

Family, Obligation, and Educational Outcomes:  
Unraveling the Paradox of High Aspirations and Low Academic Achievement  
among the Children of Haitian Immigrants

by  
Tekla Nicholas

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

May 2008

Copyright by Tekla Nicholas

**Family, Obligation, and Educational Outcomes:  
Unraveling the Paradox of High Aspirations and Low Academic Achievement  
among the Children of Haitian Immigrants**


by  
Tekla Nicholas

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Michael Harris, Department of Anthropology, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

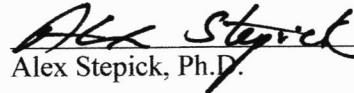
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:



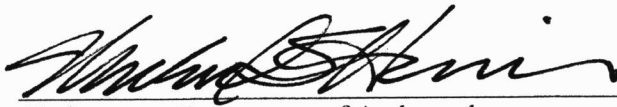
Michael Harris, Ph.D.  
Thesis Advisor



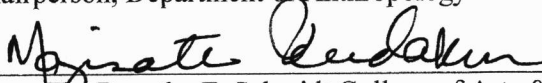
Susan Love Brown, Ph.D.



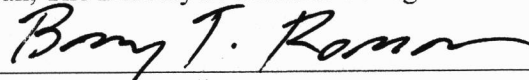
Alex Stepick, Ph.D.



Chairperson, Department of Anthropology



Dean, The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters



Dean, Graduate College

*April 21, 2008*  
Date

My sincere thanks goes to  
Dr. Michael Harris, Dr. Susan Love Brown, and Dr. Alex Stepick  
for engaging my mind and supporting my dreams.

## ABSTRACT

Author: Tekla Nicholas

Title: Family, Obligation, and Educational Outcomes:  
Unraveling the Paradox of High Aspirations and Low  
Academic Achievement among the Children of Haitian  
Immigrants

Institution: Florida Atlantic University

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Michael Harris

Degree: Master of Arts

Year: 2008

The desire for academic success is shared by Haitian parents and their American-born children. Yet, despite this will to succeed, second generation Haitian students have been shown to fare poorly in school when compared to other ethnic groups. This qualitative study revealed that students' poor results in high school were not due to adversarial attitudes toward education; rather, they reflected inadequate foundations in basic academic skills. In particular, limited vocabularies hamper the academic achievement of many Haitian American students. Some students who expected that passing grades would lead to college are unable to pass the FCAT exam required to earn a high school diploma. Surprisingly, the highest levels of academic achievement were attained by the students with the poorest and least educated parents. They displayed extraordinary motivation attributed to a strong sense of familial obligation.

To the Haitian families who have let me into their lives and shared their stories with  
me with my deepest gratitude

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Children of Haitian Immigrants: Educational Outcomes.....	1
The Problem.....	3
Academic Achievement and Minority Students .....	6
<b>Methods of Research.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Data Collection .....	13
Limitations .....	15
Analysis.....	17
Entering the Field.....	19
<b>Haitian Migration and Family .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Haitian Migration to the U.S.....	22
Haitians in Broward County .....	25
Children and Family structure .....	27
<b>Parental Education and Migration.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Education and chain migration .....	30
Education, Family Separation, and Remittances .....	35
<b>Education and the Children of Haitian Immigrants.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Parent-Child Communication Regarding Education .....	43
Parental Guidance .....	46
Homework.....	51
Grades .....	54
Haitian Parents Send their American-born Children to School.....	59
Haitian Students and the FCAT .....	68
Schools that Reproduce Inequality .....	72
<b>High Achieving Students .....</b>	<b>77</b>
Unexpected Findings .....	77
Theories of Educational Outcomes.....	78
High Academic Achievers .....	81
Obligation and Motivation.....	84
Familism and Achievement .....	85
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>References Cited .....</b>	<b>96</b>

## **List of Figures**

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT BY NATIONALITY.....	4
GRANDPARENT MIGRATION AND PARENTAL OUTCOMES .....	34



## **Introduction**

### **Children of Haitian Immigrants: Educational Outcomes**

Contemporary immigrant families hope that the second generation will achieve a better life by taking advantage of the educational opportunities the United States offers. But for some groups, these dreams have been elusive. One of the groups that is struggling academically includes the children of Haitian immigrants. Although Haitian immigrant parents and their American-born children share a desire for academic success, second generation Haitian students fare poorly in school when compared to other ethnic groups.

Immigrants have come to the United States throughout its history to find a better life. The members of the migrant generation accept that they will endure difficulties in a new land, but they are motivated by the promise of greater opportunity for their children. For the descendants of the immigrants who flocked to the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the American dream has been generally attainable as second and third generations reached the middle class or higher. Post-World War II conditions in the United States provided economic and social opportunities for large swaths of the population. But there is reason for concern that this outcome may elude the descendants of today's immigrants. The current economy is much different than that of the twentieth century. It has been described as an "hourglass" economy, with highly skilled professional careers at the top and

low wage careers with little opportunity for advancement at the bottom (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 1997). The mid-level careers that helped to propel earlier generations into a higher economic bracket are dwindling. To succeed in such an economic system, one must have the education and skills necessary to attain more lucrative careers. Those who lack adequate education just can't compete.

In light of this economic structure, educational achievement is considered to be an important predictor of future economic status. Currently, in the U.S. the average college graduate earns an annual income nearly \$20,000 higher than a high school graduate can expect to earn. Furthermore, those who lack a high school diploma earn 27% less on average than those who complete their degree (Day and Newburger 2002:2-3). Contemporary immigrant families hope that the second generation will achieve a better life by taking advantage of the educational opportunities the United States offers.

This desire for academic success is shared by Haitian parents and their American-born children. Yet, despite this will to succeed, second generation Haitian students have been shown to fare poorly in school when compared to other ethnic groups (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). This study examines the role of the Haitian immigrant family in the second generation students' education. Ethnographic methods were used to examine how Haitian families transmit attitudes and expectations regarding education. My research uses ethnographic data from interviews of Haitian immigrants and their children to provide a better understanding of the way that education is discussed and supervised in these families and to reveal the participants' understandings of family roles and

responsibilities in academic achievement. While survey data is useful for identifying trends and general variations, these results are often interpreted according to social theory. An ethnographic study allows the researcher to examine general findings from an emic perspective. Using grounded theory and analysis, conclusions emerge from the empirical data in this study.

An ethnographic approach can illuminate the role of culture in the behaviors and attitudes of a group of people. Culture provides the framework for interpreting and adapting to novel experiences. Immigrant families bridge the cultures of the homeland and the new society. The strategies they employ to adapt to these changes may contribute to the disparate outcomes of second generation students. For this reason, I explore the family history in regard to schooling to provide context for their attitudes about and understanding of the education system. The family's background in Haiti as well as their experiences in the United States provide the context for the education of the second generation.

### **The Problem**

The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS)<sup>1</sup> demonstrated a clear correlation between ethnic origin and academic success among second generation students (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Among the nationalities included in the CILS results, second generation Haitian students reveal some of the greatest levels of ethnic disadvantage in educational outcomes. Haitian-American students' GPAs were among the lowest, averaging 2.27 (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:236). In addition, Haitian students had standardized math and reading scores substantially lower than

all other groups except Mexicans and Laotian-Cambodians. Portes and Rumbaut noted that the majority of second generation Mexicans, Cambodians, and Laotians do not expect to earn a college degree, while on average the other groups, including Haitians, plan to achieve advanced degrees (2001: 38).

### **EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT BY NATIONALITY**

sorted by GPA (1992)

(adapted from Portes and Rumbaut 2001:236)

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Math Score</b>	<b>Reading Score</b>	<b>GPA</b>
Chinese-Korean	77.38	61.66	3.34
Other Asian	70.31	62.39	3.09
Vietnamese	60.3	37.45	3.03
Filipino	59.11	51.07	2.93
Laotian-Cambodian	37.87	18.33	2.83
Other nationalities	66.03	58.81	2.79
Cuban, private school	79.52	68.52	2.68
West Indian	52.78	45.62	2.40
Colombian	58.35	44.66	2.34
Nicaraguan	55.45	38.04	2.32
Other Latin	55.33	42.85	2.30
Haitian	45.03	30.40	2.27
Mexican	31.87	26.54	2.24
Cuban, public school	56.24	45.10	2.23

These expectations and aspirations for higher education, particularly when shared by parents and children, are considered by many to be a positive predictor of academic achievement (Chang and Le 2005, Glick and White 2004, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998, Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Zhou 1997). Yet the CILS data reveal this correlation to be breached by Haitian students. Haitian immigrant parents and their children report high aspirations and expectations for academic success, but this does not result in the expected high grades and test scores. Portes and MacLeod

(1996) conclude that the ethnic disadvantage for second generation Haitians even reduces the positive effect of parental socio-economic status, which is generally a strong indicator of educational attainment in all school contexts.

Haitian students present a paradox. Despite their low levels of academic achievement, they share the high academic aspirations of their parents and report a strong scholastic effort in the number of hours spent on homework. Among other groups, these characteristics tend to correlate with enhanced educational performance (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001)

Haitians are among the largest immigrant groups in South Florida. They have been clearly identified by the Portes and Rumbaut CILS project as a population at risk of being left behind. As our local schools struggle to serve disparate groups of immigrants and their second generation children, more information is needed to provide these students with the tools to succeed. Scholars are now engaged in understanding the particular factors that influence the outcomes of each group.

In my research I sought to understand why second generation Haitian students experience an academic disadvantage and how family interaction, particularly parental involvement, influences academic outcomes. The next section will review theories regarding disparities in academic outcomes that attempt to explain why some minority groups in the United States consistently fall below the average for academic achievement while others have become associated with academic success.

## **Academic Achievement and Minority Students**

Why do ethnic groups achieve such disparate academic results? With many variables contributing to educational outcomes, scholars debate which contribute most significantly to the differences between racial and ethnic groups.

Once, these differences were ascribed to an inherent intellectual inferiority of non-Western peoples (Jensen 1969). Such claims of genetic differences have largely been rejected; however, assertions of inferior intelligence among some racial or ethnic groups continue to arise (e.g., Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994)). Anthropologists generally discount these claims as racist, and have sought other explanations for these disparities. This section will review some of these theories.

