be better than me, you need to do more than what I did, you have more resources, more opportunities, so take 'em*" ...you know...

Although in this excerpt, Moises does not deliberately connect his wanting more of an education to his family's expectations, we can speculate from his previous excerpts that their influence had an impact. Responding to the researcher's question, Moises expressed a sense of wanting more:

*Researcher:* What feelings emerged for you when you obtained your degree? That bachelor's degree and what did that degree mean to you?

*Moises:* [pause] I think I felt...I felt accomplished. I don't know that I felt like, in particular, like super excited. I was, I was happy, I felt accomplished, *but I still wanted more*. So, I think for me, it was just like a step in the right direction, and... you know...not a destination but more of a starting point, I guess.

Francois, on the other hand, shares his grandparents' view of reaching for the highest level attainable through education. There is a sense of encouraging Francois to want or do more.

*Francois:* It's like, in my...in my grandparents' eyes, education, no matter what piece it is, it could be an associates', or it can be a doctorate, but the fact that you went to school is very important to them. Of course, they want you to go all the way. *If there was a level after the doctorate...you know... I think they might be (said jokingly), but if there was that level then they would want you to go to that level.*

**Be better.** Similar to doing more, the concept of being better resonated throughout the interviews. There is an expectation that the next generation should do better, educationally, than the previous generation. In the following excerpt, Casandra shares her expectation for the next generation.

*Casandra:* Well I have maybe 17...have 17 nieces and nephews, so...19 nieces and nephews. And so, I'm always telling them education. I want them to be better than me. I want them to not...I want them to take advantage of the education. Take advantage of scholarships.

Likewise, in response to the researcher's question, Macie shares her hope that the next generation will be better.

*Researcher:* What do you imagine the future implications of education are or will be for the next generation of your family? Like, your children, your siblings' children, so forth?

*Macie:* I would like them to be better than...it's always you want the next generation to be one better, one more better than you. I don't know if you understand, like okay, if I'm an Oscar winner, whatever, winning producer, okay, you don't have to follow my... be successful in your own field. So that's my belief, you don't always have to follow your parents' lead but *be one more successful in your own lane.*

**Gender Expectations.** The expectation to “do more” or “be better” was unanimous across the cases; however, two of the female participants shared a slight distinction of their parents' expected educational momentum. Although both participants expressed the importance of education for their family, being married and having children appeared to be equally important. Based on Bowen's concept of chronic anxiety, there seems to be the parental concern or expectation for these women participants to marry and reproduce within a certain timeframe. Chronic anxiety is defined as an “emotional and physical reactivity shared by all protoplasm, the responses that are automatic rather than mediated by the cortex” (Friedman, 1991, p. 140). There is a sense of a reactivity for parents in that education is important, but marriage and children are important as well in assuring their offspring's perceived well-being. Cultural factors may also be at play, although not explicitly addressed.

Farah, who is on track to receiving her Ph.D., reported her parents' concern regarding the possibility of too much education in reference to her not being married and having children. In the following excerpt Farah recounts her parents' reaction to her decision to pursue a Ph.D.:

*Farah:* ...Now here's a funny thing. I think my mom, when I told her that I was actually getting my Ph.D., because I'm not married, I don't have kids; the question was how much school is too much school? That's the funny ...(chuckling)... That's when they were like, (speaking in Creole accent) "but you are.... where's your husband, where's your children [laughter], where's your... [laughter]?" So, it was fine when I was going for my undergrad. I think that...you know... gave them bragging rights. It became a difference, I think, once I started getting up in age and they're like, "okay."

Similarly, Macie's parental conversation about education in reference to marriage and children centered around an expected timeline:

*Macie:* Like my parents are like, okay, by 40 you should have your house, be married, have kids and stuff like that. And um, raising them and working in your career. So that's how my views are set. Like [pause], they always emphasize make sure education, after education, marry, have kids, you know... and that's it. Work hard to save, work hard to save so you could retire lovely, that's it.

For these participants, the message received about education shares a seesaw balance with the message about marriage and reproduction. Based on these excerpts, there is a sense that the participants' parents view both messages as equally important or one shouldn't be neglected over the other. Both messages can be explained by Bowen's concept of chronic anxiety because they both speak to survival and survival is instinctual (Friedman, 1991). Education speaks to economic stability and survival, while marriage and reproduction may be speaking to the survival of a lineage. Shared parental concerns by the participants in the excerpts speak to the instinctual reactivity or chronic anxiety regarding marriage and children. Although Farah and

Macie shared this common experience, the consensus regardless of gender, was that the participants' families viewed education as important for their offspring.

The expectation for the next generation to “do more” or “be better” is an example of educational chronic anxiety being passed down from the previous generation to the next. Additionally, there seems to be an increase in the expected momentum pertaining to education for the participants and their families. Participants were expected, by their parents, to do better educationally than the previous. Likewise, many of the participants expect the next generation to do better. In these excerpts, it is conceivable that the transmission of chronic anxiety surrounding education is projected to continue in the next generation.

### **Future Multigenerational Method of Transmission**

Multigenerational transmission processes posit that there is “an orderly and predictable relationship process that connects the functioning of family members across generations” (Kerr & Bowen, p. 224). Based on this Bowenian concept, there seems to be a predictable intergenerational relationship process regarding education. All the participants shared a sense of passing down their beliefs about education to the next generation. It is noteworthy that most of the participants used the same adjectives regarding their perception of how they received the message about education in describing how they will transmit the same messages to the next generation.

**Harder on the next generation.** There is a sense of continuing and augmenting the message about education. Interestingly, Casandra shares she will be harder on the next generation.

*Casandra:* You know...so, *I'm instilling* into my nieces and nephews to focus and to take advantage of being an honor roll student. Like, there's no reason why your neighbor can get an



“A” and you get a “C.” You know... Like, they’re in that class just like you are. For me, *I’m harder* on them than my family was on me.

