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Psychosocial Impacts on Young Adult Haitian Immigrant Students in the United States

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Walden University

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Lucien Eugene Pierre

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2018

Abstract

Psychosocial Impacts on Young Adult Haitian Immigrant Students in the United States

by

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MA & Mdiv, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, Florida, 2007

BA, St. John Vianney College Seminary, Miami, Florida, 2002

Advanced Certificate, Catholic Leadership Institute, Miami, Florida, 2017

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Psychology

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Abstract

Many young adult Haitian immigrant students (YAHIS) move to the United States hoping to achieve better lives. This growing population faces many challenges when acculturating to a new country and educational system. Some obstacles include inadequate family and social support, language barriers, limited education, distinct cultural values, a lack of academic materials, a shortage of Haitian teachers, and inadequate educational programs. These psychosocial factors often prevent Haitian immigrants from succeeding in U.S. schools. This study explored YAHIS' experiences of acculturation and education as they relate to these psychosocial factors. Qualitative phenomenological techniques, guided by Adlerian theory, revealed the assumptions, meanings, and feelings of the study participants via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 YAHIS. Key findings included the identification of common themes regarding critical factors for academic success: (a) family support; (b) role of culture; (c) educational opportunities; (d) challenges of acculturation; (e) questioning of self-identity; and (f) personal attitude. These findings may inform schools, universities, and professionals who seek to assist YAHIS acculturate and succeed in the U.S. educational system. The study findings may facilitate positive social change by enabling scholars, school psychologists, educators, and family members to help YAHIS integrate into U.S. society, succeed in education, and contribute to their communities. Specifically, results suggest that administrators must provide increased transparency regarding access to education in the United States and additional information about the registration process to ensure YAHIS acculturate and have all necessary support to succeed in higher education.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicated this work to my mother and father for the gift of life. To my lovely Aunts Rose Celestin, Eunise Eugene, Mrs. Roland Eugene who continue to nurture me with their maternal love throughout my life and my academic endeavors and life goals. To my Uncle Jocelin Eugene, my cousins Alice Metelus, Margareth Eugene Francois, Carline Eugene, Angelique Docteur, and Yanique Docteur, who always applaud my effort. In memory of my deceased Beloved grand-father Soliman Pierre for his fatherly care and discipline.

I also would like to dedicate this to all my family members, friends, my brother priests, participants in this study, and parishioners where I previously served and always encouraged and supported me through the years of studies. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this piece of study to all I encountered on this journey who allowed me to assist them in their struggles to cope in life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In recent years, the scope of mental health study has expanded to include the immigration system and its impact on immigrant communities and ethnic groups. Karkos (2004) pointed out that most immigrants to the United States faced similar psychosocial problems relating to their basic human needs, including securing a job, finding a place to live, buying food, enrolling children in school and universities, adjusting to a new cultural environment and its educational systems, and struggling to learn a new language. Karkos added that if these basic human needs are not met, psychological effects on the individual may result and the larger immigrant community's mental health and wellbeing may suffer.

Among all immigrant groups, the Haitian immigrant population had experienced a particularly intense struggle attempting to survive in United States' society (Felix & Perrin, 2000). Often emigrating from Haiti under conditions of acute duress, Haitian immigrants to the United States have a great deal to overcome, including poverty and language barriers (Ball, 2015). In order to overcome these conditions, young adults who came often sought a better life through education. However, according to Pichard (2006), young adult Haitian immigrant students (YAHIS) face a myriad of obstacles in the attempt to meet their educational needs and adjust to a new physical and social environment. My study presents the experiences of YAHIS as newcomers, thus filling a gap within the literature that addressed this demographic. This study was timely and necessary because it highlighted the particular context of the YAHIS so that their needs could be better understood and met by the educational community.

Chapter 1 presents the background to the study and the argument that a greater understanding of the context of the YAHIS enabled educators to better support their educational success. From this perspective, I used the background to the study to promote an understanding of the problems YAHIS faced as they were struggling to acculturate and adjust to a new environment and educational system. A theoretical framework based on an Adlerian theoretical lens, which stressed the importance of social connectedness as a means of making meaning in people's lives, allows readers to understand YAHIS' plight as they strove to attain their educational goals. Chapter 2 offers a review of the research literature. The literature review explored and analyzed important characteristics of Haitian immigrant communities in the United States with an emphasis on YAHIS' acculturation and educational goals. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the research design and the process of data collection and assessment. The chapter presents general information about the participants who agreed to participate in the study, while explaining qualities that distinguish YAHIS from other Haitian immigrant groups and defined relevant terms that allowed readers to connect to YAHIS' contextual realities. Moreover, the chapter presented the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and an overview of the proposed study.

In addition, Chapter 4 addresses the research questions identified in this dissertation regarding the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS and presents the participants' perceptions about the educational and social issues that affect academic success as they are striving to acculturate in the United States. The chapter is an exploration of the psychosocial factors on YAHIS' acculturation and presented a phenomenological analysis looking particular at the data that provided the advantages or disadvantages in their

integration and educational success in their new land. I discussed the participants' aspiration and shared their challenges they faced in achieving their goals. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a review of the main findings of the research and summarizes the contributions of the previous chapters. Then, the chapter discussed the theoretical framework and the implications of the study. The chapter presented the empirical finding of the research that demonstrated how the research could contribute to the previous studies or existing literature bring about social change. Some recommendations were made that could benefit future researches.

Problem Statement

Recently, a growing Haitian immigration rate into the United States has increased the numbers of YAHIS in the country's colleges and universities (Balatova, 2014; Desir, 2007; Morse, 2008; Nwosu, 2008). Many of these students left their homeland under deplorable conditions, including fallout from natural disasters and political unrest, seeking a better future (Cone et al., 2013; Nicholas, 2008; Wah, 2009). Some Haitian students are encouraged by immigrant family members to migrate to the United States and they come anticipating a better education and future here (Nicholas, 2008; Wah, 2013). While Haitian-American family members are likely to be students' primary resource for coping with psychosocial stressors, such as finances and legal issues associated with immigration, research has indicated that many Haitian immigrant families have limited knowledge about American culture and its education system (Cone et al., 2013) and may thus be ill equipped to assist with the adjustment process. In addition, the economic circumstances of Haitian immigrant families can have a negative impact on YAHIS' ability to achieve educational

goals and acculturate to their new environment. Studies have found that most Haitian students have experienced tremendous psychosocial challenges related to these factors (Cone et al., 2013; McBean, 2007; Nicholas et al, 2009).

According to researchers, academic achievement, stable employment and income, and language fluency are integral aspects of students' acculturation process as they strive to integrate themselves into the host society (Brown, 2014; Iboke, 2007; Nicolas et al, 2009). Studies have pointed out that "both individual (e.g., gender and family SES) and contextual (e.g., quality of education and safety of school/neighborhood) factors play a role in the educational attainment of immigrant youth" (Nicholas et al., 2011, p. 665). However, linguistic, economic, and social barriers to educational achievement that exist among Haitian immigrant students living in the United States can be seen as the primary predictors of disappointment and failure (Wah, 2013).

In a recent study, Un (2013) found that "only 10% of Miami-Dade Haitian adults over 25 years old have a bachelor's degree, and only 5% of Haitian adults living in the city of Miami are college educated" (p. 1). This low rate of higher education is not consistent with the educational aspirations of the Haitian immigrant community. Therefore, there is a disconnection between the educational goals and outcomes of YAHIS as a group. Research on gaps in family and social support is needed to allow educators to support the YAHIS population in meeting their educational goals and achieving cultural adaption.

Background to the Problem

Immigrants to the United States seek a better future, often harboring dreams of improving their education and living conditions. Among these newcomers are immigrants

from Haiti and in recent years, their population has increased in the United States' educational system (Aaron, 2010; Lonette et al., 2010; Suarez et al., 2010). As these newcomer students endeavor to adapt to the new cultural environment, they encounter many problems that challenge them to succeed (Suarez et al., 2010). Some of these immigrant students have succeeded and others have failed due to psychosocial challenges such as limited formal education, substandard English language skills, and lack of appropriate curriculum for Haitian students. Lack of social and family support is another challenging factor for immigrants' educational success and cultural adaptation (Iboke, 2007; Lonette 2010). Therefore, researchers have encouraged further studies regarding the direct psychological impact of lack of social and family supports on this population (Lonette, 2010).

Vanderkooy (2011) examined the cultural and socioeconomic problems of YAHIS and suggested three key themes that are important in YAHIS' integration into US society: ethnic identification, enclave, and economic resources. The impact of these factors on YAHIS' success is made clear when one considers their status as (a) immigrants who often lack English proficiency; (b) members of a disadvantaged ethnic group that is predominantly black; and (c) individuals with limited employment opportunities. Together, these factors constitute substantial barriers for YAHIS' integration and cultural adjustment. From this perspective, researchers need to investigate how YAHIS receive support from members of Haitian community groups as they strive to achieve their educational aspirations and integrate themselves into American society.

Lauren and Chen (2013) found that all immigrants regardless of documentation status experience psychological stress. However, Haitian immigrant students often enter the United States under acute duress, emerging from precarious social, environmental, economic, and political conditions and circumstances that affect their psychological states. Desir (2007) found that,

Many Haitian students have experienced tumultuous social and political context[s] that may delay their academic achievement and their cultural adjustment and many aspects of their lives and [have] left them with a number of academic and psychological needs, of which most US educators seem unaware. (p. 74)

Research has stated that too often teachers and educators are culturally incompetent working with students from underprivileged backgrounds in U.S. schools (Un, 2013). Studies have pointed out teachers and educators' inability to culturally support these students; such support would entail developing curricula based on knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, and ethnic identities (Un, 2013).

Suarez et al. (2010) articulated that YAHIS have experienced dissonance between the lived realities of their native land and their adopted home, which factors into efforts to overcome stress and distress, and adjust to a new educational system and cultural environment. Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) demonstrated how social support and quality of life (physical and psychological health, social relationships, and environment) are important to the adjustment process, especially when immigrants endeavor to acculturate. My study will extend the understanding of ways YAHIS deal with stress as they are trying to adjust to a new environment and navigate a new educational system.

Haitian immigrants extend their economic and social support to family members within both Haiti and the United States. Despite their limited financial resources, they collectively contribute their resources to enable other family members—including Haitian students—to migrate to the US, hoping they would improve their lives and in turn have the means to support those who remain back in their native land (Giles, 1990). Studies found that new arrivals often experienced financial strain due to the obligation to take care of those they have left behind, especially members who had contributed their meager resources to their migration. However, if they lack the means to support family members, the pressures of the migration chain could create anxiety, conflict, and division (Giles, 1990; Nicholas, 2008). This situation could be a significant source of stress for YAHIS, affecting their educational success and cultural adjustment.

In addition, there is a disparity in family income among Haitian immigrant students' families, which may directly or indirectly affect their educational achievement and cultural adjustment. According to Nicolas et al. (2009), while 30% of all U.S. immigrants did not obtain their high school diploma, only 12% of Haitian immigrants failed to complete high school. Nicholas et al. (2008) showed that Haitian immigrants—both males and females—have demonstrated high self-esteem and aspirations for their futures. The authors found that family support plays a pivotal role in immigrant students' adaptation, educational attainment, and mental wellbeing (Nicolas et al., 2009). Nevertheless, an educational and cultural adjustment gap still exists among young adult Haitian immigrant students, and this may be because many YAHIS are not from families with a high economic or social status.

An ethnographic study was conducted with adolescent Haitian immigrant students in the US which found that the students' perceptions about succeeding in their education along with relevant psychosocial factors—such as family support including family attachment and structure, economic destitution, and languages—could prevent them from achieving their goals (Pichard, 2006). While that study focused on adolescents and used Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, my study documents the lived experiences of young adult Haitian immigrant students, using Adlerian and adjustment theories. My study sought to detect barriers and challenges YAHIS face as they try to acculturate and attain their educational goals. This study extends Pichard's 2006 findings by investigating the perceptions and experiences of older Haitian immigrant students as newcomers. Pichard's findings about adolescents fall short of helping psychologists and educators understand and advise the older students, whose acculturation experiences and educational goals may differ (Pichard,2006). Addressing and properly analyzing the social and mental health issues of these YAHIS will enhance psychosocial health outcomes and provide better mental health and social services.

Historical Background to the Problem

Historically, Haiti is the second independent nation in the Western Hemisphere and the world's first black-led republic (Ott, 2017; Unaeze & Perrin, 2016). After Haiti's independence, events continuously divided the country and made it a dysfunctional and vulnerable state. For example, from 1867 to 1915, Haiti had 20 different presidents, including those that served under the U.S. Marines occupation between 1915 and 1934 and another military coup d'état (Unaeze & Perrin, 2016). Haiti has remained a politically

unstable country. Consequently, Haitians are pushed to leave their native land and migrate to other shores for a better life and greater safety (Unaeze & Perrin, 2016). Vanderkooy (2011) pointed out that Haitians have a long history of migration, with different phases and trajectories.

The United States is one of the most appealing countries to emigrants who are seeking safety for their families and their future (Schulz & Batalova, 2017). However, migration to the United States has never been an easy journey for Haitians. Aside from the perils of the journey, Haitians have been negatively labeled and face overwhelming prejudice based on race, class, language, and national origin (Aaron, 2010; Lonetteet al.2010; Suarez et al.2010). The discrimination that Haitians face in the United States is deeply interwoven with Haitian history (Vanderkooy, 2011). Studies revealed that Haitians in the first wave (1960s and 70s) faced linguistic and racial barriers (Aaron, 2010)). Nevertheless, those with professions were able to contribute to and integrate into American society. As immigrants continued to enter the United States from an unstable Haiti, professionals (such as nurses, doctors, and others) have faced greater barriers in integrating themselves in the US economic and educational system (American immigrant cultures, 1997).

Haitian immigrant students are considered a new group within the U.S. educational system, requiring better education to integrate and acculturate themselves in the new land (Nicolas, 2009). Most of the time, these new immigrant students face tremendous challenges such as lack of English proficiency, racism, prejudice, and lack of social and family support (Desir, 2007; Nicolas, 2009). In Gelin's (2010) view, YAHIS can best be

served when the “historical, political, and social contexts of their experiences are understood and valued by all those who are involved in their schooling” (p. 48). Many Haitian students have immigrated to the United States to escape poverty and political turbulence, which have affected their social and emotional lives (Desir, 2010; Gelin, 2010)). Many of the students that immigrated to the United States, whether they are from elite upper and middle classes or working classes, have generally been stereotyped as economic refugees rather than political refugees, and have suffered prejudice and racism—unlike other ethnic groups, such as Cubans (Gelin, 2010). From this perspective, researchers posit that Haitian immigrant groups have contended with the substantial hurdles to their acceptance and incorporation into U.S. society (Vanderkooy, 2011). They have, further, been placed under suspicion as far as national security goes, due to racial profiling (Gelin, 2010; Vanderkooy, 2011).

According to Iboke (2002), Haitian students have been taught that education is the key to prosperity and dignity, which motivates and instills in them an eagerness to learn. However, the reception of students of Haitian descent in the United States has shaped their educational careers (Iboke, 2002). Scholars consider Haitian immigrant students’ social status to be a “triple minority” group: as immigrants or foreigners; as black, which automatically subjects them to prejudice; and of a non-English (and non-Spanish) linguistic group (Gelin, 2010; Vanderkooy, 2011). A crucial issue that Haitian students face is the acculturation to their social environment, which is dependent on several psychosocial factors such as degree of social and family support, language, and ethnic identity. In this study, the acculturation process is an essential factor because it is through acculturation

that immigrants demonstrate that their understanding and cultural competence in regard to the practices and language of the land to which they have immigrated. Theoretical frameworks related to the acculturation process will frame the discussion of YAHIS' experience in the forthcoming dissertation.

Potential Significance of Study

I explored the academic and adaption experiences of YAHIS and investigated the impact of factors such as family, social support, and language barriers on their educational experiences. In addition, this study determined what other barriers YAHIS faced and how they endeavored to overcome them. The study built on the previous research conducted on adolescent Haitian immigrant students by researchers such as Cone et al. (2013), Desir (2007), Doucet (2006), Nicholas et al. (2011), Pichard (2006), and expanded the focus to young adult Haitian immigrant students' lived experiences within the culture of the U.S. educational system.

Previous research focused on the experiences of Haitian adolescent immigrant students has suggested the importance of social context and family. These studies have consistently found that Haitian children and adolescent students face challenges that affect their educational achievement and acculturation including (a) cultural conflicts that made it difficult for students to relate to peers; (b) shifting educational demands that result in deficits in organizational and learning skills; (c) poor English skills; (d) lack of efficient pedagogical approaches, (e) applicable curriculum guidelines, and (f) limited involvement of parents (Belizaire et al., 2009; Desir, 2005; Doucet, 2007; Nicholas, 2008; Pichard, 2006); (g) posttraumatic event experiences; and finally, (h) a lack of social and family

support (Cone et al., 2013; Elie, 2011; Un, 2013; Vanderkooy, 2011). While these factors have been identified as contributing to the acculturation difficulties experienced by children and adolescents who immigrate with their families, to date, a review of the literature revealed no studies of young adult immigrants from Haiti who come to this country seeking higher education.

Several studies have focused on the children of Haitian immigrants and adolescents born in the United States or who immigrated at an early age (Desir, 2005; Doucet, 2007). Those studies revealed the phenomenon of posttraumatic disorders that manifested and were transmitted within the family. Research has suggested that further study is needed to understand the political conflicts and social contexts that pushed or motivated these students to migrate, and their influences on academic and social adjustment to the United States (Desir, 2007). Specifically, one researcher has strongly encouraged teachers and other colleagues to know the social, cultural, and political contexts of Haitian immigrant students (Desir, 2007; Un, 2013). This finding is relevant to my study because psychologists and teachers recognizing life events or conditions experienced by these students will support their adjustment to the U.S educational environment.

Furthermore, several studies have investigated the impact of social factors, such as shifting family and household structures, as well as other social issues Haitian immigrant children and adolescents have brought with them from their native land, including their learning behaviors and their perception of success, especially their goals and definition of being successful (Desir, 2007; Doucet, 2005; Pichard, 2006). However, few studies have included YAHIS, especially the newly arrived. Family cohesion and social support are key

factors in Haitian immigrant community social development (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2011). My study investigated the role of family, economic, and social support in young adult immigrant students' educational achievement and cultural adaptation. Thus, this study will enable educators, practitioners, and scholars to further explore the process of acculturation of Haitian young adult students and gain the knowledge they need to raise community awareness about the significance that family and social support play in young adult Haitian immigrant integration and educational attainment.

Implications for Social Change from the Study

The project could bring great social changes for the YAHIS. A better understanding of YAHIS' experiences would help educators to understand how to support these students as they learn the new culture, adapt, and succeed in a new land. Education is of utmost importance for YAHIS and allows them to improve not only their lives but also their communities. Their integration into American society can be instrumental to change regarding psychosocial and mental problems. This research could empower educators to help YAHIS to engage, participate, and bring change to this country's educational system, while integrating themselves into that system. The audience for this study would be scholars who would educate school psychologists and school psychologists themselves. From this perspective, an original contribution the study would bring to the field could raise the academic community's awareness about the significant role family cohesion and social support play in young adult Haitian immigrant integration and educational attainment. Examining the adjustment process through the lived experiences of the YAHIS might aid school psychologists and scholars in better understanding YAHIS' experiences

while eliciting methods to ease the transition. Therefore, changes in the lives of YAHIS may come about because the educators and school psychologists who work with them will have a better idea of how to help them.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the Adlerian theory *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, meaning social interest and social feeling (Adler, 1927), I selected a framework that to examine the importance of family and social supports for immigrant students. Adlerian theory is a holistic, social, goal oriented, systemic, and humanistic approach that is based on individuals' capacities to improve themselves by striving to give meaning to their lives (Corey, 2009). Adler believed that people have aspirations and needs and yearn for social interaction and connectedness (Corey, 2009). His theory was based on seven major theoretical constructs: (a) unity of the individual, (b) goal orientation, (c) self-determination and uniqueness, (d) social context, (e) feeling of community, and (f) mental health and treatment. The unity of the individual is defined as a person having a balanced sense of self that is consistent with that person's lifestyle (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Goal orientation is a future oriented desire to reach a goal that improves who a person is as a human being, while self-determination and uniqueness say that goal springs from who one is and what one desires—criteria unique to each individual (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Social context is the environment where one lives and is made up of layers of systems that join and interconnect (Stein & Edwards, 1998). It is here that people live and work on life tasks, including community work (Stein & Edwards, 1998). The construct feeling of community is the connectedness to others, while mental health has to do with the health of the psyche (Stein & Edwards, 1998).