Cultural deficit theories of the 1960s suggested that the poor academic performance of minorities resulted from deficiencies in the home. A “culture of poverty” that was passed down from one generation to the next was characterized by family dysfunction and a lack of planning for the future (Lewis 1965). It was argued that the home life of minority children lacked the linguistic and intellectual environments that prepared youngsters from white, middle-class homes for formal schooling (Deutsch et. al. 1967, Hess and Shipmann 1965).

Later, theories that attributed inferior values in the cultural orientations of minority families were challenged by others with a perspective of cultural relativism (Foley 1991, Erickson 1987). Sociolinguistic theories focused on the cultural differences in communication styles employed by minority students and their teachers, arguing that this created misunderstandings and misinterpretations that

impeded student learning (Cazden et.al. 1972). Explanations for minority student underachievement that emphasize cultural differences between the student's home and school experiences are still promoted by researchers such as Trueba (1988) who advocate culturally appropriate education.

However, as Ogbu (1982) has pointed out, *all* students experience some level of cultural discontinuity as they enter school. Among other aspects, students leave a primarily oral learning tradition at home and must adjust to a reliance on written sources of knowledge as they progress in school. Cultural discontinuity theories suggest that cultures that are most similar to that of white, middle-class Americans are likely to make the adjustment most easily. But the positive academic results of groups such as Chinese and Koreans seem to indicate that they readily overcome the cultural mismatch. In addition, immigrant students, who should experience the most cultural discontinuity, achieve better results in school overall than the American-born children of immigrants (White and Glick 2000).

Ogbu has argued, in what he considers a cultural ecological theory, that it is the *type* of cultural difference, not the difference itself that impacts school performance (Ogbu 1982). He claims that non-Westerners and immigrants may be “turned off” from schooling in response to the type of treatment they experience, as well as their perceptions of having limited access to the economic rewards of education. According to Ogbu, “secondary cultural differences usually develop as a response to a contact situation, especially a contact situation involving stratified domination” (1982: 298). It is these differences that lead to academic difficulties. He argues that “castelike minorities,” those who have been “historically denied equal educational

opportunities” through a rigid system of racial stratification develop ambivalent attitudes toward school. Because school is seen as a “white” institution, parents may blame poor grades on teachers and the school system, rather on their children (Ogbu and Simmons 1998). Subsequently, “oppositional” attitudes develop among students, leading them to resist conforming to the expectations of the school system (Ogbu and Simmons 1998).

These ideas of adversarial attitudes among groups that face discrimination have been incorporated into the segmented assimilation hypothesis, which is widely cited in immigration literature today. This theory warns that assimilation into American culture, while generally thought to be a pathway toward upward mobility, may in fact lead minority children into “downward assimilation,” or declining socioeconomic status (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that different paths of incorporation into American society lie at the root of disparate academic achievement. Segmented assimilation theory asserts that while some children of immigrants are able to assimilate into an American mainstream with equal access to social and economic opportunities, others, particularly racial minorities, risk a negative outcome. The types of resources a family brings into the immigration process - financial resources, education, skills, and social status – coupled with the context of their reception in the new country – government policies, racial stratification, and labor market conditions – interact to create the mode of incorporation that the immigrant family will experience (Zhou and Xiong 2005). Portes and Zhou have argued that “the central question is not whether the second generation will assimilate to American society, but *to what*



*segment* of that society it will assimilate” (2005:1), noting that existing structures of stratification shape the incorporation of immigrants. Immigrant youth, particularly racial minorities, who grow up in impoverished inner cities are at risk of assimilating into the lowest strata of American society. A concentration of marginalized groups in the inner cities exposes immigrant families who settle there to high rates of crime, illegal drug use, and adversarial attitudes toward middle-class values (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou 1997). Portes and Zhou (1993) contend that the children of immigrant parents who have meager financial resources, low levels of education, and sparse social networks, are often raised in underprivileged urban settings, where they may assimilate into an American underclass. According to the segmented assimilation theory, as in Ogbu’s cultural ecological theory, it is the development of “adversarial attitudes” among the children of immigrants raised in these circumstances that leads to poor school performance.

Stepick and colleagues analyzed the CILS data within the context of their years of experience in the Haitian community in South Florida (Stepick et. al. 2001) and also found the environment of racial and ethnic discrimination to be an important factor in understanding the poor academic outcomes of Haitian students. Student behaviors to cover up their Haitian nationality demonstrated the effect of the high levels of prejudice experienced by this group. Fraught relationships between Haitian parents and their children may develop within this hostile social environment. The unfavorable reception experienced by Haitian immigrants combined with low levels of human capital create barriers for immigrant parents’ acculturation into American society. Their children, however, are immersed in American culture through school,

television, and peer interaction. As American-born offspring quickly adapt to the cultural norms that surround them in the U.S., parent-child conflict over behavior, ideas, and values increases.

This situation in which children adapt to American society much more rapidly than their immigrant parents has been called *dissonant acculturation* (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Stepick and colleagues argue that among Haitians “an extremely negative context of reception and low parental human capital combine to produce cultural dissonance and negative social psychological outcomes and, in turn, transform high educational aspirations into relatively low achievement. . . . The result is an ethnic effect that elevated individual (such as hours studying) and family characteristics (such as socioeconomic status [SES] cannot overcome.” (Stepick et. al. 2001: 234). This analysis suggests that the combined effects of adverse government policies, high levels of prejudice and discrimination, and an unfavorable labor market for Haitians who often have little formal education or job training, leads to an identity crisis among their children. The negative social climate feeds an ambivalence in the second generation toward their cultural heritage, resulting in diminished self-esteem and depression. These psychological factors may undermine educational aspirations and lead to poor academic outcomes.

In their analysis of the CILS data, Stepick and colleagues concluded that most factors that normally predict variation in academic achievement did not apply to the Haitian students in the sample (2001). While a small proportion of students did well in school, academic achievement was generally low among Haitians in all circumstances. They conclude that the pervasive negative context of reception

experienced by Haitians lies at the root of the poor academic results of second generation students.

Important factors involved in the educational outcomes of the children of immigrants include the group's relationship to the host society, the cultural congruence between the immigrants and American society, the economic and social resources of the immigrant families, and the families' abilities to support their children's academic progress. Although these theories often deal with the experience of the ethnic group, schooling is an individual pursuit. The leading theoretical perspectives suggest that negative societal forces of prejudice and discrimination lead to individual psychological tendencies (adversarial attitudes, cultural dissonance, shifting identities) that impede educational progress. However, none of these seem to sufficiently explain the low academic achievement of Haitian-American students in light of the consistently high academic aspirations and explanations shared by the students and their parents.

The CILS data show that nearly 55% of Haitian students expected to earn an advanced degree (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:217). Yet these students by and large are not earning the grades that will allow them to reach their academic goals. While survey research can clearly demonstrate this paradox, it is quite limited in its ability to explain it. To understand the "why" of situations such as these, ethnographic research is uniquely well suited. This study uses semi-structured interviews to explore the educational history of Haitian parents and their children, as well as their understandings and interpretations of those experiences. Participant observation is another critical component of ethnographic study, allowing the researcher to

compare participants' statements about beliefs and practices to what is actually observed (Bernard 2006). While this study was informed by the theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter, it was based in a "healthy skepticism" toward all. A grounded theory analysis was used to generate conclusions that emerged from the data collected. The next chapter will specifically address methods of data collection and analysis.

## **Methods of Research**

### **Data Collection**

This research explores the communication regarding education between Haitian immigrant parents and their children. Interview data was combined with a substantial period of participant observation. Participant observation for this research began in a large Protestant church in Broward County, Florida, where approximately 1000 Haitian worshipers congregate each Sunday. The church is the site of many activities throughout the week and is central to the lives of many local Haitian families. Haitian pastors lead the church, which has expanded dramatically over the last decade. Worship services are conducted primarily in Haitian Creole, but also include French and some English. The Sunday school and Bible study classes for the youth, however, are in English.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 pairs of high school students and parents. The students include 15 girls and 5 boys.<sup>2</sup> Participating parents include an equal representation of fathers and mothers. The initial participants were identified from within the Haitian church congregation, and the group of participants was expanded by snowball sampling. Two Haitian American college students from the church congregation assisted me in recruiting participants for this study.

Parents and students provided basic demographic information and were interviewed about their family migration history, educational history, educational expectations and aspirations, and the ways that education was discussed and supervised within the family. These interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1-1/2 hours. Students and their parents were interviewed separately to allow their responses to be compared, except in one case in which both parents chose to be interviewed together with their two children, citing concerns about their English.<sup>3</sup> All interviews were conducted by the author and began after nine months of participant observation in this church community, which included attending church services and activities, and later, tutoring students to prepare for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT). Several parents who chose not to formally participate in interviews, nevertheless wanted to talk with me “off the record” about their experiences and their children's educations. While none of these conversations are used in this paper, they served to test the reliability of my findings. Regular interaction with Haitian families throughout this study provided the backdrop against which all data were considered. So while a small cohort of participants provided the data, the information presented was found to be consistent with observations of the greater population of Haitian immigrant families I came to know over the course of this research.

All interviews were conducted in English, although a Haitian translator was offered to the parents. Semi-structured interviews, primarily utilizing open ended questions and probes were used to allow the participants' views to be explored from their own perspectives, rather than to test pre-determined hypotheses. The

interviews were taped<sup>4</sup> and handwritten notes were taken to record the interview setting, my impressions, and any nonverbal communication. At the beginning of the study interviews were conducted at the church or at a local library. After I had become more familiar to the families, most interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants.

### **Limitations**

In my first meeting with the pastor of the Haitian church, he expressed a hope that I would “find some way to be useful” to the church community. As the school year concluded, I was dismayed to learn that a number of high school seniors would not be receiving their diplomas because they had been unable to pass the FCAT exam. I offered to tutor the students to prepare them for another attempt to pass the exam over the summer. When the announcement was made in church, the woman next to me said “That's very nice of you, but unfortunately they will not come. They will be too embarrassed.” She did not want me to be disappointed if no one accepted my offer of assistance.

Happily, a number of students did come to me to prepare for the exam. But her comment highlights an important limitation of this study. My participants are restricted, as they are in all human subjects research, to those who consent to participate. For this study, parents had to consent to their child's participation, and both parent and child had to agree to share their stories with me. Most students who were asked were willing to be interviewed, but many parents chose not to participate in the study. Some expressed concerns that their English was not good enough.