**No choice for the next generation.** Similarly, Joselyn expresses a sense of an educational mandate on the next generation.

*Joselyn:* ...as our lineage grows, it’s going to be the same...same types of conversation, same types of ideas on education. Like I mentioned earlier, I’m definitely *gonna instill education* in my family. And so, the implications are that ...you know...yes, you don’t really have a choice, (laughing) you have to pursue education. And I think that it gave me a lot of structure and so the hope is that it will do the same for future generations.

Likewise, Jacque hopes to pass down the message about education by imposing it, when possible, through encouragement and pushing the next generation to do greater things.

*Jacque:* .... I think as always, education is, is very important. So, for the future generation...[pause]...if I’m in a position where I’m able *to impose or encourage my children or the next* ...you know... I’m gonna do that. I’m gonna do that. Just like my parents pushed me to be better than they were, I’m gonna push my kids if possible...you know...to do something greater.

For Moises, the generationally combined message about education will be imparted to the next generation.

*Moises:* ...I think I’m still gonna take a lot of what my parents imparted to me, which is the importance of a good foundation. *I will also impart*...you know...my wisdom on education to my children and to my nieces and nephews...

Similarly, Francois seems to have a mixed message about education that he hopes to impress upon the next generation. This message is centered on the concept of types of education.

*Francois:* So, I'm gonna impress upon my children, God willing that I have children, the importance of education. But I'm not going to be like a stickler about it to where it makes it...it makes them shy away from it. Like...when I say education, I mean like...you know...continuing education outside of school. *School, obviously, is mandatory*, but reading books, self-improvement, learning different languages, learning different cultures, etc. etc.

For Farah, the next generation will receive the message about education through applied pressure.

*Farah:* I don't know what their reactions will be? But you know what, I think for me, I wanna normalize it. I don't think it's one of those expect...I would hope... I probably would put pressure, but...a normal experience.

There is a pattern involving the multigenerational method of transmission for the next generation in these excerpts. Based on the participants' responses, there is a sense that the next generation will receive the same educational message as the previous. This message will be transmitted in the same fashion as the previous generation; education will be instilled, ingrained, imparted and emphasized. These methods have been predetermined by the participants and are future multigenerational methods of transmission on the message about education.

### **Broadening the Educational View**

Surprisingly, all of the participants expressed having a broader view of what it means to be educated. The participants' broader views of education were contrary to their parents' views that one needed a college education in order to be successful or financially secure. The participants, to a certain degree, demonstrated Bowen's concept of differentiation of self in that they are able to have a distinct self, with distinct ideas about education, while remaining in touch with their family's needs and views on education (Bowen, 1976). For example, Casandra who

shared that she would be harder on the next generation regarding education, also shared that one can be successful in careers that are “unorthodox” for most Haitian families. Enjoying one’s career is more important to Casandra, “if you never wanna work a day in your life, go to school and do something you love.” The following excerpts share similar views with Casandra.

**Entrepreneurship and other options.** Many of the participants shared the idea that college is not the only option. In the following excerpt, Macie discusses having a business as a backup plan.

*Macie:* To me, what I would like to do for my children is at same time they’re doing college, set up a business for them so that, okay, if college doesn’t work, okay, try your business. Because sometimes college is not for everybody.

The idea of having a business or being successful in entrepreneurship was a common thread in the interviews. In the following excerpt, Francois shares Macie’s view that college is not for everyone and offers entrepreneurship or trade school as options:

*Francois:* And I believe that college is not for everyone. That’s not to say that you need to be a bum on the street, but there are many avenues to which you don’t need a degree and be successful. There are many avenues that actually...all you need to do is have a diploma. Entrepreneurship for example, or trade school. You don’t have to go to college. You can become a mechanic, you can become an electrician, etc. You don’t need school... like, university schooling for that.

Similarly, Farah acknowledges that secondary education is not the only option and shares her and her siblings desire to start businesses:

*Farah:* I will say what I do respect...education by... secondary education not having to be the only thing, because I do think there is something about when you do come from another

country, you have to make stuff work. And that was one of the things that stood out with my siblings, like, we all are starting your own business, because in our brains, like, we know we have to make something work; whether it's for someone else or whether it's for ourselves.

Joselyn continues the pattern of the distinct educational views of the second-generation by highlighting different paths to success:

*Joselyn:* But where I think my views are a bit different, is that I think...I think also in the culture, sometimes, parents can have a limited view on what it means to be educated and what it means to be successful. And I feel like now we're living in a generation where there's so many different types of careers and so many different types of avenues for someone to be successful. I, I see people who don't necessarily have a college education who are thriving professionally. And so, although I do view college as...and education as such an important factor, I also am open to the idea that... that's not necessarily everyone's route. Whereas I know for a fact, that's not the views of my parents or my grandparents.

Likewise, the following excerpts from Moises reiterate the idea of education as being one of many options:

*Moises:* ...education isn't the end-all-be-all. It's a great thing and we all need it, but it's not something that's meant to dictate how your life is gonna be completely. It's just one of the things that can determine how successful you can be in life.

Lastly, Jacque supports the idea of having other options by making allowance for alternative routes besides college:

*Jacque:* ...Education, yes, is very important, very important...that's why I go back to saying that sometimes, you can impose it on people as much as you can, but they have to figure out it for themselves. You have to let them live their life. And if they make a mistake down the

road, that's fine. And if they get back on track or they go another route, they have to figure it out for themselves.

Although having an education is important to the participants, they shared a broadening view of education. This view encompasses a different view of what it means to be successful. In terms of Bowenian concepts, having a sense of self while still being part of the family system is what the theory would describe as “differentiation of self” (1976). These participants seem to demonstrate a sense of “differentiation of self” in terms of educational views while holding onto some of their family of origin’s views. From their responses, there is a sense the participants’ family or origin’s educational views are important, yet so are their educational views. Based on the participants’ educational views, success is not only determined through traditional educational attainment.