Adler (1927) believed that every person has a guiding theme, and individuals' journeys towards making meaning and learning from life experiences are a direct reaction to how they feel about themselves. These beliefs arise from ideas that begin during childhood and can come from a variety of factors that emerge from family dynamics (Watts, 2000). Issues arise with this task when children do not have encouragement and support from parents (Watts, 2000). Humans are embedded in their social relationships, which causes an impact on who they are and how they react (Watts, 2003). By interpreting the YAHIS' perspectives on their social and family supports using the lens of an Adlerian theory and practice, we may deepen our understanding of how background influences young adult immigrants' success in educational programs in the United States.

According to Simmons, Buckley, Walen, and Wilson (2014), Adler perceived community success including family as one of the major sources of social support. With this familial support, individuals can integrate themselves into society and successfully achieve their goals by overcoming life's challenges. Adler encouraged individuals to be courageous and realistic about the challenging acculturation issues they would be facing by creating a strong sense of self, a positive view of others, and an understanding and interaction with their environment (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Adler suggested encouragement as a fundamental tool to use in the process when working with immigrant groups so that the individual can have hope and adapt (Bornsheur, et al., 2014). People who are encouraged have a strong sense of self and believe that they are part of the whole, while those who have been discouraged feel inferior, as if they cannot succeed (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Likewise, many YAHIS migrated to the United States to have a better life and a

more prosperous future. These individuals have social interests and needs. Societal networking support and social groups can help them to overcome psychosocial challenges by helping them adapt to their new environment and culture (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Adler posited the idea that people are social beings and that the relationships in the family influence those outside (Bornsheur, et al., 2014). If good relationships and support are found within the family, the individual will expect the same outside of the family as well (Bornsheur, et al., 2014). Based on this theory, the closer and more supportive the family is, the more the YAHIS will actively know they can also seek support from others (Simmons et al., 2014). An examination of family and social support among Haitian immigrant students and its repercussions on their educational achievement, environmental adaptation, and their overall mental wellbeing can serve to illustrate the patterns. From this perspective, the study will examine YAHIS' situation within their cultural, social, family, and educational context (Corey, 2009).

The second approach was the adjustment model, which pointed out that adaptation to the environment is a continuous dynamic process (Mandeep, 2014). Lyons, Velez, Mehta, and Neill (2013) articulated that individuals are intertwined with their environment and its social and economic factors, which affects their lives, values, and needs. In other words, the degree of adjustment an individual requires in a new environment is based on the individual's satisfaction in accordance with his or her social needs and the function the adjustment plays in a given environment (Jobin, 2010). From this perspective, the adjustment model has different phases that enable individuals to be more successful in achieving their goals when immigrating to a new cultural environment (Jobin, 2010). The

adjustment phases can be described as first, a honeymoon period when the individual experiences momentary feelings of excitement, optimism, and wonder (Jobin, 2010). Following, the individual faces a crisis phase, which is a period of culture shock when the individual feels anxious, confused, and disoriented in the new cultural environment (Jobin, 2010). Finally, the individual experiences recovery, which can also be described as the adjustment phase when the individual becomes more comfortable in the new environment and culture (Jobin, 2010).

John & Berry (2001) suggested at least three different psychological phases that immigrants experienced upon entering a new environment or new culture: acculturation, adaptation, and assimilation. In the acculturation phase, the individual experiences cultural and psychological changes while trying to establish a balance between two cultures and their people (John & Berry, 2001). Upon the individual's arrival in the host country, he or she often experiences excitement about what he or she sees. However, when the individual settles and starts facing the host country's demands, the person begins to face cultural differences and becomes limited in his or her activities due to language and social barriers. Subsequently, the individual moves to the recovery phase as he or she becomes familiar with the environment (John & Berry (2001). Finally, the individual is able to adjust by demonstrating his or her ability to function well in the new environment (John & Berry, 2001). The individual tries to integrate him or herself in the host culture without losing his or her own cultural identity (Berry, 2001). Consequently, researchers have found that individuals who try to acculturate into their new surroundings experienced lower levels of stress and achieved better adaptation by adopting a positive attitude (Berry, 2005).

The adaptation phase entails the individual's functional stabilization to the changes that happen during the acculturation phase (Jobin, 2005). Adaptation may or may not help the individual to feel comfortable with his or her environment (Berry, 2005). In other words, the process of adaptation and question of whether the individual can cope with the new life or environment is variable dependent on situations or circumstances. In short, YAHIS have unavoidably gone through these psychological phases and processes of cultural adaptation upon their arrival in this country. During the process of YAHIS' adjustment, these stages may affect their lives and cause some psychological issues, such as stress, anxiety, and frustration, that may affect their educational achievement.

I identified themes from the lived experiences of the YAHIS. By interviewing the participants and analyzing the results using Adlerian and adjustment theory, a clearer picture of the strengths and challenges faced by this community emerged, which could lead to possible interventions and support for these individuals.

Research Questions

The primary research questions examined and explored YAHIS' psychosocial factors including family and social support, mental health, cultural adjustment, and educational experiences. I documented the lived experiences and voices of YAHIS as they attempted to acculturate and attain their educational goals.

RQ 1: What are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States?

RQ 2: What are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into U.S. society?

These research questions enabled me to understand the lived experiences of YAHIS in the U.S. educational system as they are striving to adjust to the culture. I sought to identify the needs of YAHIS and highlight the ways universities, teachers, and families could support the acculturation of these immigrant students. These research questions guided me throughout this study, as the psychosocial factors will play a significant role in YAHIS' adjustment process to the cultural environment and educational system. The following chapter will continue to provide a synopsis of Adlerian theory and adjustment theory, which, together, provide the theoretical framework for this study. Moreover, these theories guided the literature review and aligned with the research methodology. The literature review will highlight YAHIS' experiences in the U.S. educational system and the cultural environment. The research literature will look at studies that have been done on this population and present a comprehensive summary and interpretation of the sources that are relevant to YAHIS and indicate further research that needs to be done.

Definition of Terms

The following major conceptual terms used throughout the present study are defined.

Academic attainment: The highest level of education the individual achieves.

Academic failure: An ineffective attempt of the individual to academically succeed, often due to social factors beyond his or her control.

Capital: The resources through which immigrant students find support to adapt and succeed.

Family cohesion: A prevalent aspect of the Haitian immigrant community that provides emotional support in difficult situations.

Psychosocial factors: Conflicted elements that involve both psychic and social aspects that could intrinsically and extrinsically affect the individual upon his or her adjustment to new environments or new systems.

Social capital: Specific types of social bonds that sustain a sense of connection among individuals grounded on social norms of trust and reciprocity, networks, and civic engagement.

Social support: Constructive interpersonal elements that directly influence health by promoting self-esteem, wellbeing, and self-regulation regardless of the presence of stress (Cohen & Lakey, 2014).

Young Adult Haitian Immigrant Student (YAHIS): A student between 18-30 years old who arrived in the United States from Haiti within the last 10 years.

Assumptions

A fundamental assumption of this study is that the participants in this study would be cooperative. They will support the rationale behind the study, which will in turn validate my initiative to explore factors that would enable them to succeed in American society. The study will also maximize YAHIS' potentiality by ensuring that they have educational and social support to integrate themselves into the host society. Pichard (2006) enumerated some of these crucial factors,

Shifting family structures and households; severe economic hardships; frequent political unrest and turmoil in a country-wide atmosphere of danger; a lack of

governmental infrastructure in Haiti to provide basic services such as roads, electricity, education, justice, medical care or drinking water; and the different moral codes embedded in Haitian cultural values, such as a class system of elitism, and notions of what a successful person should look, act and sound like. (pp. 10-11)

Thus, these psychosocial factors could continue to be challenges for YAHIS' educational success and cultural adaptation. However, Pichard (2006) highlighted that, "Haitian society overall places a high value on education, and Haitian people in general believe that education leads to success" (p. 11). In other words, educational achievement and professional success can be the motivation for YAHIS to overcome their social challenges.

Nevertheless, Haitian immigrant students have mixed expectations about their academic success and environmental adjustment. YAHIS can be fully aware that their lack of social and family support could affect their educational success and acculturation or adaptation. However, Haitian immigrants are resilient individuals and have strong positive beliefs about education through which they may be able to overcome some of these psychosocial factors. Moreover, in this research, there may be socioeconomic differences among Haitian immigrant students that would explain the disparities that exist among the Haitian immigrant community. Nicolas et al. (2009) affirmed that there are many parallels between Haitian families in Haiti and those living in the United States. Like families in Haiti, Haitian families living in the United States are comprised of immediate and extended family members who maintain a high level of loyalty to, and support for, each other (pp.137-138).

Scope and Delimitations

The goal of this study is to explore the psychosocial factors adult Haitian immigrant students are facing in their lives as they attempt to adapt to a new land and new educational system. The study will not try to resolve these psychosocial problems; rather I sought to pinpoint the psychosocial problems and make relevant propositions that will enable Haitian students to integrate, embrace American culture, and participate in the U.S. educational system fully. Moreover, this study aims to involve all participants and stakeholders in the Haitian Diasporic community, such as church communities including religious young adult groups and ministers, colleges, universities, professional and mental health practitioners, teachers, leaders, families, and political leaders. This study is an ongoing investigation into the experiences of Haitian immigrant students as they arrive in the United States. Therefore, from the research, I identified strategies to enable students to engage in dialogues about their problems and raise the community consciousness about their psychosocial problems and their psychological impacts on their wellbeing. With hope, the results of my study will encourage students and families to be proactive by organizing group discussion and providing a forum to address issues relating to family and social support including health and cultural adaptation. From this perspective, this study could help students to adapt to new environments from where they can pursue their goals and dreams.

Limitations of the Study

Doing research on any ethnic group can be demanding; certain factors and traits can affect the study. Haitians tend to be distrustful and scared when they are asked for

personal information. For instance, asking Haitian immigrants to fill a survey might cause them to be intimidated and due to their lack of trust, they may not want to provide personal information to the interviewer. From this perspective, one of the most important elements to create or encourage Haitian immigrant students is building trust. This study will ensure that the rights of the individual are respected. Since the study deals with YAHIS who migrated to the United States, there are number of ethical and legal issues—such as their immigration status—that could influence in the research. Birman (2005) articulated that migration does not occur at random, and the sociology of international migration has much to tell us about the contexts in which migrants are received (p. 158). The ethical, legal, sociopolitical, and economic issues in the Haitian case have a great deal to contribute to the study. As the researched, I needed to understand the trends of Haitian migration, which would enable me to understand Haitian sociopolitical and economic situations and how to approach the legal and ethical aspect with sensitivity and respect.

Confidentiality and informed consent have to be established and valued in the study so that the researcher maintains collaborative relationships with the participants. Taylor (2007) pointed out that this involves enhancing the motivation for sharing and then, empowering them to share information when it can help solve problems. All stakeholders must value privacy concerns and be aware of legal requirements to protect privacy (Taylor, 2007). Lack of familiarity with participant cultures poses challenges with respect to assessing research risks/benefits, procedures to obtain informed consent and appropriate incentives in research. Further, steps must be taken to avoid coercion and maintain confidentiality (Birman, 2005). For example, I made it clear to participants that their

participation in the study will not jeopardize their legal status. Haitians may feel that the collection of personal data by fellow immigrants will not honor their promises of confidentiality. Haitians tend to be guarded when sharing sensitive information about family members. Surveys, interviews, and videos were stored in a locked cabinet inaccessible to the public. Cultural competency and sensitivity are similarly important in the study as they foster and establish good interpersonal relationships between the interviewer and participants.

Summary

The aim of this proposal is to define the essential elements of the research. The proposal presents the main psychosocial issues that YAHIS are dealing with. This chapter identifies YAHIS as a unique ethnic group among the myriad forms of racial and ethnic identity in the United States. Rong and Brown (2001) suggested that, “as racial and ethnic identity is becoming increasingly complicated, educational practitioners need to move away from the conventional notion that equates each racial group with one culture and one ethnic identity” (p. 1). This research explores the essential role of family and social supports in YAHIS’ acculturation process. From this perspective, the following chapter covers the research literature and will explore important aspects of the Haitian immigrant experience in the US in regard to cultural adaptation and educational learning success. The research literature discusses family and social support, defining the parameters of what is typical about Haitian family support systems and obstacles that tend to make a family unresponsive to young adult Haitian immigrant students’ needs. This study will highlight the psychological symptoms YAHIS have due to lack of family and social supports.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

All immigrant groups face challenges adjusting to the new culture to which they are trying to adapt. YAHIS came to the United States with learning challenges that educational communities did not fully understand; Chapter 1 provided a background to this study to assist in the understanding of the Haitian immigrant student context. In literature review I examined the ways various psychosocial factors (acculturation, social and family support, language and learning challenges) that affect YAHIS' educational success and cultural adjustment. The review focused on the theoretical approaches to understanding the acculturation and adaptation of young adult Haitian immigrant students, with a view to addressing the main research questions this study sought to answer.

The literature review covered studies that were conducted related to Haitian immigrant students. Some of these studies discussed students and parents' perceptions regarding education in a new cultural environment, and the impact of that environment on their intelligence and learning. Scholars also addressed the challenges schools and educators faced in assisting immigrant students to succeed academically. Many of those studies also investigated the cultural factors that directly affected the education of Haitian immigrant students and other newcomers and the importance of those cultural factors on academic performance. What remained to be studied are questions related to the psychosocial impact of factors such as family and social support on the specific group of YAHIS.

The General Concept of Acculturation among Immigrant Groups

Acculturation constitutes an essential process in the experience of any immigrant group as members find themselves dealing with two different worlds and cultures: they brought with them behaviors and values that were distinct from the host country. Immigrants faced uncertainty as they integrated themselves into the new culture and find many aspects of life were unfamiliar to them (Lakey 2001). In the acculturation process, there are some general expectations of migrants that are evident: to learn English; to adapt to American culture, values, and norms of behaviors; and, if possible, to embrace the new host country's nationality (Kotlowitz, 2007; Massey & Sánchez, 2010; Salins, 1997). Vanderkoy (2011) maintained that for an immigrant group to successfully acculturate they must come to identify with the host society. Acculturation is an inevitable part of immigration; nevertheless, the overall acculturation process does not occur equally for all immigrant groups (Vanderkooy, 2011). Following a general view on the acculturation process, in which immigrant groups developed a sense of belonging and an affirmation of membership in the new society the literature supporting this study is presented.

Support and Outcomes for Immigrant Students

American society has been built by, and has benefited from, the vitality and enthusiasm brought to its shores by those seeking a better life. For immigrant students to be successful in the United States, they rely on support from families, educators, school, and communities (Pichard, 2006). They must also excel in the language of the new host country (Tobocman, 2015). Moreover, scholars have postulated that both the acculturation and the educational success of immigrants are based on the distinctive skill sets (whether

trained professional or unskilled labor) that they bring with them (Baum & Flores, 2011). Scholars have also noted that differences in overall educational outcomes for different generations of immigrants are determined by conditions related to their country of origin, race, level of community support, education and quality of prior schools, and legal barriers, all of which have shaped their experiences (Baum and Flores, 2011). Furthermore, parents' levels of educational attainment affected the educational success of their children (Baum & Flores, 2011). For instance, the same study compared the educational attainment among immigrant subgroups among first and third generation immigrant parents from Asia, Europe, and Africa with those from South and Central America and Caribbean Nations to see how their professional skills would boost their children and other immigrant students' educational attainment (Baum & Flores, 2011; Hsiao & Wittig, 2009). The study's findings indicate that postsecondary attainment rates of young people who come from low-income households and, regardless of income or immigration status, whose parents have no college experience are low across the board (Baum & Flores, 2011; Hsiao & Wittig, 2009). Exacerbating the financial constraints is the reality that low-income students and those whose parents have little education are frequently academically ill prepared to succeed in college (Baum & Flores, 2011; Hsiao & Wittig, 2009).

Moreover, Baum & Flores (2011) have reported that children of parents without a college education are less likely to succeed in a postsecondary environment (p. 174). The comparison has shown that immigrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Europe are more likely than native-born individuals to be college graduates, whereas those from Mexico, Central America, the Spanish Caribbean, Laos, and Cambodia have much lower

educational attainment (Baum & Flores, 2011; Hsiao & Wittig, 2009). Therefore, the study concluded that a strong predictor of immigrant student educational success is parental education (Baum & Flores, 2011, p. 174). Another report on critical issues for children and their immigrant families pointed out that family relationships and support are essential for the overall wellbeing and successful acculturation experiences of immigrant youth (Princeton University, 1995). The same study has found that family structure and dynamics are key indicators of success in the new land (Princeton University, 1995). This general study on subgroups of immigrants' attainment and family support will benefit our research by helping us understand the case of YAHIS.

Acculturation of Young Adult Haitian Students in the US

Adjustment to a new country requires time and effort from the individual to adapt to a new place and way of life. Adjustment is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process that could also be a lifelong one. Diakanva (2011) described four stages of cultural adjustment: honeymoon, hostility, integration or acceptance, and finally, home. These stages resemble a cycle in nature, rather than a linear process because adjustment is continuously happening as the individual faces new situations (Diakanva, 2011). Adler (1975, 1987) preferred to term culture shock as *transition shock*, a process in which one experiences “profound learning, self-understanding and change” (Lakey, 2001). Moreover, Lakey (2001) found that immigrants from countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Vietnam, Haiti, Mexico, and other Latin and South American countries are dealing with the dilemma of communication in the effort to adopt the language of the new host culture. They are similarly contending with contrasting behavioral modes and values

among their kin and members of their new culture. These elements constitute essential aspects of the process as well as outcomes of any immigrant group's acculturation process (Lakey, 2001). From this perspective, immigrants that arrive on American soil should understand these stages and know that, unlike other Western cultures, American culture is constantly renewing and reshaping its values and customs. New immigrants should be aware of this cultural dynamism, which will enhance their integration into the new society (Diakanva, 2011). In their effort to acculturate to these new cultural values, they will be able to manage the divergent situations they will face in the new land.

YAHIS, as immigrants, also experienced these stages as they attempt to adjust to a new academic and cultural environment. Adjustment is based on the issue of self-identity (Desir, 2007; Stepick et al. 2003; Vanderkooy, 2011). YAHIS, like other ethnic groups, have to assimilate, adjust, and integrate to the new lifestyle of the host country. Stepick et al. (2003) pointed out that assimilation of immigrants is not only about the immigrants adapting their ways and becoming American. Rather, the American population must also accept immigrants in order for them to become truly assimilated (Stepick et al. 2003). Their integration may occur within a diverse social landscape, including individual groups or affiliations. According to Zhou (1997), regardless of the ethnic group the individual belongs to, the immigrant must begin his acculturation to proceed with the immigration process. Haitian immigrants have encountered many hurdles including racial, familial, social, and language barriers in their assimilation process (Lakey, 2001; Zhou, 1997). They tend to retain a distinct ethnic community in order to maintain and consolidate their own identity (Vanderkooy, 2011). Scholars have observed a shift that gradually happened

among Haitian children immigrants born or raised in the United States: they have successfully assimilated into American culture and represent a key liaison between parents and U.S. institutions (Vanderkooy, 2011). For instance, many of those born and raised in the United States become cultural gatekeepers by helping their parents to understand and navigate cultural differences (Vanderkooy, 2011). Scholars have also suggested that, as immigrant children enter adulthood, a more appropriate sense of integration needs to be applied (author, year). The present study investigated how YAHIS managed to navigate their transition as they acculturated to a new environment.

Obstacles to Immigrant Educational Success

Scholars have pointed out that Haitian immigrants arrive to the United States with unique educational needs, which are often overlooked by teachers and schools in low-income neighborhoods (Desir, 2007). This lack affects the students' ability to succeed academically in the United States (Desir, 2007). Elie (2011) noted that two of the obstacles faced by Haitian immigrant students are their prior education and their limitation of their native language, Haitian Creole. Researchers have indicated that there is a lack of educational resources written in Haitian Creole and what is available is of inferior quality (Elie, 2011). Scholars have found that Haitian immigrant students often lack the ability to speak English and have had little to no previous formal education (Elie, 2011). As a result, students face language discrimination in the classroom, which coincides with an ethnic and cultural identity crisis. This crisis affects their confidence and sense of self (Cone et al., 2013; Elie, 2011).