Although I would be the only researcher to listen to and transcribe the interview tapes, one father explained that he felt someone at the university would hear them and laugh at the way they talked.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, when participants were asked to sign the required consent forms many became quite concerned. This was a sure sign to some of them that the interview could not really be confidential because the forms indicated that other people from the university were also involved. Some parents objected, explaining that they could talk to me because they knew me, but they did not know these other people. Others agreed to participate, but postponed our interview repeatedly until I understood that this was just a polite way of refusing my request.

In particular, male students and their parents were hesitant to participate in this study. I have asked many parents and students why this is so. “Perhaps they are embarrassed,” is the typical reply. In general, male students are doing worse in school than their female peers (see Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Stepick et. al. 2001). Additionally, Haitian parents allow boys more privacy and independence than girls of the same age. Several of the girls interviewed also had high school age brothers, but the parents were much more forthcoming in discussing their female children. Perhaps a male researcher would have had more access to the boys. This is an area that warrants further study.

The participants were well aware of my positive view of education as I was conducting the study in order to complete a Masters degree. This could potentially result in participants reporting a more positive attitude about education than they sincerely held. In order to minimize the effects of this potential bias, the interview



questions requested personal stories that would illustrate both parents' and students' behaviors rather than simply surveying their feelings about education. In addition, participant observation afforded an opportunity to experience family and community interaction that reflected attitudes regarding education.

### **Analysis**

A grounded theory analysis requires an open approach to the data, gradually drawing categories of relationships between observed phenomena. Relationships between variables in the data are constantly compared to new observations as the research progresses. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, tentative hypotheses are tested until all variations can be accounted for.

The data from interviews and field notes were analyzed using the methods presented by Strauss and Corbin in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1998). In a grounded theory approach, predetermined hypotheses are not tested; rather patterns and relationships are identified within the data. The basic steps of analysis begin with open coding in which the data are broken into discrete parts, examined closely, and compared to and contrasted from other parts to develop concepts. Conceptually similar events, actions, practices, beliefs, are then grouped together into categories. The properties and dimensions of categories are explored to identify the range and variation within them.

Patterns among concepts and conditions lead to preliminary relational statements, which are subject to continued scrutiny through constant comparison of

one piece of data with another. The comparative analysis is carried out throughout the research process. Emerging themes guide modifications to interview queries and probes. Finally, a central category that integrates the other categories is identified that is logical, consistent, and accounts for all variation and seeming contradictions. Through this process grounded theory is developed, as consistent explanations are derived from empirical data.

NVivo software was used as a tool for coding, organizing data, and developing relational models. Quotations from interview data and field notes have been used throughout to demonstrate general assertions. All interviews were transcribed by the author, recording the natural speech of the participants as closely as possible. In presenting this data, I liberally utilize the words of the participants. Although the analysis is mine, the story is theirs and I attempt to present their voices as clearly as possible. While transcribed interviews are often “cleaned up,” polishing the language of the participants, I have chosen to transcribe the interviews as I heard them. The manner in which Haitian immigrants and their children speak affects the way that they are perceived by others. Because of this, preserving the natural qualities of their speech provides the reader with a fuller understanding of the participant.

## **Entering the Field**

My first visit to the church set the stage for my social placement. I was invited to attend the church by a Haitian man in his 50s who I had known for several years. He had discussed this invitation with the church pastor, knowing that I hoped to eventually conduct research among Haitian immigrant families. I knew that I would have to become known within the Haitian community in order to gain access for my upcoming research, and I wanted to learn Haitian Creole. The pastor confirmed my expectation that my interest in the Haitian community would be met with some suspicion. He greeted me saying, "I am interested to find out exactly what you are up to." I am phenotypically "white" and blonde and it was pointed out to me on many occasions that my presence in the church could not be missed.

Although I am in the age group of the parents in this study, my language limitations led to my placement in the youth Sunday school class, which is conducted in English. The class included male and female high school students, and was led by a young woman a few years older. This Sunday school teacher came to be a good friend and important guide into the Haitian community. Socially, I became identified with "the young people" who generally spoke English well and were acculturated into American society through their school experiences. Many had nevertheless been born in Haiti and the group usually included some very recent immigrants who sometimes struggled with English. To my knowledge, no accommodations were ever made to aid these students.

The students were very welcoming toward me, but treated me as an "elder," and a privileged guest. The church service that followed Sunday school was conducted

primarily in Haitian Creole, with some French and English, as well. Usually, the Sunday school teacher served as my translator. However, when she was not available my social position became a bit uncomfortable. Students who were usually friendly toward me would avoid me. But inevitably, one would be assigned by a church elder to translate for me. These situations left me feeling quite uncomfortable. While I appreciated the translation, I did not feel that anyone should be obligated to perform this service for me. I was beginning to catch on, and I would have been quite satisfied to fend for myself. But it was quite clear that the adults of the church would not allow this. A student was always assigned to translate, and they were expected to comply. After several such incidents, I learned why the students resisted this request. They just did not feel competent to serve as translators. In particular, if a pastor who used a very French style of speaking was preaching, or if there were references to life in rural Haiti, they found translation quite difficult. They were able to handle general social interaction in Creole quite easily, but the language of a lengthy sermon often went beyond their comfort zone. Additionally, there were words they understood only in Creole, without knowing the English equivalent.

By the time I began to conduct interviews, the Haitian men of my own age group were regularly greeting me and interacting with me. However, the adult women generally held me at a distance until I began to offer my services as a tutor. This effort “to be useful” served to minimize the community’s general suspicion of me as an outsider. At least I would be a useful outsider. Over time, I realized that embarrassment over language skills was an important factor in limiting social

interaction. I did not understand for some time that even when a Haitian immigrant's English seemed quite good to me, they were always concerned that it would not be good enough. As I began to attempt to communicate in Haitian Creole myself, I came to understand very well how inhibiting the uncertainty of linguistic competence can be. For many Haitian immigrants, avoiding embarrassment caused by the limitations of their language skills factors into every encounter with American society.

## **Haitian Migration and Family**

### **Haitian Migration to the U.S**

Haitian migrants have come to the United States since the island nation gained its independence from France in 1804. Refugees from the Haitian revolution settled in a variety of locations along North American waterways. In particular, New Orleans became a popular destination for fleeing Haitians including whites, free blacks, and slaves (Catanese 1999). Immigrants from Haiti have trickled into the U.S. steadily since that time.

Prior to 1960, most Haitian immigrants were professionals and political exiles from the Haitian elite. After Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier came to power in 1957 upper class migration increased, and by 1964 the Haitian middle class joined the anti-Duvalier exodus. From 1950-1970 nearly eight percent of the Haitian population emigrated, in particular those with money, education, and professional, business, or trade skills (Catanese 1999). Most Haitian immigrants, prior to the 1970s, made their new lives in the northeastern U.S. or the French-speaking regions of Canada. Haitians generally avoided the southern U.S., where racial segregation persisted, despite its more familiar climate (Stepick 1998). However, the 1970s marked a change in the nature of Haitian migration.

In the early 1970s Papa Doc was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier. The economic deprivation and political repression that characterized this period led to increased migration from rural Haiti, as well as the urban centers (Laguette 1984). The typical immigrant was now more likely to be poor and uneducated. Population pressures, land depletion, and poverty drove migration to the urban areas of Haiti, or off the island to the Bahamas, Canada, or the United States.

Although there had been a few earlier attempts to flee by boat, by 1977 Haitians began regularly to arrive on the shores of Florida, sometimes in vessels that were barely seaworthy. It is estimated that up to 70,000 Haitian refugees arrived by boat from 1977-1981, with an additional 5,000-10,000 entering South Florida by plane (Stepick 1992). This influx of dark-skinned immigrants, many of whom were poor and uneducated, set off a strong negative reaction in the United States, particularly among Florida residents.

During the 1970s Haitians came to be regarded as carriers of tuberculosis, and this fear caused many who worked in restaurants to lose their jobs (Stepick 1992). Negative impressions that Haitians were a burden and disruptive to the community resulted in political efforts to exclude them. The INS increased efforts to control Haitian immigration including imprisonment, denial of work permits, and rejection of claims for asylum. In 1981 the Reagan administration began a program of interdiction to intercept migrants before they ever left Haitian waters. Those who reached the US were subject to imprisonment at Krome detention center, where some Haitians were held for more than a year. In addition, the Centers for Disease

Control (CDC) included Haitians on a list of high risk groups for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), again enforcing a stereotype of Haitians as carriers of disease. As Stepick notes “In the public mind, all Haitians were black boat people who were disease ridden, desperately poor, and pathetic” (1992:65).

In the 1980s the “Haitian program” was undertaken to prevent Haitian claims of asylum, characterized by detentions and expedited deportations of Haitian refugees (Charles 2006; Lawless 1986). In spite of the turmoil in their country, Haitians were seen only as economic refugees. When a legal challenge threatened US government deportation practices it began to transfer asylum seekers to Guantanamo. Haitians were often treated as illegal immigrants by INS even after the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 provided opportunities for many Haitians to regularize their legal status.

The US government has consistently implemented measures to reject Haitian claims of asylum and exclude them from the United States. This political and social climate forms the negative context of reception discussed in literature regarding the children of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Stepick 2001). Although the U.S. interdiction program brought a sharp decline in the numbers of Haitian immigrants after 1981, Haitian migration to Florida continues at a steady pace (Stepick and Portes 1986).

Haitian immigrants in South Florida come, overwhelmingly, from the last wave of migration that began in the mid-1970s. These include many poor and uneducated migrants from the rural villages of Haiti. Many speak little English when they arrive, and are often illiterate. They began to arrive in Florida where the labor



market had no need for them, and were met with prejudice and legal obstacles to immigration (Stepick and Portes 1986). Despite these difficulties, Florida's Haitian population more than doubled from 1990-2000, to 267,689 (Stepick, Dutton Stepick, Kretsedemas 2001:5). Of the 548,199 persons of Haitian ancestry living in the United States in 2000, more than 62,000 lived in Broward County, Florida and over 95,000 Haitians were in neighboring Miami-Dade County (U.S. Census 2000). Migration to North America has increasingly become part of the survival strategy for Haitian families, and South Florida has been a key destination. The next chapter will provide a demographic profile of Haitians in Broward County based on information from the United States Census 2000.

### **Haitians in Broward County**

Broward County Florida is the home of more than 62,000 persons of Haitian descent. Nearly 70% are foreign-born, and almost a quarter of the foreign-born have become naturalized U.S. citizens. This is a relatively young population; 34% are under 18 with a median age of 28 years. Educational outcomes are an important issue as nearly 25,000 Haitian students in Broward County are enrolled in school. Close to one third of these students are in high school.