### **Educational Genogram Patterns**

An educational genogram, utilizing symbols, was used to highlight patterns of education across multiple generations of the participants’ families. Drawing the genograms was a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants during the interviews. Official genograms were later generated using the GenoPro, a genealogy software. The participants were then given an opportunity to view the generated genograms and ledger of symbols for accuracy. The ledger of symbols is depicted in Figure 1.

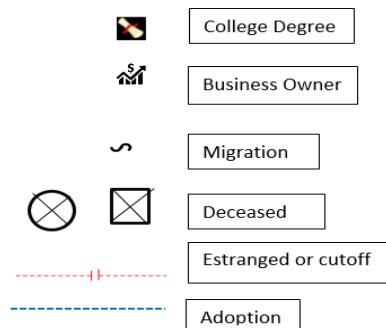


Figure 1. Participants' Educational Genogram symbols.

**Farah.** Farah shared that secondary education was more prevalent on her mother's side of the family for the women as depicted in Figure 2. However, there is a history of entrepreneurship on her father's side. It appears from Farah's educational genogram that she and her siblings have adopted both concepts of education and entrepreneurship from the previous generation. Farah also has surpassed her family of origin's educational attainments.

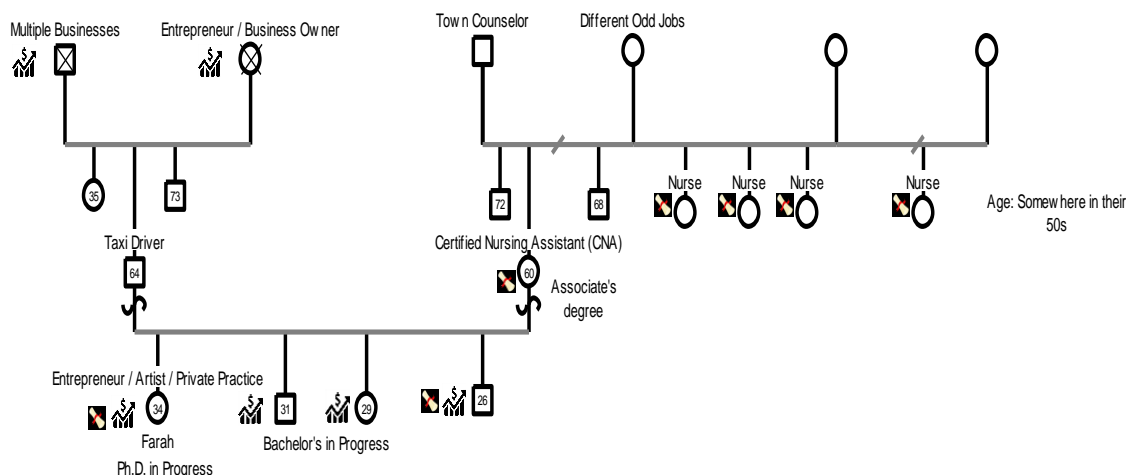
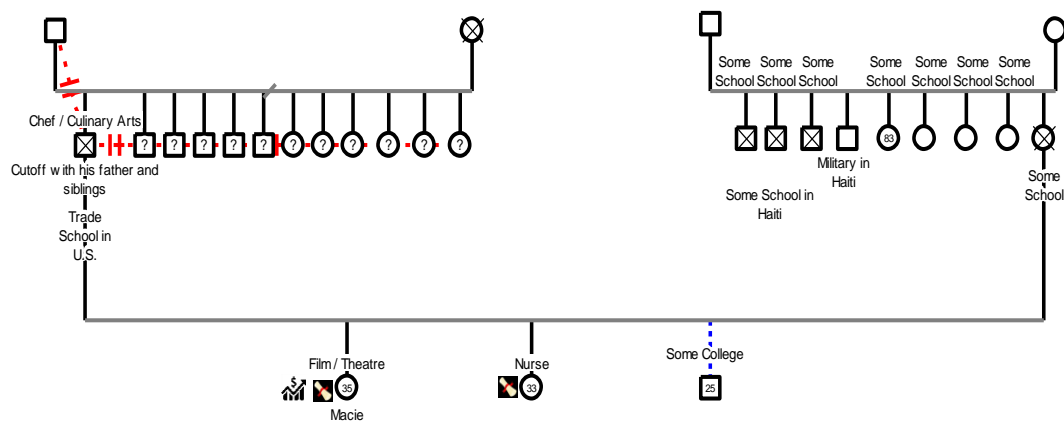


Figure 2. Farah's family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the educational and entrepreneurship patterns present in Farah's family of origin.

**Macie.** Macie was not able to provide her grandparents' educational history because they lived in Haiti and she could not recall any stories about their education. It was also not possible

for her to share educational history about her father’s side of the family because of “emotional cutoff” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). An emotional cutoff is a Bowenian concept that can be described as a reactive emotional separation with a member or members of one’s family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). In Figure 3, in addition to the educational history of Macie’s family, we see an emotional cutoff between her father, his father, and siblings. It is also worth noting that Macie and her siblings seem to have exceeded the educational endeavors of the previous generation.



*Figure 3.* Macie’s family’s educational genogram. This figure illustrates the known educational patterns in Macie’s family of origin.

**Cassandra.** Casandra was not able to provide her grandfathers’ educational levels; a history of deceased family members may be a contributing factor. However, we can see educational patterns throughout her family’s genogram in Figure 4.