From this perspective, Haitian immigrant students belong to the category of students that require special educational programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) learning classes or literacy programs to enable them to become fluent in English and achieve fair assessments (Ibokette, 2007). Facing challenges on multiple fronts, YAHIS have many obstacles to overcome in the process of gaining an education in the United States. For instance, seeking to enroll in American schools and universities, their challenges include learning and speaking English; learning new educational styles; acculturating themselves to the host society; and dealing with inadequate family and social support—these factors are then compounded by a greater ethnic and cultural misunderstanding (Doucet, 2007; Elie, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, 2006). These psychosocial factors engender greater burdens for schools, universities, educators, and mental health counselors (Doucet, 2007; Elie, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, 2006). The following section of the review turned the focus to the adjustment process of YAHIS and highlighted questions regarding their cultural adaptation.

Paths to YAHIS' Success in Education

Most newcomers, regardless of where they came from, faced challenges in their acculturation process, due to social and family issues, language brokering, and from leaving their homeland behind (Brown, 2014). Gelin (2010) noted that immigrant students are deeply influenced by both their natal culture and the diversity of cultural practices they observe in America (p. 48). Numbers of scholars observed that Haiti is generally diverse and divided into social classes (Gelin (2010). The diversity in young adult Haitian immigrants is based on skin color, family, educational level, economic, and geographical

backgrounds (urban/ rural or peasant), which may have different hues, different social classes, and color issues (Cadet, 1998; Pichard, 2006). For instance, Cadet (1998) highlighted the phenomenon *restavec*, which is a way both affluent blacks and mulattoes use children from poorest families as slaves and servants. YAHIS are a recent group of immigrant students within the U.S. educational system who could be better equipped to integrate and acculturate themselves in the new land. Furthermore, the needs of Haitian immigrant students could be best served when historical, political, and social contexts of their experiences are understood and valued by all those who are involved in their schooling (Desir, 2007; Elie, 2011; Gelin, 2010).

Desir (2007) commented that both Haitian and non-Haitian scholars have negatively depicted the history of Haiti and have downplayed the highly significant role it played among world history movements: Haiti was the site of the first black-led anticolonial revolution in the Western Hemisphere (Desir, 2007). Nevertheless, Desir (2007) mentioned contemporary effects of political violence on Haitian immigrant students. Haitian students immigrated to the United States to escape poverty and political turbulence; conditions that have influenced their cognitive and attentive skills and have thus affected their social and emotional lives, and educational success (Desir, 2007). Haitian immigrant students enter the United States with a common purpose: to have a better life (Vanderkooy, 2011). Nevertheless, young adult Haitian students' journeys to the United States have never been pleasant; they have encountered many obstacles along the way (Brown, 2014; Fawzi, et al., 2009; Ibokette, 2008). The preceding waves of Haitian migrations have connected Haitian students' educational experiences to their lived

experiences. Many of the immigrant students that have immigrated to the United States, even if they are from elite upper and middle classes, have generally been stereotyped as economic refugees rather than political refugees and are subjected to prejudice and racism, unlike other ethnic groups, such as the Cubans (Gelin, 2010). From this perspective, researchers have noted that Haitian immigrant groups encounter greater hurdles to their acceptance and incorporation into United States' society (Gelin, 2010). They have been misunderstood and placed under scrutiny for national security due to racial profiling (Gelin, 2010; Vanderkooy, 2011). Haitian immigrants have faced problems such as hostility, discrimination, prejudice, and inequality, which are embedded within official U.S. policies, and present obstacles to assimilation and acceptance by American society (Vanderkooy, 2011).

According to studies on immigrant students and parents' perceptions of the U.S. educational system, scholars have found that learning is connected to a few crucial elements, including strong support networks of family, peers, and mentors that enable the students to acculturate. These elements can invigorate immigrant students' learning or discourage them from acquiring knowledge, which can make them fail academically (Elie, 2011). Major findings pointed out that a lack of bilingual academic materials for students and lack of academic skills among parents at home hindered the learning process (Elie, 2011). However, other studies have shown that Haitian students have been taught that education is the key to prosperity and dignity, which motivates and instills in them the willingness to learn (Desir, 2007; Ibokette, 2002). Ultimately, the reception of students of Haitian descent in this country has shaped their educational careers.

Gelin (2010) maintains that the experiences of Haitian youth can be seen through the distinct cultural strategies (style of dress, speech, social gatherings) of first generation versus second generation immigrants. Scholars consider Haitian immigrant students to be triple minorities: as immigrants or foreigners; as black, which subjects them to prejudice; and as non-English and non-Spanish speakers (Gelin, 2010; Vanderkooy, 2011). A crucial issue Haitian students face is acculturating to their environment. Acculturation is one of the essential characteristics in the immigration process through which immigrants demonstrate they understand and have adapted to the culture, practices, and language of the land they have immigrated to. Therefore, the acculturation process was discussed in detail in the dissertation, which included a comprehensive study of the theoretical framework and the implications of the acculturation process.

Transitioning of YAHIS from Haiti to USA

Educational opportunity is one the benefits individuals who immigrate to the US may enjoy. That is to say, education is inextricably linked to the immigration package because most immigrants have come to the United States in pursuit of a better life. These new immigrants believe that through their resilient spirit, work ethic, and endurance, they can succeed and achieve better lives for themselves and their families. Among these immigrants are students that dream the American Dream by achieving their highest purpose through higher education. As they enter the country, they begin transitioning to the lifestyle, especially its culture and educational system. From this perspective, the literature review will now turn to the psychosocial factors that could be considered transitional challenges for YAHIS in the United States.

Based on the Harvard Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study (LISA), research has shown that many young adolescent Haitian immigrant students had major behavioral issues and memory challenges; they encountered schools and educators that lacked an understanding of their social contexts and cultural backgrounds; they experienced a lack of trust through relationships and poor adjustment (Desir, 2007). These findings revealed that many Haitian immigrant students exhibit trauma through repetitive behaviors that can affect their academic success, relationships with peers, and perceptions toward life and their future (2007). These immigrant students may lack sufficient social and family support to face these challenges.

Based on the literature reviewed, Chapter 2 is primarily focused on the impact of psychosocial factors on young adult Haitian immigrant students, their acculturation experiences in the new land, and their experiences in the new educational system. The literature reviewed discussed the general concept of acculturation among all immigrants and presented the underlying problems—such as communication—which enables immigrants to satisfy their basic personal and social needs while navigating between two cultures. Few studies have explored the needs of YAHIS that could benefit both students in their acculturation process and teachers in their effort to assist this group of students to succeed in higher education. The study will provide the participants means to express and explain themselves by sharing their lived experiences in regard to their acculturation and educational experiences in their new land.

Theoretical Background to the Study

The literature review was framed with Adlerian theory and adjustment theory. Both theories offer a structure to understand how the participants' adjustment and acculturation allowed the individual to stabilize in the host country regardless of the situations they were facing. Some of the young adult Haitian students were introduced to higher education in the United States for the first time, alongside their need to acculturate to their new country. The following research questions guided our discussion into two aspects of the literature that informed us about the problems: (1) what are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States? And (2) what are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into the United States? Departing from these questions, the first element to be reviewed is the literature linked with the students' experiences of transitioning to higher education. The second element to be reviewed was the literature linked with specific psychosocial issues directly related to the immigrants' acculturation and educational achievement in higher education.

Lived Experience of YAHIS

The United States of America is known as land of opportunity where everyone can become somebody if they strive to achieve their full potential. For many individuals, immigration is a burden; among others, immigrants are negatively characterized. Many discourses focused on immigration reform emphasize its impact on the social, political, and economic life of the country. According to Vanderkooy (2011), immigrants are expected to conform to the culture and values of the new host society (p. 32). Nevertheless,

in many cases, immigrants have tremendous difficulty adjusting to the new cultural and educational system of the country. The Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) postulates that immigrant success is based on the standard of postsecondary education. From this perspective, many Haitian immigrants face tremendous challenges in the U.S. educational system.

Cone et al. (2013) indicate that Haiti has been facing numerous systemic problems, which include limited financial support, inadequate resources, and antiquated curricula, which have contributed to inadequate schooling experiences (p. 265). Desir (2007) acknowledged that students in Haiti, especially college and university students, have been subjected to political rivalries. For example, students, teachers, and scholars were perceived as threats to Duvalier's regime and were consequently suppressed, controlled, and imprisoned. Nicholas et al. (2009) commented that the same practice continued after Aristide's resignation, where schools in a majority of the major cities were attacked and students were threatened with banning from schools. According to Nicholas et al. (2009), Haitian immigrant students have experienced violence that ultimately affects their behaviors and creates conflict that impedes their adjustment.

Haitian immigrant students have educational learning challenges. For instance, seeking to enroll in American schools and universities, their challenges include learning and speaking English, learning new educational styles, acculturating to the host country, dealing with inadequate family and social support, and finally, contending with ethnic and cultural misunderstanding. These psychosocial factors engender greater burdens for schools, universities, educators, and mental health counselors (Doucet, 2007; Elie, 2011;

Suarez-Orozco, 2006). The following section pointed out the adjustment process of YAHIS and highlighted questions regarding their cultural adaptation.

Haitian Family Dynamics and their Implications

Family ties and strong social networks are essential for immigrant students to succeed, to enable them to deal with many stressors of acculturation, and to empower their educational aspirations (Guarnacia et al., 2013). Haitian family dynamics are an important aspect of the young adult Haitian immigrant students' lives. Family relationships are central in their transition to American society, which demands more autonomy than their previous way of life in the homeland (Guanacia et al., 2013). Family obligation in Haiti comes with a sense of duty: family members feel obliged to help or assist one another. They look after one another by taking responsibility for family members' needs. Some family members in Haiti have chosen to cease their own education and devote themselves to giving direct assistance to siblings and relatives. However, in U.S. society, family dynamics are different—there are fewer obligations toward supporting and reaching out other the family members (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002). Scholars have assessed that Haitian parents depend on their children for survival due to low socio-economic opportunities (Gelin, 2010). Additional newcomers can be financially overwhelming for the family due to the lack of resources. Vanderkooy (2011) affirmed that the offspring of Haitian migrants have achieved lower levels of educational success than they had expected when they were adolescents, largely due to limited opportunities. From this perspective, a lack of family support could be a critical element in the young adult Haitian immigrant students' educational success and cultural adjustment. Consider the “strong kinship” described

above which is part of successful strategy to overcome difficult situations in their homeland. The newcomers often find themselves in difficult situations when their educational success depends solely on a family members' financial support (Desir, 2007; Sheikh, 2014). In the proposed study, the questions elicited the sentiments that YAHIS experience when they were dealing with a lack of social and family support.

Cone et al. (2013) found that Haitian students and parents perceived an asymmetrical power relationship in U.S. education, which in turn maintains economic stratification linked to race, ethnicity, and social class. As a result, researchers have found that students are forced to (re)negotiate their Haitian identities, adjusting to what U.S. schools describe as "good student" behavior, in order to gain social mobility (p. 281). Furthermore, research has revealed that there is an unequal reception of Haitian and other ethnic groups by the U.S. government, which is a factor in Haitians' lack of economic opportunity and lower level of education (Un, 2013, p. 1). Researchers have found that other ethnic groups, such as Cubans, have strong social capital, while Haitians have weak social capital (Vanderkooy, 2011, p. 53). This led the present researcher to question the many ways Haitian economic and social capital could have an impact on the lives of young adult Haitian immigrants.

Summary

The impact of psychosocial factors on YAHIS might have a significant role in their cultural adjustment and educational success. Researchers had found that every newcomer had to face a period of adjustment when they immigrated to a new land. However, each newcomer faced the challenges differently based on the primary and unique needs or

situation (Brown, 2014). For YAHIS, the primary stressors were educational success and cultural adjustment. Some scholars viewed the implications of the psychosocial factors as determinants of their educational success and adjustment experiences. Moreover, the acculturation of newcomer students in general involved many challenges that needed to be overcome: language acquisition, social challenges, new cultural identity and sense of belonging, and transitioning to a new educational school system (Brown, 2014). As in the case of YAHIS' psychosocial factors, scholars found that some Haitian students may have greater needs than other ethnic groups and these problems should be addressed differently (Brown, 2014; Elie, 2011). Scholars have suggested that educators, schools, universities, social services, and practitioners need to be informed and mindful of the YAHIS' particular experiences. Given that YAHIS' as newcomers were an understudied population, it was imperative that this study was done to ensure that YAHIS' voices were heard and special attention was given to them as they strove to acculturate and succeed.

The research literature review studied the available research on the issues YAHIS faced during their educational and cultural transitions into U.S. society. The literature review highlighted elements that were essential for immigrant students and educators, scholars, and practitioners to understand when they provided services to these students. Even though there was a lack of research on this specific group of immigrant students, the proposed study investigated the most common factors that could impede immigrant students from achieving their educational aspirations. The literature review focused on the impact a lack of family and social support had on young adult Haitian immigrant students' educational achievement and acculturation. Gelin (2010) emphasized that Haitian

immigrant students needed to be understood in their historical, cultural, and social context. Moreover, scholars have underscored that, in addition to the lack of family and social support YAHIS face in the US, additional factors impede the transition, such as language barriers (Garcia 2000), finance, race (Gelin, 2010; Un, 2013; Vanderkooy, 2011), and changes in family dynamics (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002), which could cause success and acculturation to be daunting endeavors. Based on the literature reviewed, most of the studies reflected on immigrant experience, especially adolescent Haitian immigrant students. The primary goal of this study was to investigate how the lack of family and social support specifically affect YAHIS' educational success and acculturation into U.S. society. The proposed study investigated the primary research questions through interviews with YAHIS and analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Immigrant students face many challenges in the process of adjusting and acculturating to a new environment. Schools, educators, and practitioners must confront these challenges, such as language barriers, lack of formal education, lack of social and family support, cultural values, and lack of adjustment and acculturation (Un, 2011). Elie (2011) pointed out that some immigrant students face greater challenges in schools and in the process of cultural adjustment. The case of YAHIS is one such exceptional group, and as newcomers, their educational and social challenges remain under-addressed (Elie, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore YAHIS' experiences in terms of the psychosocial factors that might affect their outcomes such as achievement and adjustment to American society. This chapter elaborated on the methodology used in the study including the theoretical framework that supported the study. A qualitative method was used to collect the data to account for the individual perspectives of YAHIS while allowing them to express their experiences as newcomers or immigrant students. The purpose of the chosen theoretical method was to provide a conceptual framework for the collected data.

Understanding the context of the YAHIS population enabled me to provide more tools to scholars, practitioners, and teachers to work and attend more efficaciously to the needs of the YAHIS. Gaining a better understanding of YAHIS' contextual situation would help scholars, universities, social workers, relatives or parents, and professional practitioners willing to assist the YAHIS as they are striving to succeed academically and adjust to American culture.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a phenomenological qualitative approach to examine the experience of YAHIS' family and social support and their effects on their mental health, academic attainment, and environmental adaptation. Creswell (2007) explained that the purpose of a phenomenological study is to “reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 58). A phenomenological method was used to illuminate YAHIS' lived experiences and provide an understanding of the ways family and social support affect their educational success. Moreover, the qualitative phenomenological approach would help to deepen understanding about the concrete and unique experiences of young adult Haitian immigrant students. Using a qualitative process allowed me to understand a series of interrelated activities that the participants were involved in and allowed the research to go beyond the collected data (Creswell, 2009). Using a phenomenological method for this study also gave participants the opportunity to voice their lived experiences regarding their educational and acculturation experiences in the new land and new educational system (Creswell, 2009). This study used semi-structured interviews that enabled me to ask open-ended questions, which was one of the qualitative formats the researcher used to listen and understand the perspectives of those who were participating in the research (Creswell, 1998). The method provided an in-depth understanding of complex issues YAHIS were facing and an exploration of YAHIS' personal experiences. From this perspective, this method facilitated the exploration and understanding of the personal experience of the individual participant in greater depth.

Research Questions

Before discussing the primary methodology in the study, the research questions need to be reiterated to set our emphasis on the main issues regarding our theoretical frameworks. These research questions dealt with some of the psychosocial factors and experiences that YAHIS were facing when they were transitioning to higher education while acculturating to the United States. In this study, the research documented the lived experiences and voices of YAHIS as they attempted to acculturate and attain their educational goals.

RQ 1: What are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States?

RQ 2: What are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into the United States?

These questions were asked in a specific and direct manner so that participants were comfortable to communicate their experiences. This enabled the researcher to establish rapport with the participants.

Central Concept of the Study

The study based on Adlerian theory, which offered a framework for the researcher to examine the importance of family and social support for immigrant students. Adlerian theory is a holistic, social, goal oriented, systemic, and humanistic approach that is based on individuals' abilities and capacities to improve themselves by striving to give meaning to their lives (Corey, 2009). Adler believed that people have aspirations and needs and yearn for social interaction and connectedness (Corey, 2009). His theory was based on

seven major theoretical constructs: unity of the individual, goal orientation, self-determination and uniqueness, social context, feeling of community, and mental health and treatment. The unity of the individual is defined as a person having a balanced sense of self that is consistent with that person's lifestyle (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Goal orientation is a future oriented desire to reach a goal that improves who you are as a human being, while self-determination and uniqueness say that goals spring from who a person is and what the person desires—criteria unique to each individual (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Social context is the environment where a person lives and is made up of layers of systems that join and interconnect (Stein & Edwards, 1998). It is here that people live and work on life tasks, including community work (Stein & Edwards, 1998). The construct feeling of community is the connectedness to others, while mental health has to do with the health of one's psyche (Stein & Edwards, 1998).

Adler believed that every person has a guiding theme, and individuals' journeys towards making meaning and learning from life experiences are a direct reaction to how they feel about themselves. These beliefs arise from ideas that begin during childhood and can come from a variety of factors that emerge from family dynamics (Watts, 2000). Issues arise with this task when children do not have encouragement and support from parents (Watts, 2000). Humans are embedded in their social relationships, which cause an impact on who they are and how they react (Watts, 2003). By interpreting YAHIS' perspectives on their social and family support using the lens of an Adlerian theory and practice, the understanding of how background influences young adult immigrants' success in educational programs in the United States is seen.

According to Simmons, Buckley, Walen, and Wilson (2014), Adler perceived community success including family as one of the major sources of social support. With this familial support, individuals can integrate themselves into society and successfully achieve their goals by overcoming life's challenges. Adler (1927) encouraged individuals to be courageous and realistic about the challenging acculturation issues they would be facing by creating a strong sense of self, a positive view of others, and an understanding based on interaction with their environment. Adler suggested encouragement as a fundamental tool to use in the process when working with immigrant groups so that the individual can have hope and adapt (Bornsheur et al., 2014). People who are encouraged have a strong sense of self and believe that they are part of the whole, while those who have been discouraged feel inferior, as if they cannot succeed (Stein & Edwards, 1998). Likewise, many YAHIS migrated to the United States to have a better life and a more prosperous future (Bornsheur et al., 2014). These individuals have social interests and needs. Social networking support and social groups can help them to overcome psychosocial challenges by helping them adapt to their new environment and culture. Adler posited the idea that people are social beings and that the relationships within the family influence those outside. If good relationships and support are found within the family, the individual will expect the same outside of the family as well. Based on this theory, the closer and more supportive the family is, the more YAHIS will know they can actively seek support from others (Simmons et al., 2014). An examination of family and social support among Haitian immigrant students and its impact on their educational achievement, environmental adaptation, and their overall mental wellbeing could serve to

illustrate the patterns. From this perspective, the study was to examine YAHIS' situation within their cultural, social, family, and educational context (Corey, 2009).