More than 10,000 Haitian households include children under eighteen years of age. The majority of Haitian children are raised in households headed by a married couple; however, nearly a third live in households headed by a single female. Unfortunately these households are at a much greater risk of poverty. About 28% of

Haitian families with minor children live in poverty, but for single female households the poverty rate is above 43%.

Although a small percentage of Haitians in Broward earn high salaries, on average they have very low incomes. The median household income is \$31,041 and 38% earned less than \$25,000 annually. Another 37% earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. The majority work in service occupations including food service, hotels, healthcare, education, and retail. Levels of education and literacy are notably low in Haiti. But among adults of Haitian ancestry in Broward, more than half have a high school diploma and 30% have at least some college education.

The families who participated in this study generally reflect the statistics for Haitian families in Broward County, Florida. Most two-parent households earned above the median household income. However in most cases this was the cumulative total of a full-time job for each parent plus at least another part-time job, usually held by the male parent. The single mothers, as in the census figures, earn below the median income. Still, all adults were employed, most in jobs they had held for quite a few years. One marked difference from the census averages was family and household size. While Census 2000 recorded an average family size of 4.04 and average household of 3.89 persons, only two families among those studied had fewer than five members residing together. It is likely, with a median age of 28, that the lower average family size reflects a sizable cohort of young adults who are just starting their families.

One advantage of the Haitian families studied was a consequence of the sample criteria. All students in this study are U.S.-born and consequently all parents have

been in the United States for at least 15 years. This puts them necessarily in the cohort of Haitian immigrants that arrived prior to 1990. Having spent at least 15 years in the United States, most of these parents have improved their English skills and occupational opportunities. Based on the histories reported by the parents, the study participants are fairly typical of Haitian immigrant families in Broward County who have risen above the median earnings over the course of time in the U.S. Those who have arrived more recently likely skew the median earnings downward.

Family relationships are changed by the migration process and subsequent contact with another society (Foner 1997). The next section will discuss the literature on children and family in Haiti as well as Haitian immigrant families to provide a context for the examination of parent-child communication in this study.

### **Children and Family Structure**

Children in Haiti are considered a gift from God. “God gives poor people many children and rich people he gives money instead of children” (survey respondent quoted in Stykos 1964:45). Large families bring prestige and help to extend social ties. They are also important to the family’s economic survival. In rural Haiti, as soon as they are old enough, boys go to the field with their fathers and girls help their mother with her tasks of cooking, caring for younger children, and taking goods to market (Herskovits 1971). Children will help to provide for their parents in old age, especially their mothers. Karen McCarthy Brown (1991) found that the vital role of children in a mother’s security persisted even after migration to the U.

S. “For Haitian women, even for those now living in New York, children represent the main hope for a financially viable household and the closest thing there is to a guarantee of care in old age” (Brown 1991:244).

Children are critical links in the social relationships of the extended family. Childcare is important in maintaining social networks. In Haiti, children may be sent to live with wealthier relatives who will support them, and perhaps send them to school, in exchange for domestic labor. These relationships may be mutually beneficial. However, they are sometimes exploitive situations in which the child is virtually a household servant given meager sustenance in return (Brown 1991, Cadet 1998, Herskovits 1971). Whether exploitive or benign, the web of reciprocal obligations is expanded and strengthened by sending children into extended family homes. This usually includes godparents, who take on many responsibilities, and are thus drawn into the family network.

Children also play a role in expanding family networks and maintaining ties. In migration, children are frequently left behind until their parents have the money or the legal status to be able to send for them. Relatives or godparents will take them in, caring for them in exchange for their help with domestic chores. Even children born in the United States to Haitian immigrants may be sent to Haiti for a time to save childcare costs. And often, migrant children are sent to Haiti to spend time with family and absorb Haitian culture and values (Laguerre 1984, Stepick 1998). The links reinforced by children may work in the opposite direction, as well. Immigrant families may send for a niece, nephew, or godchild to stay with them in the U.S., extending the migration chain to another branch of the family network (Laguerre

1984, Stepick 1998). The extended family feels a responsibility for children and reinforces reciprocal assistance. Haitian immigrants maintain the flexible extended family in their new country through similar reciprocal childcare arrangements. Shared childcare is an important mechanism through which Haitians reinforce their social ties. During summer school breaks a Haitian family in the United States will often send their children to stay in a relative's home, or a niece or nephew will come to stay with them.

The flexible family practices employed by Haitians were an important part of the migration stories of the families who participated in this study. The next section will present migration experiences of the parental generation and discuss their connection to the parents' opportunities for education.

## Parental Education and Migration

### Education and Chain Migration

Explanations of poor academic performance of the children of Haitian immigrants often note the low level of parental education and their unfamiliarity with American schools. Communication between parent and child, as well as the parents' ability to participate in their child's education are important factors to be considered. In interviews, the parents participating in this study were asked about their schooling, as well as the education of their own parents, in order to assess the impacts of the family's educational history on the students' educational achievement.

Education and chain migration are vitally intertwined in the migration stories of the Haitian families in this study. In each family, education beyond primary had been an unaffordable luxury for the grandparents of the high school students. Some members of the grandparent generation were able to read and write, but others, particularly the women, lacked even a basic education.

*My mom don't know how to read. My dad know how to read, but he drop out; before high school he drop out. (Gina<sup>6</sup>, parent)*

*[My mom] went to school but she was eleven children in her family, so it was hard. In her time it was very hard for her parents. She went to school, but not like everybody else. She read, but not, you know, not like other people. I can say like elementary, basic education. (Marie, parent)*

But education, nevertheless, was highly valued. Regardless of the limitations of their own educational opportunities, the grandparents were determined that their children would be educated.

*My father had a few years of schooling. But my mother, no. The way we grew up, or were brought up, our philosophy of education, it's in all Haitian parents. People who come from Haiti, they all see education with the same eyes, AS – A - MUST. Because again, every parent's wish is that their kids will get ahead, be better, you know, or have an easier life than them. (Evens, parent)*

*My parents barely go to school. My mom probably has like a, not even, she's below 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. My dad also. She can read, barely, at an elementary grade level. In Haiti, most of the parents, they will learn by their mistakes. And they don't want their children to grow up the way they do, they did. And my mom always told me. "I didn't have a chance to go to school. It's the time for us really to push you up so you don't have the same issues that we have to deal with. To come and have the lowest job, to have the lowest paying job in the country. (Daniel, parent)*

Haiti has very low levels of literacy and education. Until the 1980s fewer than half of school-age children were enrolled in primary school (Miller 1992, The Library of Congress 2005). The Haitian immigrants who arrived in Florida in the 1970s and 1980s included many adults who had only a few years of schooling (Stepick and Portes 1986). Consequently, I was surprised to learn that many of the parents I interviewed for this study had reached a high school level of education. Some had even attended college. I learned that the families' stories of immigration and education were closely intertwined. The key difference occurred if a grandparent had migrated to the United States when their own children were young. This difference led to notable distinctions in academic and occupational attainment among the parents who participated in this study.

Two general pathways emerged in the parental generation. One featured a migrant with few family members in the United States. These parents had limited educations that had ended early due to their family's financial constraints. They have not been able to elevate their occupational status to any significant degree, despite living in the United States for at least fifteen years. Their educational limitations have largely prevented them from succeeding in any vocational education programs they have attempted.

Another pathway emerged that resulted in more highly educated members of the parents' generation. In these cases their own parents (the grandparents of the students in this study) had migrated to the United States, sending back remittances for their children. Immigration of the grandparents had supplied the necessary income to allow the parents to go to school. These members of the parents' generation migrated to the U.S to join the grandparents after achieving a high school education. With the support of their parents, many were able to get additional education in the United States. They improved their English, their prospects for employment, and their ability to navigate American society. Despite their lack of education, the grandparents, who were the original migrants to the U.S. in most families, were able to earn enough money to send back to Haiti to keep their children in school. The grandparents' generation had the disadvantage of arriving in the U.S. with few social resources to count on (see Stepick and Portes 1986). They had no well established family members to take them in and help them get jobs. With no more than a few years education, many were not literate in any language