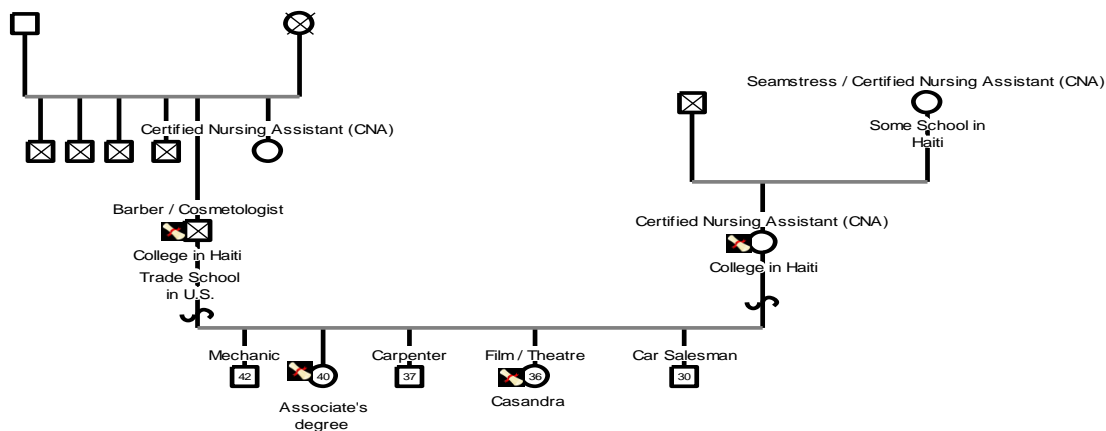


Figure 4. Casandra's family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the known educational patterns in Casandra's family of origin.

**Joselyn.** Joselyn's family's educational genogram shows a strong history of college education throughout her family of origin and extended family. It is worth noting, in Figure 5, that Joselyn is on track to surpass most of her family's educational levels in her pursuit of higher education.

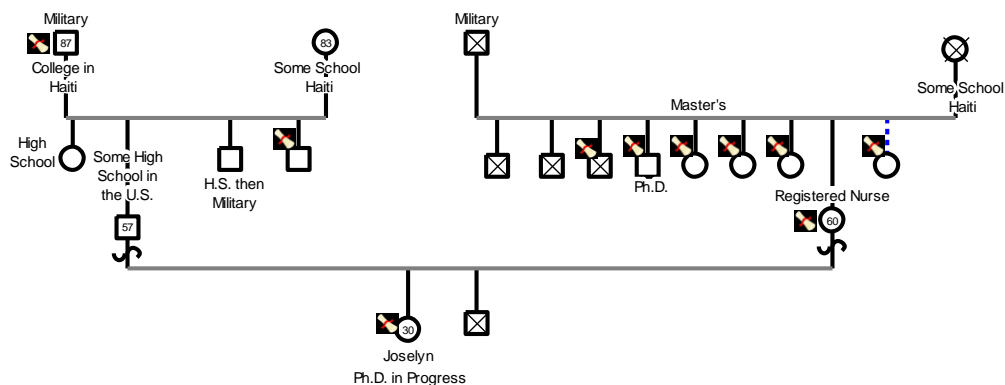
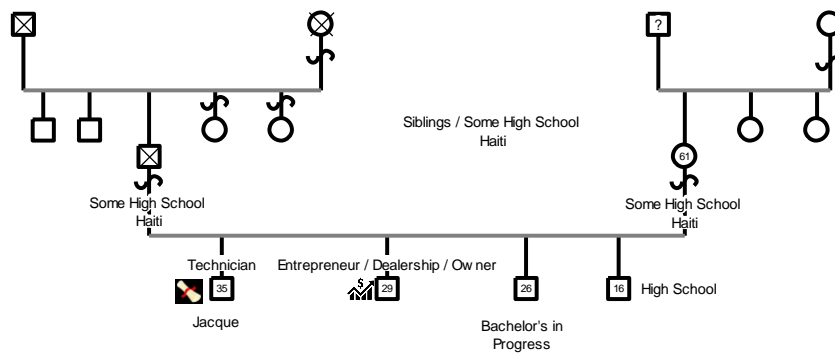


Figure 5. Joselyn's family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the educational patterns in Joselyn's family of origin.

**Jacque.** Jacque was not able to provide the educational levels of his grandparents. Jacque has a deceased grandfather that he never met and another grandfather who has not been part of any family dialogue. As he states it "they don't talk about him." Regarding his



grandmothers, although one is deceased, he had an opportunity meet her. Similarly, Jacque does not recall having conversations with them about their education. He speculated this may have been because his grandparents and extended family may not have been able to afford school in Haiti. However, Figure 6, Jacque's family's educational genogram, reveals that he and his siblings are on track to surpass the previous generation educationally or economically.



*Figure 6.* Jacque's family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the known educational patterns in Jacque's family of origin.

**Francois.** For Francois and his family, their educational genogram shows a slightly different pattern. Francois and his siblings are not currently seeking to surpass the previous generation's educational levels. For Francois, this may be a reflection of his differing view of higher education as one way of educating one's self. Figure 7 depicts the family's educational pattern.

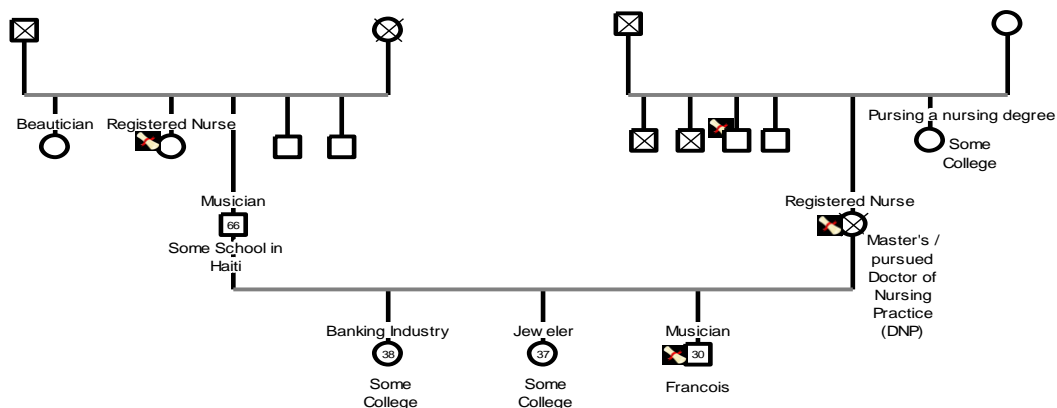


Figure 7. Francois's family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the educational patterns in Francois's family of origin.