The second approach was the adjustment model where adaptation to the environment is seen as a continuous, dynamic process (Mandeep, 2014). Lyons, Velez, Mehta, and Neill (2013) articulated that individuals are intertwined with their environment and its social and economic factors, which affects their lives, values, and needs. In other words, the degree of adjustment an individual requires in a new environment is based on the individual's satisfaction in accordance with his or her social needs and the function the adjustment plays in a given environment (Jobin, 2010). From this perspective, the adjustment model has different phases that enable individuals to be more successful in achieving their goals when immigrating to a new cultural environment. The adjustment phases can be described as a honeymoon period when the individual experiences momentary feelings of excitement, optimism, and wonder (Berry 2005). Following, the individual faces a crisis phase, which is a period of culture shock when the individual feels anxious, confused, and disoriented in the new cultural environment (Berry, 1997, 2010; Jobin, 2010). Finally, the individual experiences recovery, which can also be described as the adjustment phase when the individual becomes more comfortable in the new environment and culture (Berry 1997, 2010).

Berry (1997) suggested at least three different psychological phases that immigrants experienced upon entering a new environment or new culture: acculturation, adaptation, and assimilation. In the acculturation phase, the individual experiences cultural and psychological changes while trying to establish a balance between two cultures and

their people. Upon the individual's arrival in the host country, he or she often experiences excitement about what he or she sees. However, when the individual settles and starts facing the host country's demands, the person begins to face cultural differences and becomes limited in his or her activities due to language and social barriers (Berry, 2001; Huang, 2015). Subsequently, the individual moves to the recovery step as he or she becomes familiar with the environment (Sam & Berry, 2010; Huang, 2015). Finally, the individual is able to adjust by demonstrating his or her ability to function well in the new environment. The individual tries to integrate him or herself into the host culture without losing his or her own cultural identity (Berry, 2001). Consequently, researchers have found that individuals who try to acculturate into their new surroundings experienced lower levels of stress and achieved better adaptation by adopting a positive attitude and behavior (Berry, 2005).

The adaptation phase entails the individual's functional stabilization to the changes that happen during the acculturation phase (Berry, 2005). Adaptation may or may not help the individual to feel comfortable with his or her environment (Berry, 2005). In other words, the process of adaptation and question of whether the individual can cope with the new life or environment is variable depending on situations or circumstances. In short, YAHIS have unavoidably gone through these psychological phases and processes of cultural adaptation upon their arrival in this country. During the process of YAHIS' adjustment, these stages may affect their lives and cause some psychological issues, such as stress, anxiety, and frustration that may affect their educational achievement.

I identified themes that constitute the central meaning or essence from the lived experiences of the YAHIS. By interviewing the participants and analyzing the results using Adlerian and adjustment theory, a clearer picture of the strengths and challenges faced by this community emerged, which could lead to possible interventions and support for these individuals. In addition, by using a phenomenological approach, I was able to analyze, combine, and reduce the collected data to central themes that depict YAHIS' experiences. The approach enabled me to understand how YAHIS constructed meaning of their reality as they were trying to adjust to the new land.

Research Tradition

The qualitative methodological approach was appropriate for this work because it allows a researcher to document the participants' stories and the essence of the experience from their own perspective (Creswell, 1997). This was particularly important because the research method allowed the YAHIS as an understudied group to voice their experiences so that I could gain insight into their own perception on these experiences. A qualitative research design enabled me to learn about the individuals' experiences on a more profound level than a quantitative method would allow. Through the interview process, the participants were able to speak about the events (social, cultural, educational) that marked the lived-experience of acculturation.

Moreover, I gave the participants the opportunity to express and articulate their experiences through stories, opinions, and expressions; this allowed me the opportunity to understand the participants' feelings about their experiences (Creswell, 2009). That was precisely why the qualitative researcher, according to Creswell (2009), enters into the field

rather than a lab in search of statistical results. Entering the field allows a research to develop a rapport with the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The interactions that happened between the participant and the researcher were an integral part of the individual's experience, which allowed the researcher to situate different levels of meaning that participants brought to the field. The subjective experience of the YAHIS was crucial to understanding their larger social experience. Using the interview method in this study allowed the researcher to understand how those YAHIS constructed meaning of their reality, often as a result of the challenges they were facing. The research provided a detailed account of YAHIS' experience as immigrants and documented their continuous struggle to acculturate. It gave voice to participants by establishing trust and offering understanding of their experiences on a level unavailable in much other research. From this perspective, a qualitative method allowed the researcher to interpret the worldview of the participants from observation and in-depth individual interviews that were based on their personal stories, backgrounds, and cultural context (Creswell, 2009).

Researcher's Role

The main role of the researcher was to gather data that could be interpreted and identified YAHIS who were eligible and willing to participate in the process. The researcher's intent was to build rapport with the participants, which was crucial to keeping them engaged throughout the entire process. It seemed that process required a great deal of consistency and good communication skills to keep the participants engaged. The researcher demonstrated an interest in the progress of students by offering them support and encouragement in my role as a researcher by showing them active listening, by not

interrupting, and by making them feel that they could trust. Based on this rapport, the researcher collected data from participants. In this study, the researcher was a facilitator, observer, and interviewer who conducted the study methodically.

Context of the Study

Sample Selection and Participant Eligibility Criteria

There was a total of 10 young adult Haitian immigrant student participants for this study. The sample size was based on Englund (2008) who suggested that a sample of 10 to 15 participants was adequate to reach saturation of data after intensive interviews (Gorge, 2011). The following were the inclusion criteria for this research: (1) all participants were individuals 18 and older of mixed gender currently living in the US; (2) participants were students who came from Haiti, had graduated from high, and were school seeking post-secondary academic study at a U.S. institution; and (3) participants were recently graduated students who had experienced education in U.S. institutions. These students already had some experience in the U.S. educational system and some of them were already involved in social programs in their schools, such as community outreach programs, church, and social or cultural clubs. Like other immigrants, these social, cultural, and religious groups were important for the researcher to understand the YAHIS' acculturation experiences and their overall wellbeing as they were acculturating. Maintaining the above criteria ensured that these students had been similarly experiencing acculturation and striving to succeed academically. By knowing their acculturative experiences, the researcher was able to obtain reliable information about YAHIS' lived experiences, such as their family life, university life, and cultural experiences. The interviews were conducted in Haitian Creole

and English, or according to the participant's language preferences. The interviews in Haitian Creole was translated to English.

Site Selection

The recruitment of participants for this study was done through channels such as universities and colleges, religious and social groups, friends, and agencies in the Haitian community. These sites were enable the researcher to contact and identify potential participants for the study. The researcher targeted one of the most diverse U.S. universities and colleges, which were two major sites of education for YAHIS, some of whom lived in proximity to campus and others who were considered to be commuter students. The researcher was personally involved in religious and social clubs, as well as outreach groups at the university and other churches; there were established relationships with the leaders of these groups, which could be an advantage in recruiting prospective participants. The researcher provided information about the study and explained the procedures that were followed. Contact with participants also involved putting posters and flyers in various locations and departments of the universities and churches. In addition, part of the recruitment process involved personal invitations to those who met the criteria. When a participant agreed to participate in the study, the researcher sent a letter of consent, and there was a follow up to schedule the time and location indicating where the interview would take place.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collection involved determining whether participants had experienced acculturation and educational stresses and whether they had experienced a lack of social

and family support within the US. Beginning from this point, the researcher was able to collect reliable data that reflected the lived experiences of YAHIS participants. The participants of the study were recruited from those cities with greatest Haitian immigrant populations, such as Miami Dade County and Broward County, where the largest populations of Haitian immigrant students also resided.

Ethical Concerns and Participation Protection

Creswell (1997) underlined some ethical difficulties the researcher might face during data collection and analysis and suggested ways to protect the participants. The researcher was responsible to protect the participants' identity by using a composite picture rather than an individual one (Creswell, 1997). The researcher must ensure that neutrality was maintained in order to elicit objective data. In this case, the researcher shared the same cultural background as the YAHIS, which meant the researcher was familiar with YAHIS' experiences and the topic under study. Because the problems the newcomers faced could be overwhelming, the researcher tried to maintain a neutral position in order to elicit unbiased data. The researcher was mindful of his interest regarding the topic under study and tried not to influence the research with his personal opinion or biases. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and positive outcomes that could come from the study. The study dealt with an immigrant population and therefore their legal status in the country classified them as a vulnerable population. The researcher ensured that the information shared by participants was kept under the seal of confidentiality and they were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished. The researcher explained and reviewed the consent form with the participants and allowed them to ask

questions regarding the research process so they were well informed. Every piece of information was considered sensitive in a research study and therefore, due to legal status of some YAHIS, the information obtained would be treated as confidential. During the research process, the researcher always kept the audiotapes and documents concerning participant profiles in a locked cabinet except when they were being analyzed and studied by the researcher. The researcher stored all transcribed audiotapes and collected notes from participants in a safely locked file cabinet until the research was completed. The transcribed audiotape, notes, and documents would be destroyed and shredded five years after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, in accord with Walden University policy. The research materials would be used solely for research purposes and would be safely stored and subsequently destroyed (Creswell, 1997).

Interviews

Interviews was conducted in English, Haitian Creole, and French as appropriated to participants. The researcher, who was fluent in all three languages conducted interviews. The interviews were recorded and translated from Haitian Creole or French to English as necessary and transcribed in MS Word documents. The interviewer contacted participants through letters or social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and friends. The researcher outlined the informed consent procedures in a letter of invitation, which assured participants that their privacies were strictly protected, and they should not be pressured to participate. Once the individual participants had been selected, the researcher provided a consent form to the participant to sign accordingly. The researcher scheduled appointments with the participants at their preferable time in a neutral location, such as the FIU or Miami

Dade College cafeteria, public libraries, or other places where they did not feel intimidated. After consent has been obtained, the researcher presented the interview questions. The interviewer encouraged participants to respond to the questions to the best of their abilities. The interviewer will then conduct the interview, which lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The researcher recorded all of the interviews to avoid missing essential parts of participants' stories. Subsequently, the researcher transcribed all the audiotapes and reviewed for accuracy.

Moreover, the interview questions covered some basic information about the interviewee and was used as a guide for the following semi-structured interview. To engage in an in-depth interview with the first-hand experiences, it was essential to establish rapport and become familiar with the interviewee's life experiences (Gorse, 2011). The inquiry explored each of the following areas for each participant: his or her individual background, education, economic status and employment, language, culture, family, identity, relationships, connections to the homeland, and feelings in regard to acculturation and adjustment (Vanderkoy, 2011). These elements enabled the researcher to focus on the individuals' social environment and personal experiences as immigrants, grounded in the lived experiences in their adjustment process (Gorse, 2011). As an aspect of informed consent, the interview was also recorded, and the transcription followed shortly after the interview. Moreover, the researcher took notes from the interviews, and they were part of the collected data so that the research could present and document an overall understanding of the YAIHS' experiences. Also, the researcher attached a copy of the interview protocol

in the appendix below as guide to ensure that important themes or topics were covered and explored.

Data Analysis

A phenomenological approach had been chosen so that each individual could express the essence of their experiences, and the researcher could focus on the meaning of the experiences that YAHIS have reported (Creswell, 1997). A phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to assess common meanings among the lived experiences of YAHIS in the US. The data were analyzed using a bracketing strategy suggested by Moustaka (1994), an approach that had been frequently applied in phenomenological study. The bracketing strategy allowed the researcher to collect data from different individuals who have experienced similar phenomena and then analyzed the data to determine significant themes (Creswell, 2006). The researcher began by analyzing the participants' experiences to find common themes or meanings. The researcher then organized and analyzed the data distilled from the interviews. The researcher used the triangulation method to verify and ensure the validity of the data by using data from multiple sources, including interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2009). The multiple data sources used in triangulation ensured the consistency of results.

These strategies enabled the researcher to organize the information, explore themes, and describe the meaning of the experiences of YAHIS. While analyzing the data, the researcher used a modification strategy to ensure participants' confidentiality when developing a textual description of the experiences (Creswell, 1997). During the analysis of the data, each participant in the interview was given an appropriate pseudonym to ensure

confidentiality. The researcher endeavored to eliminate all biases and presuppositions that might prevent an objective study by using journaling, member checking, and peer reviewing. Member checking, in particular, helped to demonstrate the truth or validity of the study's findings. Once the data had been collected, the researcher went back to the interviewees and made sure that the way the data had been interpreted was truly reflective of their experiences, and that there were no biases demonstrated. Moreover, to eliminate possible distortions that could arise from any interaction with the participants, the researcher also utilized his dissertation advisor to make sure that the findings were consistent and aligned with the research participants' experiences.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure credibility of the findings, and to eliminate or reduce possible distortions that might result from biases, validity and reliability were two essential tools that ensured the research's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There could be no validity without reliability (Golafshani, 2001). That means validity and reliability could not operate without each other. However, each has its own purpose in assuring the trustworthiness of a study.

Ensuring Validity

Validity was based on a range of methods the researcher selected to examine the trustworthiness of the study. The validity concept depended on the ways the researcher chose to verify the truthfulness of the data; it also relied on his or her perception of the situation the participant is experiencing (Golafshani, 2001). According to Creswell (2007), validation is "an attempt to assess the accuracy" (p. 206) of the research findings. Validity ensured the credibility of the findings and eliminated or minimized all possible distortions

(Gorse, 2011). In a phenomenological study, validation was based on the verification that comes from the researcher or an outside reviewer who ensured the accuracy of the study findings by asking about the content, transcription accuracy, application to other situations, and reflection of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the researcher used a cultural insider, who was also a clinical psychologist, as the outside reviewer. The reviewer was familiar with the context under study and was able to ensure that the findings of the study were valid. Employing the validity strategy helped to ensure that researcher's interpretation was accurate, and the participant's experiences were correct and truthful. Moreover, the researcher continued to engage with research participants to saturate the data and make sure that there were no biases or distortions while examining the data (Gorse, 2011). The researcher also used reflexive journals that allowed recording of thoughts, themes, questions, and insights that related to the study and increased awareness of the potential biases.

Ensuring Reliability

Reliability was based on the consistency and congruency of the research and was determined by verifying the steps and process notes through which the researcher obtained the data (Golafshani, 2001). Checking that interview transcriptions were free of errors and lacked deviation due to personal biases ensured reliability. The researcher listened and compared the data to the transcribed notes for accuracy. The researcher used an outside reviewer to verify the validity of the findings and identify identical patterns (Creswell 1998). The researcher made sure that the results were free from errors and biases, and that the interpretations were accurate by reading and rereading several times. The researcher

was conscious, present, and focused on the participants and refrain from applying any personal perception, ideology, judgment, or feeling regarding the validity of the collected data (Klende, 2008). Moreover, the researcher did member checking, which was a strategy offered to participants to verify for accuracy in which they checked or approved specific aspects of the interpretation of the data they provided (Carlson, 2010). It was a way the researcher used to ensure that the findings represented the participants' voice and perspective accurately. The researcher asked each participant individually for a follow-up meeting after the interpretation and analysis of the data to discuss the findings and determine data accuracy. From this perspective, the researcher provided to participants an opportunity to check if their stories accurately represented their lived experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to define essential aspects of the research design that had enabled the researcher to conduct the study scientifically and methodically. The research design highlighted ways that the researcher identified participants, demographic settings, and major elements that needed to be included when conducting the study in the field. The chapter justified the use of a qualitative method by providing participants the opportunity and freedom to share their experiences as immigrant students living in a new land. The chapter demonstrated that the qualitative method did indeed facilitate the researcher's understanding of the psychosocial issues that YAHIS have brought to their educational process. That is, the research design approach would help the reader to understand young adult Haitian immigrant students' situations as they adjusted to a new

environment and educational system. Through qualitative strategies, the study allowed the researcher to provide informed responses to the research questions, and recommendations for ways to address the problems in academic environments.

Chapter 4: Results

Achieving acculturation of YAHIS into learning environments within the United States is a challenging experience. This transition between two cultures and learning styles involves a period of adjustment. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the impact of psychosocial factors on YAHIS in the U.S. educational system. Through interviews and as part of an interpretive phenomenological study, I collected information on the lived experiences of YAHIS as they acculturated in the U.S. This chapter addresses the research questions identified in this dissertation regarding the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS and their perceptions about the educational and social issues that affect academic success as they strive to acculturate in the United States. A qualitative methodology and analytical approach was adopted for this study, which helped me to understand the world view and assumptions that guided the research questions (Creswell, 1998, p. 74). The following two research questions regarding the acculturation experiences of YAHIS were answered in this study:

RQ1: What are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States?

RQ2: What are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into U.S. society?

The qualitative methodology adopted for this research was phenomenology using semi-structured interviews with YAHIS regarding their immigration, education, and acculturation experiences. I developed the interview protocol in conjunction with the conclusions from the review of literature. In addition, I was well informed on this issue

through several years of personal experience dealing with the YAHIS community. The phenomenological approach provided the YAHIS population an opportunity to narrate their own experiences, document their perceptions, and present their lives as immigrant students in a new country and new educational system. Participants who volunteered for this research project expressed great enthusiasm regarding the purposes of this research, as they felt that it was necessary to document the experiences of YAHIS in the U.S.

Setting

Data collection followed the guidelines the researcher established in Chapter 3, which included the IRB-specified procedures. The target population was YAHIS who are pursuing their undergraduate or graduate degrees or have recently graduated from U.S. universities or colleges. Once I obtained the informed consent from the participants, I shared the interview questions with them.

Demographics

Ten YAHIS were interviewed for this study. Table 1 presents information on the participants' age, gender, education, and year of immigration. Participants ranged from 23 to 38 years of age. There were two female participants among the 10 participants who were interviewed for the study. Participants' educational backgrounds were varied. For instance, four participants finished high school in Haiti, while three had begun their high school or elementary school in Haiti and then moved to the U.S.; another three participants completed high school in the U.S. Four participants were enrolled in college during the time this research was conducted, while six had graduated a few years ago, and had become employed and successful in their careers.

Table 1

Participant demographic information

| Participant | Age | Gender | Year in the US | Years of High-School in U.S | College/University |
|----------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Participant 1 | 30 | F | 15 | 4 | Graduated |
| Participant 2 | 38 | F | 17 | 4 | Graduated |
| Participant 3 | 28 | M | 5 | 0 | In school |
| Participant 4 | 34 | M | 12 | 2 | Graduated |
| Participant 5 | 31 | M | 9 | 0 | In school |
| Participant 6 | 30 | M | 13 | 2 | Graduated |
| Participant 7 | 25 | M | 9 | 4 | In school |
| Participant 8 | 30 | M | 11 | 2 | Graduated |
| Participant 9 | 23 | M | 10 | 0 | Graduated |
| Participant 10 | 38 | M | 7 | 0 | In School |

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted one on one, after obtaining the signed consent from the participants. Interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1 hour and were scheduled in public places that were convenient to the participants. Many student participants were commuters, which means they travel to the educational institution from different locations; therefore, I proposed some sites to the participants and agreed to meet with them at their convenience. The interview protocol was designed as a series of 67 interview questions designed to gather information about the two research questions identified in the study. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The audio files and interview transcripts were kept safe in a password protected computer that I monitor. All participants agreed to the taping of the interview.

A semi-structured interview protocol was followed for the data collection. These questions were divided into three sections that dealt with immigration experience,

educational experience, and community engagement. The questions allowed me to understand several aspects or phenomena related to the social and family experiences as YAHIS underwent the process of acculturation within the United States. The interview questions offered the participants opportunities to share their feelings and perspectives which allowed the researcher to comprehend their lived experiences.

Ten YAHIS were interviewed to understand their lived experiences. The first part of the interview was structured to be a warm-up set of questions, which allowed me to get basic information about the interviewee's life.

This study adopted a social network initiation, followed by snowball sampling method to recruit participants. The initial participants were recruited from my social network. A snowball sampling was followed which resulted in 10 participants agreeing to be interviewed for the study. The participants recruited for the study were students at various U.S. schools and universities. A *Letter of Study Information* (see Appendix A) was distributed to friends and their classmates of the participants to provide an overview of what the purpose and goals of the study entail. An *Invitation to Participate in Research* (see Appendix B) was provided to those participants who qualified to participate. The inclusion criteria for this study was articulated and approved by the IRB. According to the criteria, the participant had to be born in Haiti and to had have graduated high school in Haiti or United States. The inclusion of the criteria ensured that these YAHIS had experienced similar acculturation as immigrant students and had gone through similar social changes and adjustment within the United States' culture. During the interviews, I asked in-depth questions to explore the participants views and experiences. The interview

protocol allowed me to build a rapport and generate trust with the participants to ensure integrity and honesty. After collection of data, I transcribed and analyzed all the interviews. During this time, the data was kept secured.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were coded using NVIVO 11, which is a qualitative data analysis software produced by QSR international. Transcripts of interviews, as word files, were imported into the software using the data import command. The interview transcripts were read and re-read multiple times. This process is in keeping with the qualitative methodology, summarized by Creswell (1998) when he said, “Researchers continue analysis by getting a sense of the whole database: read the transcripts in their entirety several times, immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts” (p. 143). After loading the transcripts, they were coded using a combination approach that included codes that were derived from the interview protocol, as well as codes that were detected during the process of coding. The codes derived from the interview protocol have a direct link with questions that were posed in this research study, whereas the codes detected during the coding were included as part of the open-coding system. Data were coded and assimilated into different themes that emerged from participant responses regarding their acculturation, academic success, and family and social support. The themes were mapped to the two research questions identified in the study.