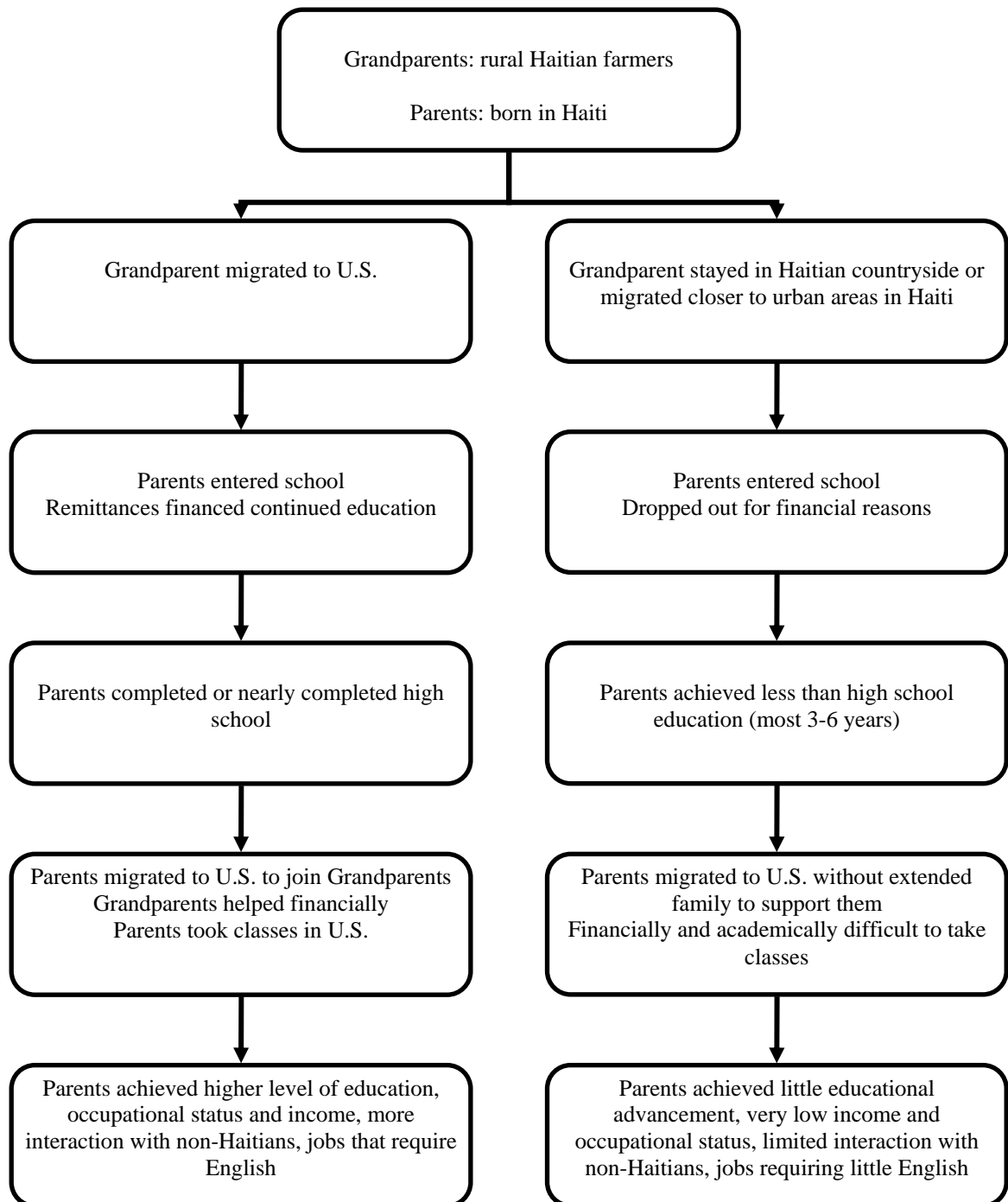


and they spoke little English. These early migrants relied on hard work and a will to survive. But they wanted a better life for their children.

They worked as many hours as they could at low-wage jobs, lived frugally, and sent money back to Haiti to send their children to school. The next generation would be educated in Haiti and then most would join their parents in the U.S. Although the parents of the students in this study were immigrants themselves, most joined other family members, usually parents and older siblings, who had migrated earlier. This gave them several advantages as they settled in the U.S.

The parents in this study whose own parents were already living in the U.S. when they migrated themselves had all been educated to at least the completion of high school in Haiti. Although none arrived feeling competent to communicate in English, they had studied English and had a foundation upon which to build. They received support from their parents once they arrived in the U.S., which allowed them to take English classes and to continue with college or vocational education. Leaving the children behind in Haiti meant that the grandparents' generation could raise their children on the very low costs of Haiti while earning American wages. Although they held very low wage positions in the United States, the money went a long way in Haiti.

## GRANDPARENT MIGRATION AND PARENTAL OUTCOMES



## **Education, Family Separation, and Remittances**

Only one of the parents interviewed had spent her entire childhood with her own parents. Many of the fathers of the grandparents' generation did not survive, or did not stay with the family, to see their children grow up. Many of the remaining parents migrated to the United States to support their families. But even if their parents were still in Haiti, nearly every one of the parents' generation had been sent to be raised by someone else. If the family lived in the countryside, the children were often sent to live closer to the city where they could go to school. Others were put in the care of a guardian who had more financial resources to raise the child. The children may have been left in the care of a relative, a paid caregiver, or even left alone under the supervision of the oldest sibling. Increasing a child's chances for education was central to these decisions.

Michael and his four siblings were left in Haiti when their widowed mother migrated to the United States to work. They stayed with relatives who lived closer to the city where they would have access to schooling. One by one as they got older Michael and his sisters and brothers joined their mother in the U.S.

*My mom had to leave the country after my father passed away. She left in order to take care of the five of us. So all our education is done because she came to the United States to work and send money back in order for us to go to school. She was here first and we came after.*  
(Michael, parent)

Most of the siblings were able to continue their educations after arriving in the United States with the financial support of their mother and other family members, and Michael was eventually able to earn a college degree.

Daniel and his siblings were also left in Haiti when their mother migrated to the United States to work, however he had already been separated from his parents for several years in order to attend school. From the age of six he returned home only in the summers to visit his parents in the countryside. But after his mother went to work in the United States, Daniel would not see her again for many years.

*I left my home really when I was 6 years old. Because we were living in the countryside and I had to go down to the city to go to school at 6. And I only spent like the vacation time with my parents. And at the age of 9 my father died, so ... And then my mother left Haiti when I was about 11.*

*They did believe in education, because they did everything to send all of their kids to school. To them, like most Haitian families, education is, they believe in education. They always tell their kids "I don't want you to grow up like me. I don't want you to go through what I went through." And they know the only way you can succeed in life is with a good education. So, I mean every Haitian family, that's what they believe in - to give their kids a good education. (Daniel, parent)*

Another parent, Gina, was sent at four years old along with her sister to live with an aunt who could send her to school. Her parents didn't have much money, but they lived in the country and produced enough food to send for their children's upkeep. They were also able to provide for a caretaker to attend to the children. [In Haiti it is inexpensive to hire household servants. Families with very modest incomes may have a cook or a maid. This is due to the general scarcity of jobs in Haiti.]

*When I went to school in Haiti I lived with my auntie, but I have my own maid, me and my sister. We have somebody who take care of us, and the house. It's a big house; it's 10 of us. So my mom sent a maid to take care of us, wash our clothes, make sure we clean, make sure*

*she help us for school, make sure she feed us, and everything in the house.*

*My father can provide some stuff, food, things, meat. He had a farm. They raise pigs and chickens. So every week they send food in my house, food and meat. (Gina, parent)*

Other children of the parent's generation were left to fend for themselves when their parents migrated to the U.S. Although their parents sent back money for the children, they had to take responsibility for themselves and their educations. By the time Evens entered secondary school his household consisted of an assorted group of siblings and cousins with no adults present. The parents had all migrated to the United States, Canada, or the Bahamas in order to support them. The children left in Haiti were well aware by this time that their futures were dependent upon the education they could achieve.

*In our home, we are all young people living together, so nobody was there really to see what you are doing, and so you just knew that since you are older that, hey, it's your life, it's your future, so you'd better do good. (Evens, parent)*

They felt a responsibility to succeed in their educations, and also some had to find ways to stretch the remittances sent back to Haiti by their parents. But getting a good education remained a top priority and sometimes the rewards of being a good student made a financial difference. Daniel always strove to earn scholarships and to find ways to insure that he could keep his younger siblings in school, as well.

*At 15 years old I was like the adult of the house. I had to be the head of the house at that time. 15, 16 years old in Haiti. But it was kind of very tough, because I had to go to school and also if my parents don't send enough money, I have to make sure that I take care of [my brothers and sister]. At that time I was in the school in Haiti they have the system that they have 3 exams for the year and if you have 750, 750 for each, they skip you for the third one, and you can have a*

*full scholarship for next year. So I always fought to get this. I know the money my mom would send to me, it was in my pocket. Or if she can't I don't have to worry about it. Also since I was pretty much on top of all the courses in the classroom, I used to help my friends and they pay me. So I tutored them and they paid me money, and with this money I take care of my brother and sister. (Daniel, parent)*

As children, this generation knew that they had to become educated if they were to prosper. There were no jobs in Haiti for those without educations.

*In Haiti education is important. Without education you will not make it. Any job in the government or whatever, if you want to be a teacher or whatever you want to do, you have to have education. ... In Haiti, for you to get a good job you have to have high education. And education was the main thing as far as a young person was concerned. A kid would probably walk miles to go to school, because they know with education you can make your way in life. (Michael, parent)*

Education was a privilege, as well. Most of the grandparents had not been able to be educated. Not only was it too expensive to send all the children to school, but there were very few schools outside of the cities. Even for the parents' generation, most of whom went to school, this created an obstacle. One of the options for families unable to educate their children was to send some of them to live with a guardian who could send them to school. This was the choice that Annette's family made.

Annette was the only girl of her mother's nine children. Her mother grew many fruits and vegetables on her small farm, but her father was involved with other women, as well, and did not contribute enough to support the household. To improve her opportunities to attend school, Annette was sent to live with a missionary family. They were quite poor, too; nevertheless they made sure that she completed elementary school. But the walk to school was long and tiring and

required her to get up early each day. The family moved around and at each level of schooling in the Haitian countryside a child has to travel to a different school, so as she progressed her journeys became longer.

*Oh! [You walk] three hours, four hours, two hours, depend. Depend where you live. Depend every step; every step you go you have to go to a different school because the teacher different at every level. You gonna go somewhere to find teachers to teach you.*

*Oh if you walk three, four hours, you have to get up every morning five o'clock in the morning. And you have to go to the river, to get water, to go to the house. At this time you take a bath in the river, and when you come back home you dress, somebody comb your hair, give you some little food, and take your little book in your hand and you go. And you walk, walk, walk. (Annette, parent)*

But some were not able to go to school. They were embarrassed because they were left behind when others went on to school. Guerline had no more than three years of education in Haiti before her parents could no longer give her the money for school. It brought her to tears to recall the anguish she felt as she tried to return to school without the few cents required for school fees.

*In Haiti, if you go to school without money they send you home. If your parents don't have money you can't go to school. You feel very ashamed. And you are very sad because the other kids are going to school and you can't go. (Guerline, parent)*

Like the other parents who had to discontinue their schooling early, Guerline feels regret and disappointment to this day. Even though most children were not able to get more than a few years of schooling in the Haitian countryside, they were aware that education was the key to a better future.

All of the parents interviewed for this study who had been able to continue on to high school in Haiti had parents who had migrated to the United States. The remittances sent from the U.S. were used to pay for private school educations or to pay for the fees and expenses associated with public schools. For these students whose parents had migrated to the U.S., the opportunity for education continued when they joined their parents here. None of the parents, regardless of their level of education, felt they had sufficient English to communicate effectively when they arrived in the U.S.

*Not a word of English. Now you have to understand, in Haiti English is mandatory in school. But it's only written English. And you have to know enough, you have to know the grammar, because you have to, when you go to, we call it in Haiti "baccalaureate", the final exams, national exams. And English and Spanish are two of the subjects you have to take. So not only since you enter high school, what you call secondary school in Haiti, you start with English. For like 7 years you have to study English in school. But you only study grammar and things like that, but really you do not speak the language. You know, you do not understand it. Until I get here, I mean it definitely helps, when you get to an English speaking country because you already had the foundation. But when I came here, no, I didn't speak a word of English. (Evens, parent)*

Their parents continued to support them while they studied English and went on to college or vocational programs. This support for additional training in the U. S. resulted in the opportunity to attain better employment than their parents had.