**Moises.** Moises' family's educational genogram shows a strong history of academia. Interestingly, there is also a strong history of schooling in Haiti as well as the United States. It is worth noting that Moises and his siblings have either obtained a college degree or are on track to obtaining a degree. Figure 8 shows that Moises and his siblings are keeping the family's educational traditions; however, Moises is on track to surpass the previous generation's educational levels.

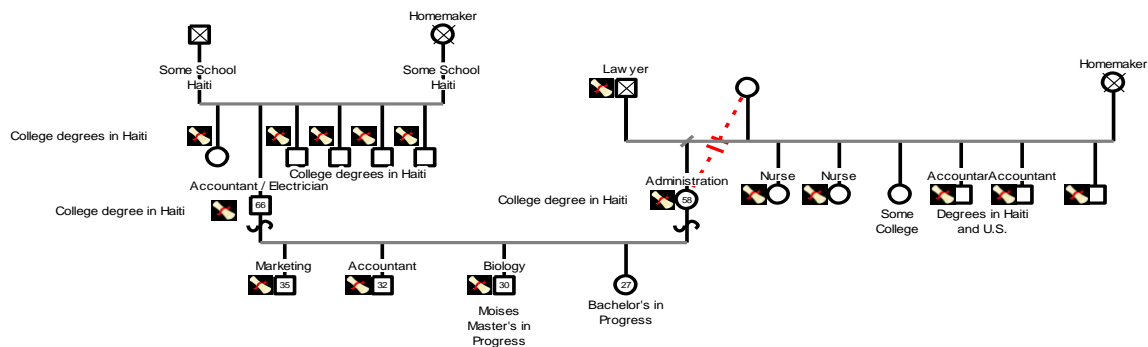


Figure 8. Moises' family's educational genogram. This figure illustrates the educational patterns in Moises' family of origin.

Based on the educational genogram patterns, most of the participants were either on track to surpassing the previous generation or at the same educational level. Furthermore, some of the

participants' educational genogram showed that the previous generations had little to no education. This is noteworthy because the lack of an education did seem to hinder the importance of education for the participants and their families based on the findings.

### **Summary of Findings**

Second-generation Haitian-American college graduates' multigenerational familial influences of education were explored through qualitative method inquiry. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design and Bowen's Family Systems Theory as a theoretical framework, the researcher interviewed seven self-identified second-generation Haitian-American college graduates living in South Florida regarding their perspectives on their families of origin's multigenerational educational influences. The study was driven by three questions which are addressed below:

1. How do second-generation Haitian-American college graduates describe their cultural views on education?

There was a consensus amongst the participants that the importance of education was part of the Haitian culture. Although all the participants reported having in common their family of origin's view of education, there was also a consensus of an evolving or broadening view of education. A broader educational view for these participants included what they perceived as culturally non-traditional or unacceptable career paths which may or may not involve higher education. Participants' combined familial and non-traditional views on education may offer insight into the resourcefulness of second-generation Haitian-Americans. Although this combined educational perspective appears to be conclusive for these participants, an overgeneralization should be avoided. The study also points to a possible second-generation Haitian-American cultural shift on education that may be explained by assimilation with

American culture and values. From a Bowenian perspective, this possible cultural shift on education may be a sign of levels of differentiation, functioning and a variation between acute and chronic anxiety as societal and economic threats are alleviated for the current generation. As Kerr (1992) puts it:

The association between basic level of differentiation and level of chronic anxiety is not static because everyone's emotional functioning can be affected by significant events and changing circumstances. Increased anxiety tends to undermine functioning, and drops in functioning tend to increase anxiety (p. 105).

2. How do these cultural views on education inform or influence Haitian families living in South Florida?

Based on this study, it is not conclusive how cultural views on education inform or influence Haitian families living in South Florida. From the participants' responses, one can speculate from their experiences that there are impactful educational dialogues taking place in many Haitian homes. Congruent with Rumbaut's and Portes' (2001) research on Haitian youth in South Florida, the study points to the high educational aspiration of Haitian families living in South Florida. Unlike the researcher's projection, in this study, the participants' academic achievements did not decline, but in many instances, surpassed educational aspirations (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001, p. 261). However, this study only focused on college graduates.

From a Bowenian perspective, education can be described as a possible "anxiety binder" through multiple generations of the participants' families (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 119). This concept was highlighted as some expressed their relief and their parents' relief after obtaining a college degree. Similarly, all the participants expressed an "imparting and incorporation of attitudes and beliefs" about education from their family of origin which may have been a

manifestation of transmitted chronic anxiety through their family systems (Kerr & Bowen, p. 116).

3. What are the lived experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates regarding their family of origin's influences on them as it pertains to education?

For the participants in this study, it was conclusive that they perceived their family of origin's educational influences on them as impactful. There was a consensus that education was emphasized or its concept transmitted through impartation, instillation, or being ingrained. This was evident as the participants recounted stories, shared memories and repeated sayings from members of previous generations.

The multigenerational transmission processes involving education can be observed in the participants' stories and shared memories. At times, it was as though these members were present during the interviews, even those who were deceased. One could ascertain from the participants' lived experiences that education was, and is, part of their familial/cultural fabric as marked by their college educational pursuits, successes, and hopes for the next generation. To what degree these participants are on the continuum of those in their family system who are high functioning and who take advantage of available educational opportunities remains a speculation (Kerr, 1992; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). However, we can determine, based on their responses, that the participants' college attainments were not solely founded on individual efforts. The interplay between individuality and togetherness (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), pertaining to education, was evident as the participants shared the combined ancestral educational ideals and their evolving ideas of what it means to be educated.