In order to round out the data and address the lived experience of participants, I used Adlerian theory as an analytical framework to examine the family and social support

for immigrant students as they underwent the process of acculturation in U.S. educational system. Adlerian theory is a holistic, social, goal oriented, systemic, and humanistic approach that is based on individuals' abilities and capacities to improve themselves by striving to give meaning to their lives (Corey, 2009). This theoretical background enabled me to attune to the subjective experience of each participant in the study as they articulated their ideas about the process of acculturation in their own experience.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure credibility of the findings, and to eliminate or reduce possible distortions that might result from biases, validity and reliability were two essential tools that ensured researchers' trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There could be no validity without reliability (Golafshani, 2001). That means validity and reliability could not operate without each other. However, each has its own purpose in assuring the trustworthiness of a study.

Validity

Validity was based on a range of methods I selected to examine the trustworthiness of the study. The validity concept depends on the ways a researcher chooses to verify the truthfulness of the data; it also relies on his or her perception of the situation the participant is experiencing (Golafshani, 2001). According to Creswell (2007), validation is "an attempt to assess the accuracy" (p. 206) of the research findings. Validity ensures the credibility of the findings and eliminates or minimizes all possible distortions (Gorse, 2011). In a phenomenological study, validation is based on the verification that comes from the researcher or an outside reviewer who ensures the accuracy of the study findings by asking about the content, transcription accuracy, application to other situations, and reflection of

the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). For this study, I used a cultural insider, who was also a clinical psychologist, as the outside reviewer. The reviewer was familiar with the context under study and was able to ensure that the findings of the study were valid. Employing the validity strategy helped to ensure that my interpretation was accurate, and the participant's experiences were correct and truthful. Moreover, I continued to engage with research participants to reach data saturation and make sure that there were no biases or distortions while examining the data, as recommended by Gorse (2011). I also used reflexive journals that allowed the recording of thoughts, themes, questions, and insights that related to the study and increased awareness of the potential biases.

Reliability

Reliability was based on the consistency and congruency of the research and was determined by verifying the steps and process notes through which the researcher obtained the data (Golafshani, 2001). I checked that interview transcriptions were free of errors and lacked deviation due to personal biases ensured reliability. I listened and compared the data to the transcribed notes for accuracy. As recommended by Creswell (1998), I used an outside reviewer to verify the validity of the findings and identify identical patterns (. This process helped ensure that the results were free from errors and biases, and that the interpretations were accurate. I was conscious, present, and focused on the participants and refrain from applying any personal perception, ideology, judgment, or feeling regarding the validity of the collected data, which, according to Klende (2008), is a necessary component of qualitative research. Moreover, I did member checking, which was a strategy offered to participants to verify for accuracy in which they checked or approved specific

aspects of the interpretation of the data the participants provided (Carlson, 2010). Each participant was individually asked for a follow-up meeting after the interpretation and analysis of the data to discuss the findings and determine data accuracy. From this perspective, I provided participants an opportunity to check if their stories accurately represented their lived experiences.

Member Checking

After the initial interviews were complete, all the respondents were called to do a follow-up interview for the purposes of member checking. At its core, member checking is a method that the researcher uses to test the validity and credibility of the data, interpretation, analysis, and conclusions by the participant from whom the data originally obtained (Crabtree, 2006). Six out of 10 respondents agreed to a follow-up interview. Three participants indicated they did not have time to meet again, and one participant could not be reached. During the follow-up interview, some participants clarified their responses and provided new insights and feedback regarding the interview.

Four participants expressed or indicated the same sentiment by acknowledging that it was their first time they had the opportunity to speak and share about their acculturation experiences. Each of the participants was given the opportunity to go over the finding results. They were asked if there was anything that they would like to add. I worked with the participants to ensure they were satisfied with the research results.

Secondly, I strove to make sure the results were corroborated by peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that

might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). This strategy was conducted to eliminate potential biases or misinterpretation of data. To conduct this, another researcher who was familiar with the young adult Haitian immigrant culture reviewed the findings and interview data.

The peer debriefing showed the level of compatibility between the findings identified by me and the peer debriefer. The peer-debriefing process consisted of a series of discussions and demonstrated agreement between the researchers. Both interpreted the data similarly. The similarity of findings in the themes established the validity of the research. This strategy was conducted to eliminate the biases or data fabrication or misinterpretation of data from the researcher.

As previously stated, the process of analysis started with transcription of the data. I reviewed the tape multiple times to study the frequency of occurrence of common ideas expressed by participants during the interviews. The interview data was coded, and the codes were organized into themes.

The codebook resulting from qualitative analysis provided in Appendix F. I used the codebook to describe the codes present in the analysis. In Appendix A, the table provides the list of codes identified during the analysis process. Sources refers to the number of interviews that contain the particular code, and references are the number of paragraphs that have been coded with that particular code. The codebook has helped me to stay connected with the material and gain a clear insight and understanding of the participants' stories. These codes were condensed into themes that originated after analysis of data, which are presented in Table 2 and the Appendix F.

Table 2

Main Themes Identified in the Data

| Themes | Definition |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Family support | Participant responses that convey support from family and in adjusting to life in U.S |
| 2. Role of culture | Participants view on how Haitian culture and American culture have impacted various facets of adjustment in the U.S. |
| 3. Educational journey | Participant's views about how educational journey has been filled with variety of experiences related to acculturation. |
| 4. Challenges in acculturation | Participant's experiences related to their immigration and getting acclimated in the U.S. society. |
| 5. Questioning self-identity | The confusion and loss of identity experienced by immigrant students from Haiti as they settle into life within the U.S. |
| 7. Personal attitude | The outlook and mental fortitude; coping strategies of the participants. |

Individual Participant Overviews

Nine out of 10 participants reported that they were the first in their family to go to college and obtain a college degree in the US; seven participants mentioned that their parents have advanced college degrees earned in Haiti. The description below presents some contextual information about the participants that is helpful in developing the backdrop of their social and educational challenges when they moved to the U.S.

Participant 1 Overview (P1)

Participant 1 was a 30-year-old female student from Miami. She was working toward her master's degree in Social Work. She had been living in the US for 28 years and

was enrolled in University for six years. She identified herself as the second generation in her family. She was born in Haiti and was brought to the US as a child. In her family, she was the first one to graduate from college or university.

Participant 2 Overview (P2)

Participant 2 was a 38-year-old female who graduated with a MA in Social Work. She came from a large family of six siblings, of which three reside in the US and three remain in Haiti. She arrived in the US in 1989 when she was 10-years-old. She lived in New York and subsequently moved to South Florida.

Participant 3 Overview (P3)

The third participant was a 28-year-old male student. He came to the US in 2014. At the time of arrival, he did not know any English. He had been studying for two years and was pursuing English and Business Administration as majors. He indicated that he was encouraged by his mother and his wife to immigrate to the US. During the time of the interview, he was employed as a chef while he was going to school as a full-time student.

Participant 4 Overview (P4)

The fourth participant was 34-year-old male who had been living in the US for 16 years and was pursuing an undergraduate degree. He spent two and half years in a U.S. high school. He had been living with his immediate family members.

Participant 5 Overview (P5)

The fifth participant was a 31-year-old female enrolled in a nursing program. She immigrated in 2008 and had been living in the US for 9 years. She was employed full-time, while pursuing her education full-time.

Participant 6 Overview (P6)

The sixth participant was a 30-year-old male who graduated from a US high school. He was educated in Haiti as a Public Engineer but was currently enrolled in a school program doing his master's in Engineering Management.

Participant 7 Overview (P7)

The seventh participant was a 25-year-old male who moved in the US in 2005. He previously lived with his two sisters in the state of Massachusetts. He spent his middle school years in Haiti and graduated from high-school in the US. He moved to Miami and attended one of the local colleges and obtained his BA in Philosophy. When interviewed for this study, he was pursuing a pre-medical degree.

Participant 8 Overview (P8)

The eighth participant was a 30-year-old male who migrated to the US in January 2005. He spent a year and half in a U.S. high school. The participant indicated that a month after he arrived in the US, he started working at a carwash and going to school and until today he never stopped working. He was employed as a civil engineer.

Participant 9 Overview (P9)

The ninth participant was a 23-year-old male student who graduated with a BA in Physical Therapy. He came to the US in 2012 as an international student. He indicated that he was the first to leave his parents' house, which allowed him to explore the world on his own.

Participant 10 Overview (P10)

The tenth participant was a 38-year-old male who migrated to the US in February 2011. He obtained his BA in Philosophy, and he was pursuing his Master of Business Administration (MBA). He stated that his immediate family members were still living in Haiti and both of his parents (mother and father) had died.

Sample Summary Description

The process of acculturation can be understood on the basis of the number of years participants have already spent in the US. According to the collected data, the sample was almost evenly distributed between those who have stayed in United States for more than 5 years: there were three participants each in the categories of 5 to 10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 years plus. There was only 1 participant with less than 5 years residence in the US.

In terms of the distribution, the sample revealed that the majority of respondents were brought to the US by their parents or other family members. This is an important detail, because it shows that they had access to social structures that were built for them by the previous generation in their family. There were two respondents who were brought to the US by their grandparents. There was only participant 2 who immigrated to the US on his own. It is important to understand the generational distinctions among the participants to show how this group of immigrants are trying to incorporate into U.S. society and identify with the complex of cultures and influences in their lives (Vanderkoy, 2007). It demonstrates the progression this group of participants has made toward their acculturation in the new environment and educational system.

Research Question Analysis

The presentation of analysis in the next section of this chapter uses direct quotes from participant's experiences, which were used for the description and interpretation of findings, that demonstrated the validity of this research. Such an approach to data analysis and presentation was suggested and recommended by Creswell (1998);

We examine the qualitative data working inductively from particulars to more general perspectives, whether these perspectives are called themes, dimensions, codes, or categories. We experiment with many forms of analysis to convey simultaneously breaking down the data and reconfiguring them into new forms. We represent our data, partly based on participants' perspectives and partly based on our own interpretation. (Creswell, 1998, p. 20)

Research Questions

The research interview questions represent a template to provide an understanding of the YAHIS acculturation experiences in the US. The questions posed concerned the participants' positive and negative lived experiences. The major elements the research questions covered during the interview were factors (such as culture, education, language, culture and family, identity, and native land connections) that eased their acculturation into US society. The next section presents the discussion of themes as identified through the process of data analysis. The following two research questions were the foundation for the study: (1) What are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States? and (2) What are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into U.S. society?

When doing a qualitative analysis Cresswell suggested that, "...the utility of 'excerpt commentary' units, whereby an author incorporates an analytic point, provides orientation information about the point, presents the direct quote, and then advances analytic commentary about the quote" (Cresswell, 1998, p. 183). The following themes in the data analysis emerged based on the focus questions that was formulated by the researcher and were designed with 65 guiding sub-questions of the proposed study. The purposes of this section is the presentation of the themes that adequately analyzed and should interest the readers. After the themes were assembled, some sub-topics were presented to express the participants' meaning of their phenomenological experiences. These experiences are generally agreement common among the participants. That precisely explained their perceptions and understanding of surrounding these two research questions that related to the findings that retrieved and compressed from the participants.

Results

The interview data showed that when the participants came to the US, they were aided by variety of factors: the most cited category was help by family. The second factor commonly identified by the participants that helped in acculturation was the process of getting an education in the US. There was one respondent who shared that the culture within the US is so laid back that they were able to adjust. Each participant identified multiple factors that allowed them to acculturate in the U.S system. Participants identified family support as the main and most common factor that allowed them to acculturate into U.S. society. This means that family support was critical to YAHIS' adjustment in US. This conclusion can be generalized to any immigrant community as they are trying to adjust

to a new environment. Participants expressed multiple factors that aided immigrant acculturation, these include seven responses for family support, three responses identified education, two responses each for employment, language, and friends. Other factors named by participants included culture in the U.S., personal attitude, time and listening to others' experiences. (2), which have been presented in the form of frequencies to identify factors that aid immigrant acculturation.

Theme I. Family Support

Overall, the two factors influencing successful acculturation for participants have been the structure and stability offered to them through their family, and the educational system that presented them with the opportunity to interact and integrate with the society at large, by giving them social networks outside of their immediate family and cultural groups.

The aids to acculturation identified in the process of educational pursuit were reflected in participants' circumstances as they were trying to integrate into the new society.

The role of family was demonstrated by the following statements by participants:

Compared with other people who arrived here and are struggling, I could say that I was lucky enough to have other family members to help me out to accommodate.

Adjusting to the US is my parents/push me with my homework/work hard/ help with homework, best school, and work very hard to put me the best place where I am.

There were three responses which support the notion that going through the process of education allowed respondents to engage in American culture, make friends, and build a social network, which helped them to make the adjustment to the US.

The most helpful to me in my acculturate was my study due to many activities on campus participating.

The most helpful in my acculturation to the US culture are friend and people that I encountered and went to school with. Somehow US makes feel at home it becomes home.

Other factors identified by participants included the appeal of culture, time, presence of friends, and personal attitude.

The most helpful to me in my acculturation to the US? Time! The more time you are here, getting an education, talking with other people, learning English, feeling comfortable as time goes getting acculturate in getting to know the system.

Participants often mentioned family in their interviews, stressing that they had a good relationship with their family, and that family is important to them. For the majority, family members provided them the opportunity to come to the US. Most participants stated they have a strong relationship with their parents. This reflects that their parents have tried hard to maintain that bond and impart family values to their children.

I have a normal relationship between my parents and my siblings. We have constant communication and them always there for me.

I do have good relationship with my family. They called us every day to know how are doing. They always called me and communicated to us.

They always give us advised and supported us and everyday they called me and wanted to know if I am ok and how my studies are going.

There was one participant who did not have a supportive father, but had a very dedicated mother

I have a good relationship with my mom and with my dad is not so pleasant because he was not really there for me. Everything was my mother. In my achievement here, I don't think my dad was there for me to support me.

The data showed that eight out of ten participants interviewed for this study came to the US due to their family members, either the father was in the United States or the entire family immigrated. Two of the 10 participants mentioned that they were self-motivated, while one named another factor (political uprising) as the cause for coming to the United States.

I came here because of my dad. He left me in Haiti when I was three-year-old and did not have his legal paper. My family has to wait until he gets his green card under Bill Clinton then after 14 years he came to visit

My dad made the decision so that I could come to close to be together. There was not a major reason at all that made me come to the US it was just to be close to my family

I could say I was both encouraged by my parents, other extended family members, and I did want to come.

Participants stated that they benefitted from the moral support and encouragement their family offered to them in the process of acculturation and during the time they were in school.

Somehow, they contributed a lot even though it was not that much but I have their moral support especially my mom always encouraged me to get a degree.

The dominant perception shared by participants is that family was with them and supported them.

Yes, I do feel loved by my family. They stay connected with me and their encouragement enables to

Not everyone was encouraged in their endeavor for education, but the family was always seen as a group that cheered them on:

I was not living with my family, they do not really support financially to succeed in my education. But I could say they appreciated and applauded me the fact that I take another road and concentrate on my education.

The economic stability of family ties into the acculturation experience as well as the effort exerted by participants in completing an education.

At the beginning of my arrival in the US, if my family economic or financial situation was stable, I do believe my enculturation process would have been easier and more prolific. Until this my family continues to support in my education and make sure I become successful in my study.

From the participants' responses, it appeared that six out of ten participants financed their own college education through part time jobs or loans. The rest were supported by their families economically, so that they could focus on studying and attaining a good education. For a lot of participants, parents were not able to support their college education. As a result, they recount of times when they struggled and worked two jobs to pay for their school. However, they always fondly talk of their parents giving them moral support and encouragement as they were going through this hardship.

By their moral and encouragement supports I was able to move forward. However, I was not relied on my family economic support to achieve my educational goal and aspirations and to acculturate.

My financial support, my parents/ I had to work two jobs to pay for my school/ they always help me. I paid by myself. I bought my books as well.

My family economically they help me out sustain by providing me with the basic things that I needed. They contribute by making sure the environment was suitable for me grow. I do have a job. The first time I had a permanent full-time job, now I am part time at school and fulltime of school. It seems like that I have two fulltime job. It is a question of time management from me.

Most participants had extended family in the United States, which allowed them to settle and find the correct opportunity structures and acculturate in the new country. In the case of most participants, their families provided the necessary support and opportunity network

for them to find a footing in the U.S. They were also able to find help with employment and education through these large networks.

I have to rely on other family members such as cousin that were there already knew the system.

I met somebody that was in college that made me getting an interest that how I got to college. Your native prepares you based on the fact that I know in my country people are struggling to get an education is not free there is not financial aid.

Thanks be to God I have my extended family and friends I could say make it easy for me. They are a big part of my adjustment.

Theme II. Role of Culture

Role of culture manifested in a multifaceted way in the interview data. On the one hand, participants were in agreement that the culture in the U.S. is conducive for immigrants to settle into the country and thrive. On the other hand, the interviews revealed few participants who were not comfortable with all aspects of American culture. Neither were they far removed from their Haitian culture. There was observed a certain longing to keep their Haitian identities intact, even as they assimilate into the country. In this theme, first part deals with how U.S. culture helps the participants in different ways as they acculturate and assimilate. Second part focuses on the internal struggle faced by participants with respect to acculturating and holding on to their Haitian culture. The third part of this theme focuses on the participants view of Haitian culture as superior than U.S. culture.

Two characteristics of US culture that were germane to the positive experience of all participants were *Freedom* and *Opportunity* offered by the US society and culture. Overall, all participants appreciated the opportunity of education, while some participants

appreciated the opportunity to get a better life and education as they moved to the US. Participant 9, and 10 particularly emphasized the opportunity for a better life, because they were the ones who viewed this experience of leaving Haiti positively because they saw it as an opportunity for exploring the world.

It was a nice experience to have exploring the world in my own

That was my own initiative to come to the US. I applied for a visa and then I was granted it and I ended up coming to the US.

While on the other hand, there were a few who cited the freedom of culture, the diversity that allowed them to feel comfortable. These participants were expressing themselves about what is appealing to them and the factors that their native country could not offer to them.

In Haiti people tend to critic you. People vision are narrow they want you to think. However, here people think differently. Haitian culture is more conservative than USA.

One participant saw his cultural difference as a positive factor:

I think different culture is good and we learn from other it is good for communication and bounding. The learning environment is great when I am from in Haiti it is a matter of space. We do have much space compare to where I am from.

Freedom to pursue a living. In the interviews, participants have pointed out they are seeking for freedom from judgment, freedom to go to school, make a living by pursuing their vocation, career, hobbies that they could not achieve in Haiti.

You have an opportunity to work to go school. Make a living it does not matter where you came from you still can have an opportunity to live.

What I like best about US is having opportunities to do anything you want to do as for as growth, education, there is no boundary that says because you grow this kind

of way you cannot be this or that. I like the freedom to become who you want to become.

The most different in life in the US compare to my country. There are more opportunities.

Freedom to pursue an identity. One of the key features about American culture that a participant pointed out was freedom to be oneself. The participants voiced that Haitian culture is very conservative and for that reason, they like to be in the United States, and living in this culture has been a positive experience.

US culture is totally different than my native culture. There is more freedom to do whatever you want. You don't care about how people look and think about you, you express yourself how you want.

They see that the system in America is set up in a way that does not discriminate against them, even though the participants talk about facing prejudice, in comparison with Haiti, they realize and note that America is more systematic and organized. This contributes to their positive lived experience.