*I didn't have to work, because my mother had an apartment, and so, you know, compared to a lot of young people coming to America ... So I went to day school to learn some English. But then believe it or not, my first job was with the Broward county school board as a translator, even though I didn't understand a word of English (laughs). OK. That was 2 months after I got here (laughs). So, that's so funny. So it wasn't hard on me at all when I got here because of the fact that my mother and brother was here. (Evens, parent)*



Even though they were immigrants themselves, when this generation started families of their own they were able to provide some advantages for their children. These parents are mostly employed in hourly wage positions, but their educations and English skills allowed them to attain positions that were far more highly paid than those available to the grandparents or to the immigrant parents who were not able to stay in school. Of additional importance, while immigrants with less education often must piece together a series of part-time and temporary jobs, these parents have been fully employed.

*I did my high school in Haiti, my two years college in Haiti, and when I came here I continue my college in Miami, [a local] Community College. And when I moved to Broward County I went to another college. And I didn't finish. I stopped for a while because of my kids. And I start again going for nursing school, and I'm a certified nursing assistant and mental health technician and patient care technician. (Marie, parent)*

In the families with two parents in the home, most couples had three jobs between them. Typically in a two-parent family the wife held a full-time job while her husband worked full-time plus an additional part-time job. Most had been working for the same employers for many years. Although most worked for modest wages, the couple together worked enough hours to earn a middle-class income for the family, and nearly all were homeowners.

The pattern of migration for the grandparents' and parents' generations set the stage for the educational experiences of the student generation. In some families the grandparents migrated to the United States, leaving their children behind in Haiti.

This allowed the parents to continue to attend school at least through high school. For most Haitian families, this would not have been possible without the remittances sent from the U.S. In addition, these parents had the advantage of migrating themselves after their parents and other family members had already become established in the United States. The earlier migrants provided places to stay and financial support. The grandparents' generation helped their children to find jobs and to attend school. The members of the parent generation were immigrants themselves, but their immigrant experiences were markedly different from those of the grandparents. The links of chain migration had been fortified with education. Consequently, the opportunities for the immigrant family were improved, paving the way for the next generation of American-born children.

## **Education and the Children of Haitian Immigrants**

### **Parent-Child Communication Regarding Education**

A strained relationship between second generation Haitian students and their parents has been cited in previous literature as a possible contributing factor to poor educational performance (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998, Stepick et. al. 2001, Zhou 1997) Stepick et. al. (2001) suggest that when immigrant groups encounter negative contexts of reception as Haitians have, arriving to face discrimination, poor employment opportunities, and unwelcoming government policies, the children of immigrants are likely to acculturate much more rapidly than their parents. The resulting cultural dissonance between the generations increases parent-child conflict and identity crisis. Negative academic outcomes have also been associated with generational dissonance, a disparity between parents' and child's expectations for academic achievement, as well as their levels of acculturation into American society (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998). It has been predicted that when the second generation assimilates to U.S. society much more quickly than their parents, there will be high levels of conflict between parents and children. These cases will be associated with negative academic outcomes as the students reject their parents' values for academic achievement.

Based on my preliminary research I suspected that I would also find this to be the case. Students in the high school Sunday school class I attended complained

frequently about not being able to talk to their parents. However, when I asked students specifically about talking to their parents about education there was a very different answer. Second generation students and their parents reported that education was a constant topic of conversation in Haitian families. I asked the students when their parents talked to them about education. “Every day. *Every day*” was the typical reply. Most students went on to recount a conversation that had occurred earlier that same day or the day before. Most students reported that not only do their parents talk to them constantly about the importance of education, but other family members including older siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents, frequently talk to them about their education as well. The most common theme of these discussions is “Don’t be like me.” The students are constantly reminded that working for hourly wages in menial jobs is a very difficult way to live one’s life. “If you don’t have education you’ll be working like me, working hard.” Parents who were able to continue their education in the U.S. have been more economically successful. But even for those parents who were educated in Haiti, migrating to the U.S. has generally meant having to accept low wage employment. Regardless of their own circumstances, all the Haitian parents were confident that their children would be able to get good, professional jobs if they persisted in their educations.

When I asked students what their parents say to them about education, they were quick to reply. Because it is a constant topic of conversation in their homes, they didn’t have to think for even a moment.

*They're like "Education is your future." "You can't get anywhere in this country, unless you're really lucky, without education." "You don't want to be like me." "You have to surpass us." (Sherley, student)*

*They're very serious about it, and they want me to do better and get a good education so that I could help to pay for a lot of things I need when I'm older. [My parents expect me] to go to school and graduate and then go to college and then do what I, do whatever it is that I want to do. And finish that and graduate from that, and from there do the rest of my life. Because they always tell me that that's what they want me to do. (Tiffany, student)*

*[My dad expects me to go] all the way through college... because he wasn't able to go to college and he kind of wanted to go to college, maybe have a high profession, ... and all he had to go through, different jobs, construction worker, work in a restaurant cleaning and everything, so he doesn't want me to go through that same thing, like he is going through now. (Miguette, student)*

*Don't play with education. You better get it 'cause, OK, the one thing I always hear, "The children in Haiti don't have the advantage that you have. You get a free education." You know, I would hear that all the time. (Stephanie, student)*

Most parents emphasized the practical economic nature of the importance of education. They see it as natural that a child should achieve more than his or her parents did. The story of each of these families has been one of each generation striving and sacrificing to elevate the position of their children. The grandparents struggled to get their children into schools in Haiti. For American-born children education is available for all, but these parents realize that they must still push their children to take advantage of it.

*You go to school; that's a part of life. You go to school. You get an education first, because if you don't have education, in the world, not only in this country, you cannot be able to succeed. To help yourself and others. You cannot without education. You need it. I always said, what I doing, I don't want you to do it. Like me I work in, now I work*

*in [a local grocery store]. I like it. I like it because I don't go to school for it, but the Lord use me (laughs), somehow. I doing good on it. But I always tell them, I don't want them to do what I do. I like them to do better. Like if I make \$15 an hour, how come you're going to make \$15 an hour? If I buy me a car for \$500, how you going to buy a car for \$500? You're not the same generation. Everything's going high. You need education. Go to school to help yourself. (Gina, parent)*

Getting an education was important for one's financial future, but it was also important for cultivating desirable relationships and securing one's social status.

*I put God first, "cause I know he had made ways for me to get an education. But if I didn't have education, I probably wouldn't be able to afford a LOT of things that I'm affording now. You know, like my lifestyle, my home, car, and everything. Education is the backbone of everything. So, without an education, even the type of friends that you will have are limited, because they don't really want to mingle with somebody who's not on the same level with them. So, I think education is really, really important.*

*I would like her to even surpass me, or be better than me. And I wouldn't like to die knowing that my daughter is not doing good because she lacked what she needed to succeed, which is education. I'm always talking to her, telling her that when it's time for her to have a fiancée or somebody, I said I don't want nobody without an education. I describe what type of people that I want. So she knows. (Daphnee, parent)*

### **Parental Guidance**

Although several parents in this study were able to achieve higher levels of education through the family migration process, generally Haitians have very low levels of literacy and education. Although parents' fluency in English was surveyed in the CILS project, it did not consider parental literacy in the native language or their experience with and understanding of education systems. Many second generation Haitian immigrants are the first in their families to be able to attend

school for more than a few years. Such students will begin school without the early exposure to reading and other basic learning that benefits the children of more educated parents. These parents may lack the understanding or skills to successfully guide their child's performance in school. Even among educated Haitian parents, different cultural understandings of the role of the family and the role of the school might contribute to poor outcomes. American schools operate with an expectation of the role of the family which is quite different from that which is experienced in Haiti. This leads to questions both of whether Haitian parents understand these expectations and whether circumstances allow the parent to fulfill them.

Educational research involving Haitian immigrant students has identified problems with lack of parental involvement in school activities and homework (Felix-Marcelin 2000, Mundeke 1999). Additionally, these studies noted differences between the education systems in Haiti and the U.S., including very different standards for discipline. In Haitian schools the teacher has much more authority over the child, including the use of corporal punishment. This section will discuss whether these problems are also found for second generation students and if they contribute to the intergenerational conflict noted by Stepick et. al. (2001).

In every household included in this study, there were rules for homework completion, standards for grades, and rewards and punishments for academic results. The parents, raised in Haiti, had been subject to harsh discipline for poor performance in school. The consequences might include whippings both at school and again at home. Most parents were relieved not to be raising their children with corporal punishment. They had come to the U.S. in early adulthood with the

unpleasant memories of physical discipline still fresh. Some parents felt that corporal punishment was necessary at times, but it was not reported to be a regular method of enforcing school compliance.

The students reported that they were talked to constantly by parents and other family members about their educations. The parents have very high expectations. Most report that they hope that their child will become a doctor or a lawyer. But the students themselves are much less ambitious. They consider their parents' aspirations to be a Haitian cliché to be endured by all Haitian children. Several students mentioned that they didn't need to be rich, just comfortable. In most cases, their parents have been able to provide them with a fairly comfortable upbringing and, although they acknowledge that their parents work very hard, the students seem assured that a comfortable middle-class life will be easily achieved.

Parents are generally attentive to their child's homework and grades. Most parents have rules about when homework must be done, but they acknowledge that as the student has gotten older they have relaxed their oversight. They rely on the student to have developed adequate work habits and they monitor the student's work through their report cards. Haitian parents regard entering high school to be a big and important step. However, none of the parents I spoke to acknowledged any additional pressures for students in their high school years. Only a select group can make it into high school in Haiti, where this is an elite level of education. This is fundamentally different from the large institutions in the U.S. that include many students who may not be prepared or who do not want to be there. The parents did



not seem to realize that the schools provided only minimal supervision of high school students.

For many students the high school environment is overwhelming and distracting. There is a great deal of freedom, with no close supervision from teachers. Many students lose their focus on education at this point and see their grades plunge. At this age, the students no longer felt comfortable bringing their problems to their parents. They thought they should be able to handle the pressures of high school themselves.

Gabrielle was failing her first year of high school. She was excited to be accepted by her older brother's friends. With them, she began to cut classes and leave the school grounds regularly. She found that there was no obstacle to prevent her from doing this.