## Chapter V: Discussions and Implications of the Study

Immigrant parents' high educational aspirations for their children are not unique to Haitian Families (Baum & Flores, 2011; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). For many immigrant populations living in the United States, education is often seen as a vehicle towards equality and economic stability (Baum & Flores, 2011; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). This study, however, was focused on how the concept of education is shaped within Haitian families and is understood by second-generation Haitian-American college graduates. Like other immigrant groups who left their homeland because of political and socioeconomic difficulties, many Haitians living in South Florida remember the historical context that led to their family's migration to the U.S. This historical context for most of the participants' families, as evident by their stories, included the limited access to education in Haiti.

We can speculate that past limited access to education is, in part, a motivational force in the participants' family of origin's efforts to instill educational values in their offspring. These efforts have seemingly succeeded as the study shows very similar educational values between past and current generations. However, the participants have broadened the educational view to include a variety of educational and career choices. As discussed earlier, the different past and current socioeconomic contexts may be a contributing factor in the evolving educational views between the generations. We can infer from the participants' reports, as the study indicated, that education was viewed by their family of origin as a source of economic protection. For instance, Casandra's mother viewed the nursing field as a way of ensuring her daughter's economic security. As the threat of economic stability is alleviated for these second-generation Haitian-American college graduates, there may be more opportunity to explore non-traditional educational and career paths. Again, there may be an interplay between acute and chronic

anxiety as the current generation experiences less political and socioeconomic pressure (Kerr, 1992). Education then, becomes less of a tool for survival or a safeguard from poverty, to that of choice and enlightenment. As Francois puts it, in reference to the importance of education, “*School, obviously, is mandatory, but reading books, self-improvement, learning different languages, learning different cultures, etc. etc.*” Francois makes the distinction that education is about improving or enlightening oneself.

As stated previously, this study was guided by Bowen Family Systems as a theoretical framework for understanding the participants’ lived experiences. As the findings suggest, Bowenian concepts were used as a lens in making sense of the themes that emerged from the interviews. These Bowenian concepts included Multigenerational Transmission Processes, Individuality and Togetherness, Chronic Anxiety and Differentiation of Self. These concepts were not meant to be definitive but served to offer insight on multigenerational educational dialogues occurring in Haitian families as a possible strength. There is a temptation to view chronic anxiety as pathological. However, this study points to the possibility of the chronic anxiety surrounding education in Haitian Families as a resource for upward mobility.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

A strength of this study is that it sought a balanced number of male and female participants to address possible differences related to gender and how the influence of education was perceived. Addressing these gender differences should be seen as a strength of this study because it offers insight into the multifaceted dynamics of education in Haitian families. This study, however, did not address specific questions about gender as it relates to education but made allowance for its natural emergence in the interviews with the participants. For instance, two female participants, Farah and Macie, made references to their parents’ expectation of

marriage and children. This expectation did not diminish their family's educational expectations. In fact, none of the participants discussed being treated differently regarding their family of origin's educational expectations.

Another limitation of this study was that some of the participants had difficulty answering the educational genogram questions. Some participants did not know or could not remember the details of their family's educational history. Details pertaining to family members' age, educational levels, degrees, and occupations were often left blank on the educational genogram. Efforts were made to minimize additional discrepancies by giving all the participants a chance to review and offer feedback on the educational genograms.

Additionally, one 36-year-old female participant, Casandra, missed the age criteria by one year. The age requirement was 20-35. However, there is no perceived impact from this discrepancy on the research findings. Casandra's perception of her family of origin's influence on her education was consistent with the other participants.

Lastly, although the researcher used the concept of bracketing to limit biases and assumption, it is possible that researcher bias influenced the interpretation of participants' meanings. Efforts were made to safeguard against possible researcher bias by seeking clarification from participants as recommended by Johnson (1997) in establishing "interpretative validity." Participants agreed to be contacted if clarifications were needed. Such clarifications were given via phone conversations with participants' permission when appropriate.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study focused on the perspective of second-generation college graduates. To gain a broader systemic view, future research may benefit by interviewing members of the same family from different generations. Future research may consider Haitian families in South Florida



and/or other heavily populated Haitian communities in the United States. Researchers interested in Bowen's concepts, as it relates to education in Haitian families, may benefit in using the educational genogram as a family project. A familial collaborative approach may significantly lower instances of ambiguity concerning multiple generations' educational history.

It would also be beneficial to explore specific questions related to gender and education within Haitian families. Questions such as: What were the educational conversations like for you as a female (as a male) growing up? What were the educational conversations like the previous generation of females (of males)? How do the men (women) in your family view education currently? These questions may offer further insight into the familial dynamics around education and gender.

### **Relevance for Marriage and Family Therapy**

Cultural and diversity awareness is an integral part of marriage and family therapy. Although this research focused specifically on one aspect of Haitian families, it offers family therapists insight into the cultural/familial dynamics involving education. As the literature showed and the participants shared, education is often the focal point of conversations in Haitian families. Family therapists practicing in South Florida and other areas heavily populated by Haitian families should be aware of how the concept of education informs the dialogue between parents, children, and extended family members. Additionally, family therapists should be aware of how these dialogues may involve the school system.

Educational concerns involving children's academics are often a central component in parent-child-school conflicts (Giles, 1990). Additionally, the educational dynamics often include the influence of extended family (Gopaul-McNicol, Benjamin-Dartigue, & Francois, 1998). This concept was evident for one of the participants, Moises. Answer the researcher question about

any additional comments that he would like to make before the end of the interview, Moises shared the involvement of his extended family in his education:

*Moises:* [Long pause]... I would say that my aunts and uncles are very involved in our education as well. Even when I was in high school, I remember my aunt being very...my aunt and uncle being very inquisitive. And...you know...they were always asking me how things are going in school, even through college, even post-college. They always have been involved. So, it went beyond just...my immediate...well, I guess you can consider them immediate family, but like, besides my mom and my dad and my brother and sisters. Even my aunts and uncles... both sides of the family were very involved.