The best here is the laws in place, security, even though it a system that is not built for me as a black man or Haitian as well is not for me but at the same time compared back home somebody did something to you the justice system is not the same thing as here because it is kind of hard to have the justice that you are looking for because there is so much corruption and so much things that are not in placed. Here, in the US when somebody did something to you still can bring or take him or her to court.

Meshing of cultures. Participants have learnt to consider and appreciate Haitian culture because they live in American culture. This is part of positive experience, because the participants are able to appreciate the good in Haitian culture, as well as American culture. Culture and values that people belong to shape their social interactions. If they value the culture they came from it exerts a tension in the acculturation experience. While on one

hand, per Adler it might help them to remember their identity and not lose that in the process of acculturation. While on the other extreme, it may prevent them from acculturating. Based on the Adlerian theory, the acculturation process may help them to experience profound learning, self-understanding and change (Lahey, 2003). The participants were able to avoid all the features of Haitian culture that makes it difficult for them to function. From this perspective, one can see from participants' statements and stories that Haitian young adult immigrant students (YAHIS) attempted to acquire the host cultural patterns and develop working relationships with the new environment.

She has learned a lot to have an opportunity to know more about her culture. For her, coming to the US has been a great opportunity to learn about herself, her religious background and practices, her culture by being able to go back and forth to Haiti and being able to make connection between both culture US and Haiti. Being around parents makes feel around being around my parents/spiritual/ being able to still involve in activities that related to Haitian that allows to embrace the culture and still be a part of the Haitian culture.

The way of living is very different in the US. Here in the US there is job, it is a country that is always on the move. Family does not have time for each other. While in my country family is different reality. Family plays an important thing for us. In Haiti, there is a lack of opportunity. Here in the US people are always rushing.

The participants mentioned that because of their strong connection to their family, they were able to understand and appreciate Haitian culture:

Being around parents makes feel around being around my parents/spiritual/ being able to still involve in activities that related to Haitian that allows to embrace the culture and still be a part of the Haitian culture.

Parental or family involvement and influence of culture in their life appears to have given them a set of value system which they cherish, which is enmeshed with their identity:

Having family support, having the foundation of knowing where you came from... That was ingrained in me to get a good education. I have studying partner rather than friend.

The most helpful in the acculturation experiences is education & support from family members in pushing and encouraging her toward to getting a good education and always helping to understand why it is important.

The participants who identify themselves as “second generation” (meaning they emigrated alongside or after other family members of their parent’s generation) shared that the first-generation family member, their parents or aunts and uncles who came first, were mostly focused on finding an economic footing and did not invest time in U.S. education, even though some of them were college educated from Haiti.

My Mom and Dad achieved their goal and wanted the same for me. Even though they did not go to US school, but they achieved their highest education.

For their children, they made it a point to steer them in the direction of education. Yet, their children do not consider them less educated, or lower in achievement.

I was the first who was graduated from high school because mom and dad did not graduate from HS. My dad worked all his life. They achieved something in a different way even though they did not get HS or University Degree. I don t know if I could have done something different base on the time they came here what was available to them. That all they could have achieved.

Your family activities that enable me to achieve and acculturate in the US. They instilled the culture aspect through them here by teaching about the culture, religious. They always push regarding the senior year.

In fact, family discipline, valuation of education and the focus on integration within the U.S. system was elaborated by one participant in the following manner:

Integrated into the US system was made by doing a lot of practice a lot practice; hard work/ no TV on week days instead of watching social media/ you have to wait through the weekend. Parents have played an important role in the integration. They gave us opportunity to focus on school.

US is good, but Haiti is better. Participants seem to have a conflict, wherein they do enjoy the conveniences of America, and value the country and their stay in this country for that reason. However, in their hearts, they still feel like Haiti is home. They do not think of themselves as American. They think of themselves as Haitians living in America. Culture is a big part of the determination. This also shows the tension of acculturation, when they are deciding if what they left behind was more valuable than the opportunity they have in front of them.

I feel at home in US, however, Haiti is always home

Life in the US somehow is much easier. For example, the basic thing you have here in Haiti you don't have them. Consider security, electricity, clean water, we talk about the basic necessities. But as far as the other part of Haiti, even though you don't have them in Haiti, you feel the sense that you can still survived and try to do anything because you have family.

I feel about the US culture, is that there is a negative a positive site to it. I always try to get the positive site. But I stick to my own culture. I prefer my own culture based on the negative site I see.

The culture here is very different but I did not let it dam me too much of course

I have taken a few from this culture.

There was a determination observed among the participants to hold on tightly to their culture and roots. The following quote explains the immigrant experience of one participant who was brought in the country by her father, but her mother was left behind.

I have enough support in myself it was not support as far as people or parents but the support believe in myself. From the minute I put foot in this country I always have in my mind to never forget where I came from and whom I left behind everything I did I always have to focus on day I will bring my mom to this country. Therefore, I live a certain way and did thing certain way so that I could get that opportunity to bring my mom in this country that was my support though she was

not there physically I always have her in my mind every kind of way mentally and spiritually that what kept me going.

The positive experience reflects in their willingness to travel back to Haiti and help the community there. It shows that they feel they have attained a position where they can help out their country. Four out of 10 participants were considering this idea.

Yes, I do have plan to return and contribute something positive in my neighbor and country.

It always been my dream to go back home to work helping home.

I would like to return home when I graduated and help out.

I am planning to move back home to get involved in the country and I have a background in political science. I think with the degree I have will enable to help my country.

Theme III. Education Opportunities

When asked, five out of 10 participants stated that they were able to take the right courses and felt satisfied with the direction their life had taken on basis of that.

I do feel that I picked up the right course to help me succeed and access to education was easy, I took the right course to help me succeed. The access to education it is easy for me. I could say that my native college prepared me to embrace college or university, except the language.

Participants shared that they were able to manage learning by asking for help through tutoring or extra classes, taking better notes,

Yes, I look for help. I did not just seat there. I reach out to others. I did not seat there and wait for thing to happen for me. Nope Because I was smart you have to apply yourself.

I do. I explored several opportunities such as language lab, borrowing book, CD, computers, I practice a lot because I believe that to be successful one needs to learn the language.

I do not consider the system is complicated. I just learn the rule and follow the instruction they have been prescribed to me.

The participants mentioned that they explored help from their teachers, peers, and the institution in the form of tutoring sessions, and extra lab sessions. This contributed to positive experience in education.

I learned the system by asking questions talking to people.

I think my teachers, faculty and staff were very helpful to me to achieve my goal by providing material and advice. I explored financial supports, such as student Pell grant, scholarship, group studies, and work studies.

I could say that there are some teachers that were supportive. I explore many opportunities to help me succeed. For instance, financial aid, taking preliminary classes to support my writing, reading skills, utilizing whatever support there was to strengthen my English language.

Achievement of goals. During the interviews, participants were asked to assess themselves in terms of how well they were performing in achieving their goals in life. Out of the 10 respondents, seven shared that they were doing well in life and attaining the goals professionally, educationally and financially. They were able to provide a better life for themselves and their families. This allowed them to carry a positive impression of their life spent in the United States. Overall, the impression that they are achieving their goals contributes to their positive lived experiences.

It is a positive experience, everything that I wanted it is happening. It is not easy however it is awarded because I am become more educated and whatever I studied could be useful any way I go. I do notice something in my life the way I perceive others, I communicate with others and I see things.

I feel that I am achieving my goal. I am on a good path I am not there, yet I feel positive.

I do feel that I am achieving my goals. I do notice something different especially in my personality. I do like see changing in my life is better opportunities.

Participants say that they have changed their thinking after the years they have spent in the country (US). They realize that they have become more responsible, more productive, learned how to do things themselves, and take pride in doing so.

Yes, I do notice something in my life. Change of perspective, thinking about things differently, biologically, understand life better. I want to have a better economic life for all and giving more opportunities for immigrant to achieve their goals.

I do notice something different in my life. I become more responsible.

For YAHIS going through the process of education involves interacting with a lot of different groups of actors: the college institutions, teachers, and peers. These can be a source of encouragement or discouragement to them personally and contribute to the positive or negative experiences.

Few participants mentioned that while transitioning to the United States, their previous education was not considered valid and they had to spend time in college or high school repeating some grades. Or they lost time in the process of validating their educational qualifications.

Making the system much easier for the immigrant. You have started all over. They do not honor any of my previous study. That makes difficult for me. Therefore, they need to make it much easier for the immigrant.

I think Haiti has prepared me to school in the US because I feel that I am seeing everything again that I have already learned. It is just the language that I do not have which I could say that language barrier. From this perspective, as an immigrant student, two things that are different for me: the language and the adaptation to the system. The cultural difference is feeling like a stranger, lack of friend to help you adapt.

Choosing the courses for their career also make an impact on their assessment of negative experiences. Navigating the college courses and the entire higher education system was a challenge for one participant and they described the process they went through in the following way:

When I first went to college I felt that I was lost because I was taking those classes asking question why I am taking them. I did feel that I was not progressing while I was making. I was doing something productive, but I did not know. I got my AA and transferred to University. There was a lack of direction and the system is hard to understand by taking many classes without a real explanation why I am taking this or that. I think they could help me to understand more about the prerequisite classes.

The negative experience related to education also stems from the financial need, as most of YAHIS have to support themselves through college. In some cases, participants had to work multiple part time jobs or take loans to be able to finance their education. The burden of maintaining good grade in school while working full time is a heavy burden, and some participants mentioned that pressure, as counting towards a negative experience.

...except for the loans that are too much and makes me scared.

It is a very hard thing to do when you have a full-time job and full-time student. If you don't have the mind set to achieve your goal at some point you will have ended up quite it.

In the case of another participant who completed his education but is waiting on becoming a legal resident, so s/he can work, the challenge is based on the U.S. educational policy laws and practices, which allow immigrant students to take classes, but require legal paperwork before they can start working, which is a much lengthy and stringent process, than being approved to enroll for classes in the US:

I am still an international student. I hope to become a legal resident. There is a kind of instability. I still don't know what I am going to do even though I graduated, but I still don't know what I am going to do or where I am going. I want to be stable and getting my legal status resolved.

Theme IV. Challenges in Acculturation

This theme details information regarding the challenges experienced by YAHIS (YAHIS) while acculturating in the U.S. The very reason that they left Haiti can bias their attitude negatively, which may make them more prone to viewing this as a negative experience. Therefore, those who are very sad to leave Haiti may be more prone to viewing acculturation negatively. On the other hand, those that are escaping danger, or seeking political asylum etc. would tend to view it more positively.

Regarding leaving Haiti, of the five responses, four were negative, they were sad leaving the country:

Coming to the US was mixed feeling. I was very happy when I was coming to the US. However, I feel sad because I was leaving friends behind.

I was very close to finish my education in Haiti. I was 17 years old when I left. It was very hard for me to leave Haiti. It took me a year ½. I came in Feb to stay in 2004 decided to stay and spent a month. I wanted to go back so bad my mother decided to send me back.

The reason I came was the political reasons that happened in Haiti. I spent a month here and then I went back. In 2004 there was a huge flood in Haiti. I almost lost my life and I came back here in October and decided to stay. It was still hard for me to stay I felt so sad because I missed my friends

Participants talked about what they disliked in the US culture, that contributed to the negative experiences. Racism was one common experience that participants narrated while

talking about their acculturation journey. The negative experiences they encountered during acculturation as immigrants doubled because of the racism they experienced.

No matter how hard you worked as African, Haitian you always have to give 50 time more than someone different color than you (racial) be a step above to have the opportunity the country is offered. No matter what you do one needs always to be a step above to have the kind of opportunities the country does offer you.

The least will be the way people from different background do not have the same opportunity and treated unfairly at time.

One participant talked about how low moral standards of U.S. culture was a barrier for them while they acculturated. The day to day behavior, and what the participants term as 'low' standard of moral values discouraged them and made them uncomfortable.

The thing I don't like is too much freedom that leads to lack of moral values. What I like the least probably the way people behave. There is a lack of respect and values.

In diverse ways, individuals also pointed towards the U.S. culture of individualism, which forces people to fend for themselves at a very early age, as a deterrent.

The hardest adjustment for me was living your family behind, your comfort zone. When I was a child in Haiti I had made having someone used to do thing for you. Learning to do things on your own. In Haiti it is quite different.

Participants also named crime, social media, and politics as other factors that they dislike in the United States when this question (what did they dislike in the US culture?) was asked in the interviews. Participants expressed more than one factor. There were 11 distinct responses, of which two responses that identified racism, low morality, judgmental, and individualism were equally sources of negative experiences.

I don't like the politic of the US. It is hard for both party to get something good done for everyone or for the country even though leader of the world. In my year in the US, I have seen that there is a constant fight to get something done for people.

Once they arrived in the United states, participants stated that they had a tough time due to language barrier (three respondents). In addition, they stated that transportation, food, lack of understanding of US culture, and laws were other factors that contributed to their problems. One participant stated that they had a tough time because people did not know about Haiti and did not have an understanding about the people there, which contributed to the problems.

Language barriers at time can hinder you

I don't see them as problem such as language, fast foods, I was not use to that. My country is an agricultural country. In my house, people used to cook three time a day, transportation is another problem. If you want to move from one place to another is not easy.

Adjustment the living itself such as public transportation is not easy, especially in Miami, Florida, moving from one place to another and food or Haitian cuisine

The other aspect that participants highlighted was the requirement to work hard for everything in the US. The mantra of surviving in US is *figure it out*.

You have to work and have to have an education. That is for me the main differences here you have to help yourself. However, back home is not too demanding it is stress free, you don't worry about anything, and there is a lay back. Here in the US you cannot live that way.

Most participants viewed the American culture of individualism as a negative factor, that diminished the value and place of family in the lives they were living in the United States.

This social factor or value of U.S. contributed to their negative lived experience,

When I first came here it was a culture chock highly visible it was center on materialism rather than human more specifically family oriented. My culture is different. We really have each other. We are here for each other.

The way I feel about the US culture versus the Haitian is really different coming from Haiti. The thing that I know back home, how parents do things and how kids supposed to do certain things my own culture how parents do things. When I came here it was totally different coming from Haiti specially the time when I was in Haiti the things I know back home how parents do things and how kids supposed to do things. However, when I came here it is really different more specially the way we live with our neighbor and to say good morning to the elders. There is none of that because the culture here is really different compared to Haiti.

However, there were a few participants who viewed individualism positively. They approached individualism from the view point of taking ownership of the success in their lives.

I don't see nothing that was helpful to you I live day by day. I come here with a vision and goal to go to school and college. I did not expect services. If you want something you need to look for it.

You have to work and have to have an education. That is for me the main differences here you have to help yourself.

When I was a child in Haiti I had made having someone used to do thing for you. Learning to do things on your own. In Haiti it is quite different

Participants mentioned language barriers in dealing with day to day activities; figuring out public transportation, and difficulty in traveling within the city with limited English skills as two main reasons for a negative lived experience in daily living. There were 10 responses which talked about daily struggles, of which 8 responses mentioned either language or transportation difficulty. Two responses mentioned dealing with family in daily living as a source of negative experience.

Theme V. Questioning of Self Identity

The literature states that in the process of acculturation a person enters a self-exploratory phase (Corey, 2009); this is where the participants were as they were recounting their lived experiences to the researcher. Human relationships are an important element in self-exploratory process. Involving in diverse social landscape, individuals associate themselves to specific groups that would give meaning to his or her affiliation and that will constitute part of the individual's identity or identification (Vanderkooy, 2011). In the interviews, participants pointed out their struggles to form his or her identity and belonging while living in the U.S. They articulated and presented considerable insight on how they perceived themselves as Haitian and they can shape their acculturation experiences.

What do I like to see changing in my life is nothing because I am very happy with myself identity? I would say though that is the way I present myself.

The problem I am facing sometime is culture identity, self-identity, and belongingness

However, some indicated that they are in a comfortable middle ground or struggling or existing as two culture personality by adopting a dual standard. They do things Haitian way, even though they are living in American culture.

However, there is a protocol within the Haitian household have even though I tried to adapt or get use to American culture I still feel there is a certain limit, barriers, there is certain things you have to do. Participant who came here in 1979 says that he has assimilated himself in the US, and that living in Haiti will be an adjustment for him

Having the opportunity, privileged being able to support yourself, children, and family. Living in Haitian will be an adjustment for me as oppose living in the U.S. I assimilate myself in the culture

This quote illustrates how the participant looks down on the American culture

The culture here is very different but I did not let it dam me too much of course I have taken a few from this culture.

Theme VI. Personal Attitude

The theme of personal attitude is significant for participants in their acculturation. The classification of their experience as positive or negative begin with the motivations with which the participants immigrated to the U.S. Most responses were given for the category of university education and chance for a better life. There were two participants who responded that they wanted to be close to family, which indicates that they already had family in the United States. For participants who realize that going to the US will help them to improve life by education and economic opportunities, to make a better life, their approach to the entire experience is expected to be oriented in a positive way. If they are content in Haiti, and do not feel the need to come to the United States, then they will be predisposed to not view the experience positively.

Regarding leaving Haiti, of the 5 responses, 4 were negative, they were sad leaving the country.

Coming to the US was mixed feeling. I was very happy when I was coming to the US. However, I feel sad because I was leaving friends behind.

I was very close to finish my education in Haiti. I was 17 years old when I left. I came here into HS in Coconut Creek. It was very hard for me to leave Haiti. It took me a year ½ . I came in Feb to stay in 2004 decided to stay and spent a month. I wanted to go back so bad my mother decided to send me back. The reason I came was the political reasons that happened in Haiti. I spent a month here and then I went back. In 2004 there was a huge flood in Haiti. I almost lost my life and I came

back here in October and decided to stay. It was still hard for me to stay I felt so sad because I missed my friends

Only 1 participant was positive, because:

It was motivated experience other culture, thinking one day I will be to attend university in the US.

Positive lived experience is also a result of the attitude of participants towards the difficulty or challenges in their lives.

Do you find it is difficult: no not really: you just try to apply yourself/ practice makes perfect”?

Support as ethnic group, I always look out for help. I did sit down and do nothing.

I am very easy-going person I am able to accommodate myself easily compared to other. Being inclined to learn new things and value the way they do things here in the U.S. in other words I try to understand how the culture work and how they do things here in the US versus to my country. I do that by observation and sometimes I made mistakes

Connecting with ethnic groups and student organizations or religious organizations on campus helped them to see the positivity in their experiences and form common bonds.

This allows them to feel like they are part of a community and service opportunities help them to realize that they are contributing to the community they belong to.

I did have some social groups. I have participating and involving in different group at the university, HSO, I have been part of the board for two years.

I involved with different social groups given back to the community by advocating on a national level. Haiti back to school.

Yes, I do, I was involving in several group associations on campus. They organized different activities, such as Haitian flag and big events related to Haitian diaspora that enable me to stay connected to my root

I am affiliated with a lot social support groups, affiliated with religious and social groups. Being a Haitian immigrant, I feel proud of my family ethnic.

Almost all participants stated they were sometimes treated different because they are immigrants, and because they are not white. However, there was a difference in how participants recounted their perception of discrimination. Those who experienced discrimination stated that they felt it sometimes in how their teachers interacted with them:

From my experience, I could say that some teachers want me to succeed in my study, and some teachers may not want me to succeed in my education due to my own experience when I heard a statement from a teacher that stated, “why I need to come to school if I can go to work only in my life why you need to come to school.” I feel that statement makes question this teacher view of me as an immigrant

There is some type preference as Haitian or black man. There is a certain prejudice against certain group to me is not fair but that the way that it is. I feel a little marginalized, even though that I am in very diverse cultural environment, but still some people pretend they don’t understand you and they are afraid of that.

While another participant stated that he fought against marginalization:

I did not allow myself to be marginalized, even if it was there but I did not allow that. I know who I am and where I came from. There is a self-confidence and self-identity.

One respondent tried to make peace with it, saying that discrimination is present in Haiti also when stating,

I do not feel that way. Even in my country there is kind of marginalization between those who from the capital and those who are in the country side.

Surprisingly, when asked if they felt marginalized, 7 out of 10 respondents stated that they did not feel marginalized. While majority of them speak about experiencing marginalized, they do not see themselves as victims of marginalization. It is possible that they feel like they have achieved their goals, or are on a path to achieving their goals, which possibly cancels out any negative remembrance of marginalization.