*At [a local] High School being a freshman and meeting new friends, it was like a brand new experience for me. I never really expected to know so many people within a year. But then the bad part came when some of my friends was like "Let's leave school. Let's skip." And the teachers, they'll see you walking and they won't say like, "I'll see you in class." Or even if they did see you in class the next day, they won't ask what happened. And so I'll just take advantage of it and I'll, like "OK let's skip. Let's leave. I'm not going to school today." And that's how it was. And then finally I got my grades. And then my grades was, my GPA was a 1.9. That was the end of the year, 'cause I never really paid attention to the semesters. I always thought, "OK, it'll get better, it'll get better." And then it was just going down, down, down until it was a 1.9. (Gabrielle, student)*

This was not the first time she had avoided doing her school work. In elementary school she would sometimes tell her parents that her homework was done because she wanted to go out and play. Gabrielle was able to fool her mother

for a while because her teacher had reported that she usually completed her homework in class. Gabrielle then began to use that as an excuse to avoid doing homework. If she wanted to go out to play, she would tell her mother that she had done her homework in class even if she had not. She could get away with it until the teacher called home. Many students reported that the lack of close oversight they experienced as high school students allowed them to become “lazy.”

Like all Haitian parents I have talked to, Gabrielle’s parents have been very supportive of her education. They are willing to do whatever it takes to get their child through school. They worry that they cannot provide enough assistance with school work, but they tell their children that if a tutor is needed, they will find a way to pay for it. For them, the formula for success is simple - they must provide money for the child’s educational needs and the child must do their school assignments – this should result in a sure path to higher education and a professional career.

Despite the parents’ willingness to help in any way they can, second generation students do not like to share their school problems with their parents. Gabrielle explained that she was afraid to talk to her parents about her problems in school, even though they always offered help.

*They always had a thing like “Don’t be afraid to ask me because I could find a counselor, and I could find a tutor for you” and stuff like that. But I just was always afraid. I was just afraid... of failure. I started being afraid of failure my sophomore year. I thought my parents was going to see me like I was dumb. (Gabrielle, student)*

Yet she was not afraid to bring home bad grades. Gabrielle would make excuses and try to deceive her parents rather than tell them that she was really having a hard time in school. When she eventually did have to admit how poorly she

was doing in school, she was surprised at how helpful her mother turned out to be. Although she was embarrassed about it, bringing her mother to school for a conference with her teachers really helped Gabrielle to bring her grades up.

Violet also had very poor grades in high school. Her parents also expressed a willingness to help, but like Gabrielle, she did not want them to know about the problems she was having in school.

*Oh, there's a lot of times I didn't feel like getting help. Because you feel like, I don't know, you feel like, inadequate. You're like, well if they can do it, why can't I do it... I didn't want to, I don't know, I didn't want to like burden them. Like in math, like I told them, and they got me a tutor. But like since I'm older now, I didn't want to keep going to them for every little thing. So I try to do it on my own. I last do it when I started turning like 15 or 16. I don't want them to baby me anymore. (Gabrielle, student)*

As the students got older many no longer felt that they should rely on their parents to help them with their problems. Although their parents did not share this view, they believed that as teenagers they needed to take responsibility for themselves.

## **Homework**

All parents reported that they had household rules for homework, which were confirmed by the students. All but two households included a parent who felt they could help their child with elementary school assignments.<sup>7</sup> As the students got older, many parents reached out to other family members, friends, or teachers to help their children with their lessons. When the children were young, parents supervised homework more closely than they did as they got older. In most households, fathers worked more than one job and mothers worked full time.

Although they tried to make supervising their child's education a priority, they often had work schedules that made it difficult.

*Well, no TV and no computer until homeworks are done. No play, no nothing. But, again, I work, you know, sometimes 'til late during the day, come home 8, 9 o'clock. And it's hard to keep track, only when I ask, I say "Is your homework done?" and they always say "Yes," the answer is always "Yes." So, I always make it clear that homework is, don't negotiate, it's a must. (Daphnee, parent)*

As the students got older, they were harder to supervise.

*When they were smaller, in middle school, elementary school, it was easier to keep track of their homework. You know it's done because they give them assignments. But going to high school it's like more difficult to keep track of what they're doing, if they do their homework or not, except when the school sends the report cards, that you realize that no, in fact, when they tell you that they do their homework they didn't do it. So then you get upset, you know? And then the school came with this system of putting the grades on-line. That way you could go and check to see if homeworks are done. So yeah, it was a must. Doing homework was a must. (Evens, parent)*

As Evens realized, the students do not always tell the truth about their homework. The schools have implemented online systems to help parents track their child's schoolwork, but although many of these households had a computer, they were often not hooked up to the internet and many parents did not know how to use them.

Sherley's responses to these questions about homework were typical of most of the student participants.

Q: Did anybody at home ask you regularly if you had homework to do?

A: *Yeah, my mom. Like everyday, if she saw me not doing anything, like "Oh, did you do your homework?" Yeah.*

Q: Did anyone look at your homework or check your homework?

A: *Not, um not anymore. Like when I was younger they checked it, to see if I did it right. But now they know you can write and whatever, so now they don't check it. They took my word for it because I wouldn't want to lie.*

Q: So did you always do your homework that was assigned?

A: *Hmm? Not completely (laughs).* (Sherley, student)

Except for the high-achieving students who will be discussed later, all the students admitted that they often fail to complete their homework assignments. When they were young, their parents usually looked over their papers whether or not they understood the work themselves. By the time the students reached high school, parents relied on their children to tell the truth about their homework assignments. However, many students realized that they could get away with skipping some of their assignments. Sometimes siblings would collude in misleading their parents to avoid doing their work. Gabrielle told me, “My brother would start helping me with excuses, like oh, we’ll just say that we don’t have any homework because we have a homework pass.”

This lack of diligence was not due to an adversarial attitude toward education, however. They reported that the work was often “boring” and that they were just “lazy.” As I spent more time with many of the students it became evident that poor basic skills in reading and math contributed to their lack of interest in their work. For poor readers, homework assignments are onerous tasks. At times, they do not clearly understand the expectations of the teachers. They do not want to admit, even

to themselves, that they don't understand the work, so it becomes "boring" and they avoid doing it.

## **Grades**

All students and parents reported that expectations had been set for acceptable grades. Most parents expect "A"s and "B"s, and reward their children for achieving high grades with money, gifts, or a special meal. Nearly every student happily recounted a time when they had been rewarded for a good report card. The parents also enjoyed these times of positive reinforcement and hoped that they would motivate their children to strive for high grades. Although "C"s are disappointing, they usually do not result in any negative consequences. Parents note with resignation that a "C" is passing. Grades below a "C" may generate restrictions on TV, video games, or other enjoyable activities. However, the restrictions tend to be short-lived and all activities return to normal after a couple of weeks in most cases.

Q: Do you give certain expectations for the grades she is to get?

A: *Um-hm, um-hm, I do. I tell her "D"s are not allowed, um, "C" but I don't like it. I'd rather have "A"s and "B"s. Last year she, one time, was on honor roll but this year I feel like she went down a little bit. Even though she's passing, but ...*

Q: If she is not getting the grades that you expect, how do you react to that?

A: *(Laughs.) I let her know, that I don't like that. I don't hit her for that, which is what I was subject to when I was growing up. If you have an "F" on your report card, I mean you get a whooping. I don't do that here. Not only because it's not allowed in this country, but I don't think that will encourage her. I will talk to her, and say "Annette, you know that's not acceptable. You have to do much better than that." And then she says "I know mom. I know. I'll try better. I'll try to do better next time." But um, I don't scream at her, I don't yell at her. Just let her know with a firm voice*

*that this is not acceptable, and you know that you have to change that grade. And she says "OK." Next time she comes and reports to me "I'm doing better here, I'm doing better there."(Daphnee, parent)*

Evens is disappointed by the way his teenagers react to getting poor grades. As a child in Haiti it was so clear to him that he must do well in school to succeed in life. He is baffled by his own children's lack of shame for their academic failures.

*Sometimes you see "F"s, and you, you lecture them. You lecture them. You tell them what is at stake. OK? It is their future.*

Q: What if they bring home really good grades?

*A: We take them out to eat, to a restaurant. We, I give money, you know. I believe in, what you call, incentive. And I know money is a good motivator. Yeah, and I give them money, I give them money.*

Q: What if they do badly in school?

*A: Well, sometimes you take away some things that they like, you know. Like my son's games, you know. But it's not for long. Or he doesn't go to a field trip. Um, but again, it's, you don't, my problem is that you don't see the remorse. You don't. To me. I said to them "You must have that sense of shame." I told them, I said "Look, in my country they always said people with no shame are the worst kind." And I say "You must feel ashamed when you get an "F"!" You know? I say "You must feel embarrassed." It's something that must ... I can not conceive the fact that you get an "F" and you're happy, you play, ... You know? It should be a sad moment for you. You know? But, you know, kids here, I'm telling you, to, education for kids here in America, I'm not talking about every kid but, to a lot of them, it doesn't seem it's as important to them as it was for me. OK? Because I knew education was my only way out, of poverty, of that ... But here, look, the kids, they think they can work, they see those basketball stars making billions, or millions, hundreds of millions, and with no education. And they can go and work at 14, 15 and make, start making money. And education, to kids in America, they don't see it as crucial, as third world country kids do. (Evens, parent)*

Another parent reported a similar frustration with his children's reactions to low grades. His oldest child was already in third grade when she and her mother joined him in the U.S. His sister had explained the grading system to him, so he understood that "'A's and 'B's were good and 'E' was failing." However, he said when he got the report card he didn't pay too much attention to it. He just signed it. He says "I accept what she brings me, but I can't do nothing." He feels resigned to accepting the grades his kids offer. I asked if the kids ever tried to keep bad grades from him. "Many times," his wife replied. If the report card had "C's or "D's the children took it to their mother, who did not understand as much English as their father. Mom gave money for good grades and didn't give money if the grades were bad. Sometimes bad grades meant no TV or video games, but these restrictions were not well enforced. When the kids were younger, the parents could unplug the TV and tell them it wasn't working. But eventually they learned to plug it in themselves so they could watch TV when their parents were sleeping. The parents felt helpless to do anything other than to tell the child what they should do. They had been told not to hit kids or even "talk bad" to them, so they would tell them what to do and just hope they would do it.

Tiffany explained how her attitude about grades differed from her parents. "B's and "C's were passing grades, so they were good enough for her.