In other cases, extended family members may either live in Haiti or migrate frequently as Jacques' excerpt showed. This study also points to the possible transnationalism of educational ideas as some second-generation Haitian-American college students may be influenced by their relatives' homeland values (Shulman, & Lamba, 2011; Cooper, Linstroth, & Chaitin, 2009).

Additionally, this study is relevant to the field of marriage and family therapy because it offers insight into a familial/cultural systemic approach when concerns about children's education arise in therapeutic sessions. As McGoldrick, Giordano, and Garcia-Preto (2005) suggest, family therapy sessions should be informed by "cultural underpinnings" (p. 5). Expanding the therapeutic lens to include cultural awareness will not only benefit the field of marriage and family therapy but also immigrant families who allow family therapists the privilege of witnessing certain aspects of their lives.

### **The Being of the Researcher**

The process of joining with and interviewing participants while attempting to set aside preconceptions was challenging as the researcher often recognized familial dialogues and

cultural nuances. The degree to which the *being* of the researcher, as it relates to the level of differentiation while interacting with the participants, is unknown (Friedman, 1991). Efforts were made to function on an intellectual level rather than on an emotional level throughout the interviews, transcribing and analyzing the data (Bowen, 1976; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Journaling researcher's reactions throughout helped this process to a certain degree. In doing so, Bowenian concepts were highlighted for the researcher also.

**Researcher's Multigenerational Transmission Processes.** Listening to participants' account of their family's educational dialogues often evoked the researcher's own memories of family conversations about education. The researcher's family's educational history, stories about their experiences in Haiti, relatives' stories about going to school in Haiti, stories of their migration, their hopes and dreams for themselves and their offspring, echoed during the research process. Like the participants, the researcher's beliefs and values about education were systematically emphasized, imparted, instilled, ingrained, and at times imposed by the previous generation.

**Researcher's Individuality and Togetherness Process.** The researcher's own interplay with individuality and togetherness played a major role in the process of obtaining multiple college degrees. Although there was some success in avoiding the familial/cultural push into certain career fields, the familial togetherness force may explain the researcher's academic endeavors and accomplishments. The aspect of individuality and togetherness concerning education was highlighted in participants educational reminiscent dialogues with relatives. The researcher could also hear the voices of relatives making the case for education and its importance to the family.

**Researcher's Chronic Anxiety.** Chronic anxiety is often the basis of systemic issues presented in a family. This may be the case in some Haitian families. For the researcher, chronic anxiety around education was a benefit and a strength that resulted in an economically more stable future. This economic stability does not only benefit the researcher but members of the researcher's family system as well. The researcher noted reacting to the idea of chronic anxiety in terms of participants' description of economic concerns and familial relief after graduation.

**Differentiation of Self.** Again, the researcher's level of differentiation, in the context of the family system, is not known as described by Bowen (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). What is known, is that the researcher is more mindful of family processes and interactions involving education. In many ways, Bowenian concepts have aided in normalizing the intensity surrounding education for the researcher's family system. Bowen's concepts may also be beneficial in reducing emotional reactivity and elevating intellectual function concerning educational dialogues between multiple generations in other Haitian families.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This research process has been both painful and rewarding. In hindsight, as I considered Haiti's historical context, the voices of my ancestors urged me to continue this educational journey. Their voices were heard through traumatic stories of enslavement, injustices and unimaginable hardships. I felt their anxiety for future generations. This anxiety was even palpable as I experienced the multigenerational, ancestral, and cultural pressure of completing this research. Now that I have come to the end of it, I'm grateful for their pressure and push, without which I would have validated the statistics.

I am also grateful for the participants, without whom this research would not have happened. I noted to myself, during participant recruitment, how humbling the process was. As family therapy researchers, we would be in error not to acknowledge the kindness and bravery of participants in allowing us access to parts of their lives. It is my hope that the participants were empowered by the interviews and educational genogram as they, themselves, empowered me. In honor of the participants, ancestors, and my family, I consider my own reminiscent educational dialogue. As my mother would say, "*education is power*," I add, education is also intricately collaborative.

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## Appendices

Appendix A  
Recruitment Flyer

## Nova Southeastern University Research Participants Needed!



- Are you a Haitian-American between the ages of 20-35 who was born in the United States?
- Were your parents born in Haiti and migrated to the United States?
- Are you a college graduate with a bachelors' degree or higher?



If you answered yes to the questions above, you are invited to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates and their perspectives of the systemic multigenerational implication of education within their family of origin. Interviews will be conducted at Nova Southeastern University: 3301 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314.

If interested:

Please Contact Daphney Lundi, LMFT

Phone: (954) 261 – 4689

Email: [dl1990@mynsu.nova.edu](mailto:dl1990@mynsu.nova.edu)

## Appendix B

## Consent Form

**General Informed Consent Form****NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled**

*The Systemic Multigenerational Implications of Education: Second-Generation Haitian-American*

*College Graduates' Perspectives*

**Who is doing this research study?**

College: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences / Department of Family Therapy

Principal Investigator: Daphney F. Lundi, M.S.

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Christopher Burnett, Psy.D.

Co-Investigator(s):

Site Information: Maltz psychology building located at 3301 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314.

Funding: Unfunded

**What is this study about?**

This is a research study, designed to test and create new ideas that other people can use. The purpose of this research study is to understand the experiences of second-generation Haitian-American college graduates and their perspectives of the influences and implications of education within their family of origin. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the study may add to the academic literature on the strengths and resources that may be inherent of Haitian families and other underserved minority groups.