I did receive the service I need to succeed. I did not feel marginalized.

I have been supported I have not felt any bias toward me. Personally, I have not been marginalized, collectively may be.

Discussion

The research revealed that YAHIS interviewed for this study, strived hard to maintain their Haitian identity and persist in their culture, in which they found their sense of identity and based their family values. They are imbued with the Haitian identity that sometime some of them tended to become fixated on this subject during the interview. There is a cultural tension in some participants due to their attachment with their native country. For those who are fixated on Haitian culture, it is difficult for them to step outside and appreciate American culture beyond the material economic success. For instance, they function in America with a traditional Haitian viewpoint, even as they are actively trying to embrace the American culture as part of their acculturation to succeed in the U.S. However, for the most participants interviewed for this research study, the social interaction with the U.S. culture is a source of motivation to succeed or achieve their goals. The participants referred often to the process of achieving the objective they have set in their life, primarily of a better quality of life. This trait portrayed attainment or achievement of goal, which was included in each participant's interview.

Throughout the interviews, acculturation seemed to be an important aspect of the young adult Haitian immigrant students, demonstrated in their willingness to learn the American culture. They acknowledge the importance of the U.S. culture, expressed their appreciation for the cultural ethnic diversities. They acknowledged U.S. as a multi-cultural society where everyone can find his or her voice. All participants in the research

appreciated the lifestyle and freedom to express themselves afforded to them by their immigration to the U.S., and the opportunities to succeed and achieve their goals. All participants acknowledged that they came to U.S. because it offered them an opportunity for better education, better environment, and security.

The data revealed that the acculturation or adjustment experience of the participants in U.S. was not ambivalent; it was marked by positive and negative characteristics due to different set of facilitators and limitations that each participant experienced. The positive factors in the adjustment were family support and the education experience, that provided the structure to help them acculturate. Many of them indicated that education is a major factor because it allowed them to mingle with people of different ethnic background and nationalities and use that experience to succeed in life. Some of them were satisfied about their experiences. Most of participant arrived in the U.S. with the assumption that life would be better. They did not know what to expect, but there was a sense of hope for their future.

According to most participants, freedom and opportunity are two characteristics that made their acculturation much easier by allowing them to explore the world on their own and making their own choices in life. They appreciated that America is open to all and does not discriminate in providing basic education to all, and creates a space through law and constitutional rights, for everyone to feel safe and comfortable to be themselves. Most of the participants in the study have a sense of self -achievement. Most of them are satisfied about their goal achievements in life.

Participants demonstrated appreciation for both cultures and values. This is consistent with the views expressed by Berry (2006); Yu & Wang (2011) that the process of intercultural adaptation reflects two dimensions of the experience: (a) learning about the new culture and, (b) learning about one's self within the context of the new culture. From this perspective, for some participants, coming to the U.S. and embracing both cultures has set them on a path of self-discovery. They expressed that they have learned to navigate into both cultures without compromising one with the other. Rather, they established interconnectedness between both cultures by constantly recalling who they are as Haitian immigrant. They indicated that their experience of immigrating to the U.S. has allowed them to recognize who they really are, as a person of Haitian descent, and explore what they can achieve in life. They are unequivocally positive about themselves.

Several elements that the participants revealed in the study demonstrate a changing outlook towards self-growth. Several participants stated that ever since they moved to the U.S., they have become more responsible and productive, learned how to do things themselves, and take pride in doing so. All participants highlighted that their life experience took on a different meaning for them after living for many years in the U.S. For instance, one of the main research questions was focused on the adapting and adjusting of YAHIS in the U.S. It can be inferred that the participants expressed positive attitude towards the U.S. culture that enabled them to change, open, embrace, and adapt to the new values and behaviors which allow them to "effectively accommodate the demands of living in a host culture" (Taylor, 1994, p.154).

Adapting to the educational system is another element that contributes to the participants' acculturation. The research findings showed that participants felt an overall satisfaction with the education system, and its ability to help them establish good social rapport and interaction with other individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of them who recently moved to the U.S. reported that the education they had received in Haiti prepared them academically to do well educationally in the U.S. except the English language. The educational background they received in Haiti, also allowed them to be at ease to interact and socialize with other individuals. Overall, participants acknowledged the importance of education in their acculturation to succeed in the U.S. They expressed positive view about living in the U.S. However, findings showed that few participants preferred to go back to contribute and help Haiti.

Interview data also contained glimpses of negative lived experiences of the participants. Participant mentioned that racism, low morality, people being judgmental, and individualism, as features of U.S. culture that they are not comfortable with. Participants also named crime, social media, and politics as other factors that they dislike in the United States.

In terms of their social and family support structure, most participants mentioned that they were motivated to come to the U.S. by their parents or family members. In Haitian culture, education is highly valued; parents encourage and confer upon their children and even their adults to pursue education. Participants who identify themselves as second generation i.e. whose parents were the first ones to come here, reported that there for most of them, their parents did not pursue education or devote as much time to education, even

though the parents were educated, or highly educated in Haiti. Instead, their parents focused on setting down, securing the financial means to support family, and forming social structure, networks and opportunities which were then used by the participants to navigate educational choices, and acculturation with the county. From this perspective, it can be inferred that that participants have different views on what it means to have an educated parent since they did not perceive their parents as educated because non-college degree or high-school diploma from the United States. They appreciated their parents' efforts for embedding moral values and fostering the importance of education in their lives. According to study participants, their parents although limited in their educational accomplishments, nevertheless constantly pushed them to complete their education, and hopefully continue on to higher education. One of the participants mentioned that the first phrase in creole he heard when he arrived in the U.S. from a family member who said,

Bourik fe pitit se pou do-l poze, si-m voye cheche-w se pou-kapab ede-m ak sa ki deye-yo, men mwen vle pou al lekol epi apran yon metie pou ede tout ou ak lot yo,

which translates,

Donkey childbearing for do-it stand, I brought you here so that you can help me and what is behind them-but I want to go to school and have career to help others.

Summary

Respondents reported that family encouragement and financial support in their educational pursuit enable them to acculturate and achieved their goals. Few participants reported that their families were willing to continue to support them financially as they

pursued a career or higher education. Most participants had to work two jobs to pay for their education. The study revealed that respondents held themselves to higher standards, when it came to education. The interview data showed that some participants are still facing hurdles and significant barriers to achieve their education due to lack of directions, language barrier, and process of navigating various rules and structures around college. Yet the majority participants are appreciative of the opportunity offered to them by the U.S. and their positive experience outnumber the negative experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

To explore the acculturation of the YAHIS in the U.S. I investigated their lived experiences along with various psychosocial factors. The research study was conducted as a qualitative inquiry using the phenomenological study approach. Two questions that motivated this inquiry were (a) What are the positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning to higher education in the United States? and (b) What are the YAHIS' experiences with family support as they acculturate into the United States? The data for addressing the research questions was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 YAHIS who had migrated to the South Florida region between the late 1970s and the 2010s. In the interview, the emphasis was on participant's description of their positive and negative lived experiences, following the interpretive phenomenological research design (Creswell, 1998). The data was analyzed with the help of framework offered by Adler (1977). The findings of this study may inform specific strategies adopted by educational institutions, educators, local community officials regarding the mode of assistance offered to YAHIS in their communities. Additionally, this study might serve as useful information for stakeholders interested in modifying immigratory, and educational programming.

Scholars indicated that acculturation requires total integration and adaptation in the new cultural environment (Lakey, 2011). In the process of acculturation and assimilation an immigrant individual comes to adopt the practice, language, and culture of the new host society and becomes part of the host society (Gordon, 1964). This research has indicated

that YAHIS have come to the U.S. with expectation to have a better future. Adler (1977) viewed the basic needs of immigrants, such as physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization, as essential pillars of acculturation in a host society. From this perspective, Adlerian theory provided the analytical framework for me to examine the family and social support for immigrant students as they undergo the process of acculturation in the U.S society and educational system. Adlerian theory is a holistic, social, goal oriented, systemic, and humanistic approach that is based on individuals' abilities and capacities to improve themselves by striving to give meaning to their lives (Corey, 2009). This approach allowed me to focus on the subjective experience of each participant as they constructed and formed their ideas about the world differently than the culture they relate to. In this chapter, key findings with respect to the two research questions posed in the study will be presented. The discussion section will tie in the results with the literature that was reviewed in the study and draw implications for individuals or institutions and communities that are dealing with and assisting the YAHIS to acculturate and succeed in the US.

Key Findings

The first research question specifically asked about positive and negative lived experiences of YAHIS pursuing or transitioning from higher education in the United States. The interview data revealed that for most participants, the positive lived experiences were related to their educational attainment and family support. In the interviews, it was clear that positive experiences for participants could be attributed to one or more of the following items:

- Family support, opportunity structure and stability.
- Freedom and opportunity.
- Achievement of goals.
- Education.
- Employment.
- Social network outside of the family structure.
- Culture combination and change in perspective.
- Positive perception about their host country.

For participants who had transitioned out of high school followed by college, educational attainment contributed to them securing better employment and social status, compared to their parents. While all participants admitted to perceiving some level of discrimination within U.S. society, their perceptions differed. They demonstrated a high regard and appreciation for opportunities they have been offered in the United States to improve their lives and their future. For instance, when asked if they felt marginalized, seven out of 10 respondents stated that they did not feel marginalized. In the interviews, the participants constructed a setting and developed a sense of self-realization where they feel like they have achieved their goals, or are on a path to achieving their goals, which offers a potential explanation for negating the negative lived experience of marginalization.

The findings of this study revealed that the participants provide a new way to understand their experiences as a second or third generation of immigrants compared to their parents who were classified as first generation in this study and were typically the ones to immigrate to the United States. The first-generation immigrants came with a

predisposition to achieve their life goals, by enduring different sets of challenges, and making sacrifices to present their children a better set of opportunities (Vanderkooy, 2011). Existing literature shows that for many different immigrant populations, educational achievement tends to be less than native-born comparison groups but higher than their immigrant parents (Stepick & Stepick, 2010, Vanderkooy, 2011). Scholars that have previously studied the YAHIS population or similar ethnic groups found that they have achieved higher educational than their immigrant parents (Stepick & Stepick, 2010, Vanderkooy, 2011). These participants also are continuing their education well into their thirties, beyond when we might expect young adults to be still focused on their own education (Arnett, 2004). Study participants acknowledged that adjusting to a new land is not easy experience.

The negative lived experiences of participants originated from one or more of the following aspects:

- Language barriers.
- Nostalgia/sadness upon leaving Haiti
- Disapproval of aspects of U.S. culture
- Racism
- Perception of discrimination
- Individualism
- Questioning of self-identity.

Participants reported that they have faced many obstacles and misunderstandings from others because of their cultural background and mannerisms. Two participants reported

that their traditional behaviors have been questioned by their peers. Almost all participants stated they feel different, and sometimes were treated differently because culturally, linguistically, they appear different. Their value system and social customs are not American, so that influences how others perceive them. In literature, studies concluded that language discrimination coincides with an ethnic and cultural identity crisis, which can affect the confidence and sense of self of immigrant communities (Trimble, J.E., & Dickson, R, 2010).

Alder (1977) stated that “immigrants undergo a state of impaired psychological functioning upon their arrival in a new country” (p. 445). YAHIS faced many hurdles when they came to the United States. Their vision of a better future may lead them to downplay the intense stresses they face in their new environment. This deliberate downplaying of stress in their lives while undergoing a process of acculturation, can be viewed as a strategy they use to overcome challenges. This finding is important insight drawn by this study. This insight may translate into provision of better mental health resources towards this population of students by the universities, and immigration offices.

Prior research shows that psychosocial factors dominant in acculturation experience, translating into the recommendations for building more mental health support and resources for immigrant students at schools, universities, including training the educators, and mental health counselors (Cone et al., 2013; Doucet, 2007; Elie, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, 2006). The conclusions drawn in this study affirm these recommendations that have been documented in literature.

Study participants recognized that their identities would be shaped by acculturating which requires a constant transformation that allows them to adapt to the U.S. environment. This finding relates to the conclusions drawn by other studies that have examined immigrant students and found that, in order for the immigrants to succeed and acculturate, complete successful absorption into the new country life and society is important (Desir, 2007; Lature, 2007, & Strauss, 2008; Stepick et al. 2003; Vanderkooy, 2011, Zhou, 1997).

Interview data was full of the voiced needs of the participants that may help to integrated in the host country. In this context, while there was a common set of challenges that newcomers typically confronted, each participant in the study had an experience that was unique, owing to their limitations and community around them, that could impact their behavioral and psychological well-being, and challenge their self-identification and choices in life. For example, there appears to be a tension or confusion when participants talked about which country they preferred. If this confusion is prolonged, it could lead to lack of stability and affect their educational achievement goals. The YAHIS students adapted and acculturated to the United States as it was the only way for them to achieve and succeed in their education.

In the study interview, participants constantly talked about their country of origin, Haiti, and the people they left behind. Some participants expressed their desire to go back to visit or stay. Interview data shows that there is nostalgia among participants regarding their life in Haiti, which impedes their full acculturation in the U.S. culture and society. This kind of nostalgia “physicians described it as a sentiment or longing for home, coupled with a range of more problematic symptoms (e.g., weeping, insomnia, anxiety)” (Clay

et.al., 2013). The longing for home as they knew it in Haiti creates a sentimental attachment which covaries with physical and psychological distress that can be described or interpreted into two distinct ways: concept of homesickness that is a specific psychological vulnerability experienced by groups of people separated from close others (e.g., young people leaving the family home, immigrants) and characterized by a desire to return to one's place of origin (Clay, et al., 2013). There is another way to describe the manifestation of nostalgia, as an experience common to wider range of individuals, that refers to a broader assortment of objects (e.g., persons, places, events). That is viewed as a positive emotional experience (Clay, 2013). Most of the respondents' answers reflected some kind of nostalgia, which also covaried on the basis of the generational context and the age at immigration to the United States. If they were first generation then the sense of nostalgia was greater, especially when they immigrated at an age where they have completed some schooling in Haiti.

Study findings indicated that participants were motivated and eager to get educated in the United States. Their sole focus was on education, which they viewed as a social ladder that would enable them to have a better future for themselves. All of them have followed the path that leads an immigrant person to succeed in United States. such as learning English, embracing the American culture, learning values and norms, and integrating as member of its society. From the interviews, it was seen that the participants strongly believed in the American Dream, which is not a uniquely Haitian experience, as multiple immigrant groups emphasize educational achievement (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005). The interview data revealed that the work ethic of diligently striving for

education originated from YAHIS family members who constantly encouraged them. All participants echo a positive outlook into the future toward education as opportunity to adapt and be part of U.S. society and ultimately be useful to their home country. When asked, 30% of the participants expressed their willingness to directly contribute in native country political, social, and educational activities.

The participants were proactive to improve their learning environment by using the right tools in schools to navigate and take advantage of the opportunities that U.S. educational system had offered them. Educational achievement offers dual motivations: economic security through professional advancement as well as the higher social status associated with higher socioeconomic levels (Chao, 2009). Immigrant acculturation generally involves practices that take place in multiple contexts, time periods, communication styles, power and other configurations, and forms of knowledge and knowing (Prieto, Nejad, & Janamanch, 2013).

Scholars demonstrated there are significant challenges, including difficulty navigating the bureaucracy of higher education and access to financial aid, that hampered the educational achievements of these individuals. Nonetheless, the experiences of this group indicate a great degree of resiliency and determination to achieve the education which Haitian culture values so greatly (Arnett, 2004; Stepick & Stepick, 2010; Vanderkooy, 2011). Some participants acknowledged that their education in Haiti prepared them to succeed;

I feel that my native place prepared me to college and university. The most difficulty for me in college and university is the fear of failure. I am afraid of failure

and right now I feel that I don't have any room for failure. In my case, at the beginning it was, but once I got to the upper level or reached a certain level I had to adapt. Otherwise, I was not going to get help I needed.

Existing literature on challenges that immigrants' face while receiving education in American schools and universities includes difficulty with learning and speaking English; learning new educational styles; acculturating themselves to the host society; and dealing with inadequate family and social support—these factors are then compounded by a greater ethnic and cultural misunderstanding (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Participants in this study demonstrated that educational attainment and family supports are keys in their acculturation. The respondents tried to navigate and find innovative ways to cope with the pressures of acculturation, which involved downplaying the stress, or any negative factor that can demoralize them.

Conceptual Framework Analysis and Interpretation

The findings of study were analyzed based on Adlerian theory “*Germeinschaftsgefühl*” meaning social interest and social feeling (Adler, 1927). Walsh and Horenczyk (2001), suggested that there are two essential elements that immigrants must meet before they can actually and fully integrate themselves into their new society: a sense of belonging and a sense of self. For instance, a sense of belonging is when the individual is becoming part of a community and feeling as if permanent roots are being established in the new country. A sense of self refers to a feeling of competency, independence and achievement that may be gained in several ways, such as job satisfaction, and contributing to life in the new country (Walsh et al., 2001). Another heuristic of

viewing immigrant experiences was offered by Prieto et.al (2013) who stated that immigrant life experiences involve complex unfolding of acculturation processes: (1) equalization of immigrants and natives development (convergence); (2) language and social practices; and (3) interactions among immigrants 'habitudes and their economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals (pg.291). The framework for the researcher was to examine the importance of family and social support structure for immigrant students in their acculturation in the U.S. Based on the research literature from chapter 2 of this study, psychosocial factors created greater burdens on immigrant students to respond to the norms of the host country, and their goals to achieve American Dream. YAHIS have a steady vision of a better future, their expectations regarding the help and support they needed might lead them to discouragement and intense stresses in trying to achieve their goal in their unfamiliar environment. That typical experience and challenges most immigrant face in their journey which could impact their behavioral, and psychological well-being, also challenge their core identity (Gorse, 2011).

This could result in frustration and affect their mental health. According to the findings, all participants held themselves to a higher standard with regard to their own education and achievement in life. Every participant articulated their aspiration to obtain a better life. In a single purpose, they all also aspired to attend and have their college degree and secured their future. Adler believed that people have aspirations, needs and yearn for social interaction and connectedness (Corey, 2009). The approach coincided with the findings and provided the researcher a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the participants' acculturation experiences. Adlerian theory emphasizes on the importance of

social network which manifests a sense belonging and connectedness as an important aspect in the integration of an immigrant. This requires that participants need an effective community engagement which could play an essential role possible in their acculturation. Nevertheless, Adlerian theory does not talk or explain the notion of effective community engagement. The psychological problem is not addressed as part of Adlerian framework. From this perspective, the researcher suggests that adding concept social interest, feeling, emotional wellbeing, and mental health support would be advantageous for this group of population. That means, for immigrants to acculturate they must be involved with other group, and in the total capital activities of the host country.

Limitations of the Study

This research study has the following limitations. The first, and most obvious limitation is sample size. The study was completed with interviews from 10 participants. While this is a small sample size, for a qualitative research, conducting 10 interviews provided enough data for analysis. Yet it must be acknowledged that there might be opinions and experiences this study did not capture, due to the small sample size, and the process of snowball sampling that was conducted to identify the sample. The findings represent most of the participant's experiences; however, the findings cannot be generalized beyond of the sample, as this is a qualitative study.

Another set of limitations arose from the process of data collection. Even though the researcher made sure that the participant met the requirements or criteria to participate and were assured that they can leave the study at any time, there was still a possibility that the participants did not volunteer correct information. As literature has shown that this

ethnic group population tend to be distrustful and scared when they are asked for personal information (citation), it is possible that the participants were hesitant in responding to the questions. The fact that two of the participant mentioned other ethnic group during the interview, that has posed some limitations for not being able to compare this research group to other ethnic groups. Birman (2005) articulated that migration does not occur at random, and the sociology of international migration has much to tell us about the contexts in which migrants are received (p. 158). The ethical, legal, sociopolitical, and economic issues in the Haitian case have a great deal to contribute to the study. However, as a limitation of the data collection method, during the interviews participant could be reluctant to open about their family life experiences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, schools and universities should be well informed about immigrant population, specifically YAHIS to better assist them. In the school context, I recommended that the institution should provide more information about accessing education in the U.S., the registration procedure and more transparency with the individual so that nothing should be a surprise for the students that could discourage them to pursue their educational achievement. Several participants in the study have mentioned that they have start all over again. Certainly, teachers cannot possibly read up and inform themselves of every culture and country that immigrant come from. Perhaps they should have immigrant counselors in schools, or academic advisors to guide students through this process. Moreover, as these students are entering into college level transcripts can be assessed by an independent third party to get credits for work that has already been done.