**Why are you asking me to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to be in this research study because your experience will contribute greatly to the study's aim at understanding the systemic multigenerational implications of education within Haitian families. In other words, the study is interested in your experience regarding your family of origin's influence on your educational accomplishments, if any.

This study will include about eight people.

**What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?**

While you are taking part in this research study, you will be interviewed by the researcher, Daphney Lundi. You will be asked a series of questions pertaining to your experience as a second-generation Haitian-American college graduate, your perspective on your family of origin's views on education and your understanding of your family's influences, if any, on your academic achievements. The interview will last between 1 -2 hours and will take place at Maltz psychology building located at 3301 College Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314.

You may be asked to come back to the Maltz psychology building if deemed necessary to clarify any parts of the interview.

Research Study Procedures - as a participant, this is what you will be doing:

You will be interviewed. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions regarding your perspective of your family of origin's influence on your educational accomplishments; this will take up to 1 hour.

You then, will be asked to complete an educational genogram with the researcher, which is a diagram that resembles a family tree. The researcher will ask you questions about family members' educational levels starting from your grandparents to you and your sibling(s), if applicable, and will write your response on the educational genogram. This portion of the study will take up to 1 additional hour. The entire interview will take approximately a total of 2 hours. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder by Ms. Lundi. The interview will take place face-to-face, involving only you and the researcher at the Maltz

psychology building. You will be interviewed one time; however, you may be asked to meet again briefly, approximately 30 minutes or less, to clarify any parts of the interview.

**Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?**

This research study involves minimal risk to you. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would have in everyday life.

**What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?**

You have the right to leave this research study at any time or refuse to be in it. If you decide to leave or you do not want to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study before it is over, any information about you that was collected **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the end of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

**What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?**

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form, if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

**Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?**

There are no direct benefits from being in this research study. The researcher hopes the information learned from this study will be empowering by adding to the academic literature on the strengths and resources that may be inherent of Haitian families and other minority groups in fostering the success of the second-generation in attaining college graduation.

**Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?**

You will not be given any payments or compensation for being in this research study.

**Will it cost me anything?**

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

Ask the researchers if you have any questions about what it will cost you to take part in this research study (for example bills, fees, or other costs related to the research).

**How will you keep my information private?**

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled in a confidential manner, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. Ms. Lundi will transcribe the interviews in her home office using earphones to guard participants' privacy. Ms. Lundi will use pseudonyms in the transcription and written data to protect your identifying information. This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any regulatory and granting agencies (if applicable). If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in Ms. Lundi's home office. All data will be kept for 36 months and destroyed after that time by shredding all printed documents, deleting all files from the researcher's password protected computer and from the trash bin on the computer.

**Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?**

This research study involves audio recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any of the people who gave the researcher money to do the study (if applicable). The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is

not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

**Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?**

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Daphney Lundi, M.S. can be reached at (954) 261-4689. If primary is not available, contact:

Christopher Burnett, Psy.D. can be reached at (954) 262-3010

**Research Participants Rights**

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

Nova Southeastern University

(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790

[IRB@nova.edu](mailto:IRB@nova.edu)

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at [www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants](http://www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants) for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

**All space below was intentionally left blank.**



**Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section**

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

**SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:**

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research.

**Adult Signature Section**

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Appendix C  
Interview Schedule

**IPA Interview Questions**

1. Can you describe your family of origin's view of education?
2. How did your family migrating to the United States influence your views on education, if at all?
3. What do you believe are the differences or similarities between your parents' and grandparents' view of education?
4. How did your family of origin's views on education influence you throughout your life?
5. What are the differences or similarities between your views and that of your parents' and grandparents'?
6. Can you remember and describe your perception of your family of origin's reaction when you obtained your degree?
7. What feelings emerged for you when you obtained your degree? What did your degree mean to you?
8. What do you imagine the future implications of education are or will be for the next generation of your family?

**Educational Genogram Question Guide**

1. What is your mother's name? Is she deceased?
2. What is (was) your mother's highest level of education?
3. What is (was) your mother's occupation?
4. What is your father's name? Is he deceased?

5. What is (was) your father's occupation?
6. What is (was) your father's highest level of education?
7. Do you have siblings? If so, what are their names?
8. What are your siblings' highest level of education?
9. What are your siblings' occupations?
10. What is your maternal grandmother's name? Is she deceased?
11. What is (was) your maternal grandmother's highest level of education?
12. What is (was) your maternal grandmother's occupation?
13. What is your maternal grandfather's name? Is he deceased?
14. What is (was) your maternal grandfather's occupation?
15. What is (was) your maternal grandfather's highest level of education?
16. What is your paternal grandmother's name? Is she deceased?
17. What is (was) your paternal grandmother's highest level of education?
18. What is (was) your paternal grandmother's occupation?
19. What is your paternal grandfather's name? Is he deceased?
20. What is (was) your paternal grandfather's occupation?
21. What is (was) your paternal grandfather's highest level of education?
22. Do you have aunts and uncles? If so, what are their highest level of education?
23. What are your aunts' and uncles' occupation?
24. Is there anyone else in the family whose academic history you feel is important to share?

**Closing Comment and Question:**

Thank you for participating in this research study and sharing your experience with us. Before we end, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix D  
Counseling Referral List

**Counseling Referral List:**

**Dr. Charmaine Borda**

Counseling, Marriage & Family Therapy

1860 N Pine Island Rd, Suite 101

Plantation, FL 33322

(954) 701-0241

**The Brief Therapy Institute**

Maltz Psychology Building

3301 College Avenue

Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314

(954) 262-3030

**Mercier Wellness and Consulting**

7860 Peters Road

Suite F-107

Plantation, FL 33324

[www.mercierwellness.com](http://www.mercierwellness.com)

Phone: (954) 372-5892

**AAMFT Therapist Locator:**

<https://www.therapistlocator.net/>