Teranishi, R.T., Martin, M.D., and Orozco, S.C. (2013) stipulated that there is insufficient research to inform a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and outcomes of immigrant students—including their demography, where and why they enroll in college, and the unique challenges they present for campuses, states, and higher education at large. Scholar suggested that to perceive broadly and comprehensively about the immigrant student population when considering these students' postsecondary trajectories and examining how practices and policies at the state, institutional, and programmatic levels affect their opportunities and outcomes. It is also necessary to examine immigrant students' experiences in different institutional settings, including community colleges (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, and Suárez-Orozco 2011). Therefore, this study could recommend a better understanding of immigrant students' civic engagement to build on students' existing commitments. More empirical studies on immigrant populations in higher education will facilitate colleges and universities recognize and appreciate these students' relevance to institutional, state, and national goals and respond to their unique needs, challenges, and potential.

It is appropriate to recommend to the educational institution to establish psychological counseling to help immigrant students deal with some of the traumatic events (political, social, and natural disasters) they inherited and brought with them from their homeland. In so doing, they will be able to share these experiences and receive psychological support to deal with their anxiety, and stress and post traumatic disorder because of the many natural disasters Haiti had known.

Weighing the importance of family support in the participant's acculturation process, it is recommended that host families should know that their support is vital to the participant. Inviting and encouraging someone to come to the U.S. is one thing, however, a follow up which consists of providing for their needs and giving them access to correct information regarding the educational system and work permits, is essential for their acculturation. This research contributes to field of psychosocial education of the young adult immigrant students. It is useful to those who are involved in educational and professional fields to be aware of their needs.

Directions for Future Research

There are very few studies on the young adult Haitian immigrant student's experiences of acculturation. Their experiences may not have been reflected or represented in other Haitian immigrant studies. Further research on young adult Haitian immigrant students, can examine the attachment issues to native country and ways of coping once they immigrate, to evolve the understanding of how this group of immigrants acculturates within the United States. Research is also needed on how YAHIS navigate the U.S. educational system. In addition, the future research can explore the need to include family education to gain an understanding of their responsibilities regarding the people they have been invited to migrate into the country. In a future study, it can be recommended to have a part of study to focus on several samples from other cultural ethnic background to see how they acculturate and deal with attachment to their native country, as they immigrate to the U.S.

Implications

Potential impacts for Positive Social Change

YAHIS comprise a great number among the U.S. immigrant students attending major universities, especially in the areas of South Florida, Miami-Dade and New York (Vanderkooy, 2011). Their integration could be important part in their participation in the U.S. society to bring meaning or change to places they are living. Young adult Haitian immigrant students' involvement in the social development of local areas can have an enormous impact in their contribution of socio-economic of the new country and their homeland. In the context of South Florida, political power, civic engagement, and religious institutions are shaped by the diverse population and their localized tensions (Vanderkooy, 2011). Having a place that offers opportunities to immigrant groups to succeed would allow young adult Haitian immigrant to make social change in the host society (U.S.) and participate or contribute in their native country development. This researcher has concluded that most of the participants expressed that they come to U.S. to have a better education and improve their lives.

Empirical implications

A better understanding of YAHIS' experiences will help educators to understand how to support these students as they learn the new culture, adapt, and succeed in U.S. Education is of utmost importance for YAHIS, and allows them to improve not only their lives but also their communities. Their integration into American society can be instrumental to adjustment process especially with regard to psychosocial and mental problems. The audience for this study are scholars who educate school psychologists, and

school psychologists themselves. From this perspective, an original contribution of this study is to raise awareness in the academic communities about the significant role family cohesion, and social support play in young adult Haitian immigrant integration and educational attainment. Examining the adjustment process through the lived experiences of the YAHIS may aid school psychologists and scholars in better understanding YAHIS' experiences while eliciting methods to ease the transition. Therefore, changes in the lives of YAHIS may come about because the educators and school psychologists who work with them will have a better idea of how to help them.

Recommendation for Practice

The results of the research demonstrated that participant interviews give a way to understand the phenomenon experience of a group of immigrant students who are yearning and seeking a better life in to United States. Family and social support helped the participants to acculturate and overcome barriers. This research contributes to the field of psychosocial education of the young adult immigrant students. It is useful to those who are involved in educational and professional fields to be aware of their needs.

The implications of the present study in context of an Adlerian theoretical approach, which implies that individuals strive to fulfill their aspiration and goal in giving meaning to their lives, lead to the insight that some YAHIS have some with a steady vision of a better future, their expectations regarding the help and support they were needed might have led them to discouragement and intense stresses in trying to achieve their goal in their new environment. That typical experience and challenges most immigrant face in their journey which could impact their behavioral, and psychological well-being and also

challenge their core identity (Gorse, 2011). The research findings aligned with the research literature by listening the participant stories that enable to connect and understand the sense of separation and loss they have experienced and mixing with new cultural immersion.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was on psychosocial factors on the YAHIS' acculturation in the United States., which has been called as a nation of immigrants. The immigrants have always been the making of this country (Stepick, Dutton Stepick, and Vanderkooy 2010). Irrespective of the country they are immigrating from, all immigrants aspire to achieve their dreams and goals. Some through educations and some through work by living the American dreams. These immigrants have tailored and shaped the structure of the country. They responded to the basic responsibility from learn basic English, work hard, and pursue the American dream, with most of these expectations staying true to this day (Vanderkoy, 2007).

This research study on the YAHIS who were born in Haiti and moved to the U.S. has shown that they have achieved educational aspirations. However, their responses revealed that their adjustment to the culture indicates a struggle. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that YAHIS are not totally fully integrated and fear losing their identity. The study revealed that while participants are enjoying the life and opportunities the U.S. offered them, they are still lamenting on their native as nostalgia sentiment. The cultural or values identifications intersect with the ties they continue to hold on. In their responses, three participants express their desires to return and involve in the life of their social and political homeland.

The nature of YAHIS experiences as immigrants is manifested with a deep desire to achieve their dreams and succeed in their futures. However, little is known regarding how YAHIS undergo the process of acculturation in the United States. The findings of this research elaborated essential support needed for their acculturation. More understanding and support for these young adult immigrant students should be provided by the educational and social institutions. The hosting family, and educational institution have the potential to play a much larger role in their acculturation. It is necessary that these students should be psychologically and culturally prepared to face the challenges that are awaiting or be given mental health counseling and support as they are progressing on acculturating in the society.

Like any other groups of immigrants in the U.S. history, YAHIS expressed strong desire to achieve their goals through education and adapt to the American system in pursuing their American dream through financial and security (Stepick 1998). The researcher of this study built on conclusions drawn from previous studies which have examined Haitian immigrants and has added to the literature findings specific to the young adult Haitian student population. This researcher tried to understand the processes of acculturation as they tried to achieve and pursue their goals. The researcher has presented recommendations resulting from this study, which point to the need for providing extra counseling and mental health support to new immigrants from Haiti. This recommendation can also be extended to immigrants of other countries.

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Appendix A: Letter of Study Information

Please see a description of the research

The purpose of this study is to help the researcher to understand what young adult Haitian immigrant students' life experience is like, adjusting to a new culture as they are endeavoring to succeed educationally in the face of new challenges. The study explores and examines how young adult Haitian students try to adjust to the U.S. educational system and U.S. culture. The goal of this study is to gather information that will be useful to scholars, educators, and universities as they educate newcomer Haitian immigrant students in the U.S. schools.

Type of Help Needed:

The purpose of this flyer is to invite you, students, to participate in a research study about challenges that your fellow young adult Haitian immigrant students are facing as they are trying to acculturate. You are one of the possible participants because you are a young adult Haitian immigrant who is trying to succeed, and you may be willing to share your experiences. You would need to meet the following criteria to be eligible to participate in this study:

- 18 years of age or older
- Haitian young adult student currently attending a post-secondary educational institution (vocational and technical schools, colleges, and universities)
- freely willing to volunteer to be interviewed for 45 minutes to one hour
- agree to sign an informed consent form

You are encouraged to provide a copy of this flyer, "**Invitation to Participate in Research**" to your fellow students who are eligible to participate in this study, so they may be contacted directly by the researcher. You may also provide the researcher's telephone number and email address to the potential research participants so that they may also call directly if they are willing to participate.

The Use of Study Results and Publishing:

The results of data from this study could be given to participants for participating in the study. The results will also be made available to educators, colleges, and universities, and support groups upon requested through one of their representatives.

Thank you for considering this invitation to assist in this research project and look forward to meeting and cooperating with you in this endeavor.

Cordially and Respectfully,

Lucien Eugene Pierre
School of Psychology PhD Student
Walden University

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Research

I am conducting a study about young adult Haitian immigrant students' life experiences in the US. I want to investigate how psychosocial factors such as family and social support affect acculturation in the new land, and educational success.

You are invited to participate in this research because you are a young adult Haitian immigrant student who is over age 18 and living in the United States. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to be audio taped during the face-to-face interview, which will last 45 minutes to one hour. I will also ask you for a follow up so that you can confirm or clarify information given in the interview, and so that you can trust that your perspective will be accurately conveyed.

Please accept this letter as an invitation to participate in this doctoral research study. If you are interested to participate in the study, contact me, Lucien Eugene Pierre, via telephone or email.

Respectfully,

Lucien Eugene Pierre
School Psychology PhD. Student
Walden University

Appendix C: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**Walden University****Psychosocial Impacts on Young Adult Haitian Immigrant Students in the United States**

I, Lucien Eugene Pierre, agree to transcribe data for this study.

I promise and agree that I will:

1. keep all collected research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than myself Lucien Eugene Pierre, the primary investigator of this study;
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession. This includes: any instruments (such as headphones) transcribing audiotaped interviews; keeping all transcript documents and digitized interviews in computer password protected files; closing any transcription programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer; keeping any printed transcripts in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet; and permanently deleting any e-mail communication containing the data;
3. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to myself as the primary investigator when I have completed the research tasks;
4. erase or destroy all research information in any form or format (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

Signature of transcriber

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Acculturation and Life Experiences of YAHIS

1. Are you aware that I am recording this interview? If so, please say, “Yes, I know that this interview is being recorded.”
2. How old are you?
3. Where is your family? Who is in the US, and who is in Haiti?
4. When did you arrive in the United States?
5. Tell me how long have you lived in the United States? What was it like for you to leave your country and come to the US?
6. Why did you come to the US? Did you come on your own or did family members or friends encourage you?
7. Are you a legal resident?
8. What was the reason that you left Haiti?
9. Are you currently employed? What do you do?
10. How did you feel about the US culture versus your own traditional culture?
11. What has been the most helpful to you in your acculturation to the US?
12. What about the US makes you feel most at home?
13. What problem(s) are you facing due to your different cultural background?
14. What is the most different about life in the US compared to back home?
15. Besides English, what was the hardest adjustment to make to the US? What was the easiest?
16. How much English did you speak when you arrived? How much do you speak now?

17. What do you miss most about home?
18. Are you planning to visit or return back home in the future?
19. What do you like best about the US? What do you like least?
20. What has been helpful to you in adjusting to the US?
21. Is there anything you wish the services providers could do for you that they are not already doing?
22. How would you describe your experience becoming an immigrant to the United States, do you feel that you are achieving your goals? Do you notice something different in your life? What is it? What would you like to see changing?

The life experiences of YAHIS in schools

23. Are you currently enrolled in a school program?
24. Where did you graduate high school—in Haiti or US?
25. How long have you spent in a US High School?
26. What was it like to be in a US High School compared to Home?
27. What do you like about the school you have attended?
28. How many of you graduated from college in your family?
29. Tell me what you did like about the school or High School you had attended?
30. Was the process difficult to register in college or university?
31. Do you feel that you have enough support to succeed in school?
32. What was your expectation of US education?
33. Are you able to manage the learning system?
34. Do you feel teachers, faculty, and staff are helping you to succeed in your education?

35. Do you explore opportunities that can help you to succeed?
36. Do you feel different in school because of different cultures?
37. How do you compare the learning environment versus your native place?
38. Do you feel that you picked the right course to help you succeed?
39. Do you think that access to education is easy?
40. Do you feel that your native education prepared you to embrace U.S. College and University challenges?
41. What is most difficult for you in college or university?
42. Do you find that it is difficult to learn in the U.S. system?
43. How you try to integrate in the U.S. education system?
44. How complicated do you find the system?
45. Since you have different teachers, how complicated do you find it is to follow them, and do they understand you?
46. Tell me about your friendships in the United States. Did you have a lot of friends?
47. Do you look for help at school?
48. Tell me about your friendships in school. Do you have a lot of friends?
49. Do you have some financial support? How do you pay for your school?
50. Do you feel that you have been supported and served as Haitian students like other ethnic groups or American students?
51. Do you feel marginalized or being treated unfairly because of your ethnicity or race in school?

The family and social support of YAHIS

52. Do you have social or religious groups you are affiliated with?
53. Do you feel proud about your ethnic or your family achievement?
54. Do you feel supported by your social (club and outreach community), ethnic, or religious group, in the community to which you belong?
55. How do you feel not supported by your social, religious, and ethnic groups in the community to which you belong?
56. Which educational generation do you belong in your family?
57. How do you feel the previous generation achieved its educational goals in the US?
58. What could you have done differently?
59. What does your family relationship look like—do you have a good relationship with members of your family? How?
60. Do you feel supported by your family members to succeed? How?
61. How would you describe your family activities that enable you to succeed and acculturate in the US?
62. How would you describe the ways your family's economic support could help you achieve your educational aspirations or become better acculturated?
63. How is your family contributing to your educational achievement and your adjustment?
64. Do you have a job? What is it like for you to be a full-time or part-time student and have a full-time job?
65. Do you feel your social, ethnic, and religious groups are doing enough to support you academically and culturally?

Appendix E: Coded Text

Table E1.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> | <i>References</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Acculturation | | 0 | 0 |
| Achieving goals | Do you feel that you are achieving your goals? | 8 | 16 |
| Change desired | What would you like to see changing? | 2 | 2 |
| Culture comparison | How do you feel about U.S. culture versus your own traditional culture? | 10 | 22 |
| Different in life | Do you notice anything different in your life? What is it? | 9 | 16 |
| Dislike about US | What do you like least? | 9 | 9 |
| Easiest adjustment | What was the easiest? | 6 | 7 |
| Employment Status | | 9 | 13 |
| Family or friends encouraged | Were you encouraged by family or friends to come | 8 | 9 |
| Feel at home | Where do you feel most at home? | 6 | 6 |
| Hardest adjustment | Besides learning English, what was the hardest adjustment to make to the US? | 9 | 10 |
| Do it yourself culture | | 4 | 4 |
| Parents adjustment to culture in US | | 1 | 1 |
| Helpful in acculturation | What has been the most helpful to you in your acculturation to the US? | 10 | 19 |
| Immigrant experience | How would you describe your experience becoming an immigrant to the United States? | 10 | 37 |
| Leaving Haiti | Experience of leaving the country | 5 | 5 |
| Like about US | | 9 | 10 |
| Miss about Haiti | | 9 | 11 |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> | <i>References</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Problems due to culture | What problem(s) are you facing due to your different cultural background? | 6 | 8 |
| Reason for coming | Why did the participant come to the US | 9 | 13 |
| Return to Haiti | 1 Are you planning to visit or return back home in the future? | 8 | 9 |
| Self-motivated to come | Did you come on your own | 2 | 2 |
| Services desired | Is there anything you wish the services providers could do for you that they are not already doing? | 7 | 9 |
| Spoken English now | How much do you speak now | 5 | 5 |
| Spoken English on arrival | How much English did you speak when you arrived? | 10 | 14 |
| Attitude towards the experience | | 7 | 11 |
| Action | | 1 | 1 |
| Experience at school | This code represents life experiences as YAHIS in the U.S. schools | 1 | 1 |
| College graduate in family | How many of you graduated from college in your family? | 8 | 9 |
| College Registration | Was the process to register for college or university difficult? | 5 | 5 |
| Comparison of Learning | How do you compare the learning environment versus your native place? Do you feel that you picked the right course to help you succeed? | 10 | 19 |
| Comparison with other ethnic groups | Do you feel that you have been supported and served as Haitian students like other ethnic groups or American students? | 7 | 9 |
| Currently enrolled | Are you currently enrolled in a school program? | 6 | 6 |
| Difficulty in College | What is most difficult for you in college or university? | 9 | 23 |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> | <i>References</i> |
|------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Ease of following lectures | Since you have different teachers, how complicated do you find it is to follow them, and do they understand you? | 5 | 5 |
| Expectation of US Education | What was your expectation of U.S. education? | 7 | 11 |
| Graduated High School | Where and where did you graduate high school—in Haiti or US? | 7 | 8 |
| Help at School | When and how do you look for help at school? | 9 | 17 |
| High School Experience | What was it like to be in a U.S. high school compared to home? | 8 | 13 |
| Integrate with US Education | How do you try to integrate in the U.S. education system? | 8 | 12 |
| Like previous school | Tell me what you did like about the school or High School you had attended? | 2 | 2 |
| Manage US learning | How are you able to manage the U.S. learning system? Do you feel teachers, faculty, and staff are helping you to succeed in your education? Do you explore opportunities that can help you to succeed? Do you feel that you picked the right course to help you succeed? | 10 | 31 |
| Paying for School | How is your financial support? How do you pay for your school? | 3 | 4 |
| Perception of Discrimination | Have you ever felt discriminated against or treated unfairly in school because of your race or because of your Haitian ancestry? Tell me about that time [if applicable]. Do you think there is racial/ethnic discrimination against Haitians? Against other groups? Can you give me an example? | 7 | 11 |
| No | | 7 | 8 |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> | <i>References</i> |
|------------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Preparation for US Education | How do you feel that your native education prepared you to embrace U.S. college and university challenges? | 8 | 10 |
| Right courses | | 8 | 8 |
| School Like | What do you like about the school you have attended? | 3 | 3 |
| US Friendships | Tell me about your friendships in the United States. Did you have a lot of friends? | 7 | 11 |
| Useful for work | | 2 | 2 |
| Vision for education | How do you envision achieving your education in the U.S. educational system? | 0 | 0 |
| Family Social Support | The next questions are about the family and social support of young adult Haitian immigrant students | 3 | 3 |
| Family achievement | Do you feel proud of your ethnic or your family achievements? Which educational generation do you belong to in your family? How do you feel the previous generation achieved its educational goals in the US? What could you have done differently? | 6 | 8 |
| Family contribution | How is your family contributing to your educational achievement and your adjustment? | 5 | 7 |
| First generation | | 1 | 1 |
| Second generation | | 6 | 7 |
| Third generation | | 2 | 2 |
| Family economic | How would you describe the ways your family's economic support could help you achieve your educational aspirations or become better acculturated? | 10 | 13 |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Sources</i> | <i>References</i> |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Family enabled success | How would you describe your family activities that enable you to succeed and acculturate in the US? | 8 | 12 |
| Family location | Where is your family? Who is in the US, and who is in Haiti? | 2 | 3 |
| Family relationship | What does your family relationship look like—do you have a good relationship with members of your family? How? | 6 | 8 |
| Family support | Do you feel supported by your family members to succeed? How? | 9 | 24 |
| Interesting Quotes | | 7 | 20 |
| Opportunity | This code collects references to all mention of the word opportunity | 9 | 40 |
| Positive Experience | | 3 | 3 |
| Right classes | | 8 | 26 |
| Social Support | The remaining questions are about your identification & relationships with social support groups. | 1 | 1 |
| Member Community Group | Which community groups are you a part of? What do you value about this community group? Do you have social or religious groups you are affiliated with? | 9 | 11 |
| Not supported by CG | | 4 | 5 |
| Support by Community Group | Do you feel supported by your social (club and outreach community), ethnic, or religious group, in the community to which you belong? | 4 | 6 |
| Support enough from CG | Do you feel your social, ethnic, and religious groups are doing enough to support you academically | 2 | 3 |
| Support Group Relationship | What kind of relationships do you have with social groups and support do you receive from them? | 2 | 2 |