*I mostly got like "B's and "C's, but they don't like "C's. I don't know why but we got into a little argument about the "C's. And I told them "Cs are average. They're between things." Uh-uh, no. They want to see "A's and "B's. They didn't do much, just like complain about the "C's. They want to see better, they want to see better. They know I could do it. They want to see better. I was good with average grades because I was still passing. "C" is the passing*



*grade, so I didn't have to worry about much. Now if I bring home some "D"s and "F"s I wouldn't be happy. But "C" is average, you know, passing.*

*Yeah, they're "B"s and "C"s. Lovely, passing grades, so when they complained, "OK I'll bring them up." I still bring back "B"s and "C"s., 'cause they were passing grades. But I know I could have made that "A". You know you could have that "A" but you don't do it. You stick with the "B"s and "C"s, but I don't know why. (Grace, student)*

Bennie also says he feels sure that he can achieve an "A" when he wants to. He suggests that sometimes it's better not to try as hard as he can to get an "A". He worries that it will be too devastating to try your best and still fail to achieve the highest grade.

*Like when I really work hard to show off or something, I expect to get an "A". But most likely I'm a "B" average. [If I] get below a "B" I got to work harder. I'm like "I'm slacking. Slacking off." Sometimes I think a "C", "C-", "C+", is not really bad because it's still over a 2.0 average. So I said I need to get a "B" and then I'm straight, I'm OK. Just sometimes I figure out, if I get a "A", if I keep getting a "A", one day when I get like below a "A" I won't know how to react. "Oh man, how did I get this?" Then I'm going to push myself too hard to do something. And I want to be used to it, but at the same time still get an "A". (Bennie, student)*

Nearly half of the students mentioned that they don't want to try their best at school and risk failure. Robert explained, "It's better for your parents to think that you are lazy. I don't want them to think I'm dumb." Gabrielle had a similar concern. Her fear of appearing dumb kept her from admitting her academic problems to her parents. Gabriele avoided acknowledging and dealing with her problems at school. After her parents intervened with her teachers, she began to earn passing grades.

*They always had a thing like "Don't be afraid to ask me because I could find a counselor, and I could find a tutor for you" and stuff like that. But I just was always afraid. I was just afraid... of failure. I*

*started being afraid of failure my sophomore year. I thought my parents was going to see me like I was dumb. And I don't even know why. I just thought like "Gabrielle, if the teacher's teaching you that, why can't you understand it?" But then again, I never really asked. I was afraid to ask. And then one day my sister was like "There isn't any dumb question, unless the questions you're afraid to ask." And then after I started doing that, my parents started helping me, like "If you ever need help on that, I could find you a tutor, or ask the school for a tutor and if they ask for a parent signature or anything, I'll come." And then they started coming to the school, and just them being more supportive helped me, um, overcome that failure, afraid of failure. (Gabrielle, student)*

Students with weak basic skills in reading and math don't lose the desire to succeed at school. However, they do develop a fear that their difficulties with school assignments indicate a lack of intelligence. They learn to avoid this emotional crisis by acting as if they don't care about completing their homework or getting the good grades their parents expect. As I tutored some of the students and their reading and math skills began to improve, they displayed obvious pride in their accomplishments and they became much more interested in their lessons. Gabrielle received extra help and guidance at school after she finally admitted to herself and to her parents that she was failing. As her skills improved, she transformed from a student who didn't care about completing her assignments to a very competitive student who would challenge her friends to see who could achieve the higher grades.

*Grades became a competition. It became a game. You don't look at "Oh my god, I'm failing." You look at "Oh my god, I'm succeeding. Wow." (Gabrielle, student)*

## **Haitian Parents Send their American-born Children to School**

Having had opportunities for some education in the U.S. themselves, many immigrant parents felt they had little trouble understanding the American school system. Even the parents who had not been to classes in the U.S. felt that it had not been difficult to deal with American schools. Other family members had explained things to them and the school personnel had been helpful. One father explained, “Nothing changed but the English. You got people who try to help, the school bus. It’s not bad.” They understood the grading systems and they made a point of meeting their children’s teachers, at least in the elementary grades. Many parents had volunteered in the schools specifically to insure that the teacher would provide extra help for their child if necessary. Gina told me about ways she would maintain a relationship with the teacher.

*You have to ask them their birthday, and make sure you send a little card, a little something for them. I used to be volunteering, give two hours a week for volunteering, when they was in elementary. And I, I make sure that I have contact with the teacher EVERY WEEK. One day a week I make sure I give to see how the kids progress and everything, because I know that I cannot help them.*

*They welcome me. I introduce myself and they always, you know, “You want to help?” Me, I think anything they can do for me, and anything I can do for them, too. Because we have to work together, as a parent with a teacher to make sure that .... But sometimes, if you have a child that’s slow in math, I know one of them slow in math, I said “I cannot help them. Will you please help them for me? Because I cannot.” And they always open to do that. (Gina, parent)*

Marie also made sure to have regular contact with her children’s teachers. She encouraged them to call her anytime on her cell phone. She also tried to make sure they would know her at the school.

*I did some meetings, whatever meetings they have in the school. And I do some volunteer work in the school if I'm off or if I'm not busy at work. If something's going on I spend the time in the school. I do some, if they're going away, I do um, how you call that, go away with them. Chaperone, yeah, I do that a couple times for my girls when they went away. (Marie, parent)*

Haitian parents expected communication from the teachers whenever their children might misbehave or perform poorly in school. Parents told me that in Haiti any problem in school, no matter how small, would be reported to the parent or guardian. They said that any infraction, whether it had been a behavior problem or a lesson that wasn't done properly, would be disciplined, both by the teacher and then again at home, and there were few opportunities to get away with bad behavior.

*It's what you call education "loco parentis". We just like the father and mothers as teachers in Haiti. So the parents always have that close relation with teachers. Even the principal, the headmasters. They always want to know what's going on in the house. They really have an idea. It's a family there. Now, this was the time when I was in school in Haiti. You see what I'm talking about. Still at this moment when I'm talking with you, if you go back to Haiti, the parents are really involved in their child's education. They know exactly what to do in certain circumstances. If the teacher has an issue, immediately the parent, whatever he or she is doing, he'll be there. It's a priority, because they invest the time and energy with the kids. They will sell anything they have to pay for their child's education. (Daniel, parent)*

However, the American-born students reported that teachers often didn't contact their parents unless the problems had become severe. One parent told me about her son getting into trouble for fighting at school. He had apparently been in trouble for some time, and she was called to the office and told that her son would have to be sent to another school. She was very surprised to learn later that her daughter had

also been fighting in school, but she had never been notified about it. Another parent learned that her daughter had been misbehaving at school only because she was assigned a Saturday detention. Although they assigned this detention, the school told the parent that they didn't think the problem was serious enough to warrant calling her at home.

*At one point she had a Saturday detention and she was telling me that she didn't do anything. So I feel well, let's get to the bottom of things. So I went to the office to find out what's going on. They told me there wasn't really a problem to be addressed, that's why they didn't call me. If you tell me that it's been going on since the beginning of the year, and if it's significant enough to give her a Saturday detention, to me it's big enough for me to know about, my daughter's behavior. And if my daughter is disrespectful to an adult, I need to know about it. But they told me it wasn't that bad, that's why they didn't call me. But what I don't like about the school, in two instances I went to the office because I suspected something was going wrong. That's when they were telling me, "Well this has been going on for a long time." I said, "What happened you didn't notify me as a parent? I don't like your way of doing things. Because you should try me first. If I don't come and address the situation then you will think it's somebody who doesn't care about her child's education. But you didn't even call me." So, that's one thing I have against that school. That their communication is lacking. (Daphnee, parent)*

Her daughter explained that teachers were sometimes surprised that her mother wanted to speak with them about her school performance. Several students commented that teachers told them that they were doing a good job when they were earning "C"s. However, the students knew that their parents considered a "C" to be a mediocre grade, one that had to be improved.

Q: When would your mom decide to go to the school and talk to the teachers?

*A: When she saw that something was going on. And when I would talk to her. They wouldn't really call our house and say something was wrong. She would have to go to the school first. She tries to help me and sometimes they tell her that I'm a good student, and that I'm doing well. And that they don't understand why she would have meetings with them.*

**Q:** So the teachers who say you're doing well are the teachers who give you "A"s and "B"s?

*A: Umm, No. I have, they're like in the middle grades.*

**Q:** So a teacher who is giving you a "C" might tell your mom you're doing fine?

*A: Yeah.*

**Q:** How does your mom think you're doing when you get a "C"?

*A: She tells me to do better but she's OK with it, but she tells me next time to try and get a better grade than that. She knew that I could do it better, go higher for a "A". (Annette, student)*

*Sometimes the teachers are not asking too much and the expectation is not high enough in the school. And because of that they can go there and play, and go around and show off their outfits, and come back home, if they're not making the grades they're still sitting in the classroom. And I feel like the expectation of the schools here, in that neighborhood where we're at, are not high enough. And the teachers are not going to fight anyone. They will settle for anything. If you pass, you pass; if you do not pass, you do not pass. And I'm not there to criticize teachers, but many of them are there just for the money. They do not care about the children. And I would say because a lot of them are in the teaching business just to make money. Not really to help anyone. And these kids, when they got the freedom they know that the teacher do not care, so they do not make any effort to make any better grade or do any better. The boys usually are the worst because they can go there and they go to check, you know, looking for girls, and things like that they do with their friends. They skip school sometimes. Not until they've been doing it for so long, you will not hear about it. So there's a lot of factors for the boys. It seems like they can get away with many things that the girls would not be able to.(Michael, parent)*

Their children, however, did report ways they took advantage of the limits of their parents' understanding, as well as their faith in the schools and the teachers. The most common practice in this regard was for students to hide their report cards, as well as any notes sent home by their teachers.

Some Haitian parents are not able to help their children with their educations, and some are too proud to admit this and ask for help.

*Well when you say can read and write, you may find someone from Haiti among that generation that you're talking about who can read but not enough knowledge to help the children in school. And that's really a major problem we have in our community. Because if the kids right now is in high school, parents, most of them, cannot help them with any math work, with any reading, any work, because it's probably the level is too high. So because of that, in kindergarten and elementary school the parents may be able to help. But as soon as they go to middle school and high school probably the level for most of them a little too high. And even though they have big dreams for their kids, but sometimes they leave their kids alone, trying to make it on his own, because they're not able to help. We are living in a culture of pride. People sometimes will not come to you and ask for help. Not until they just feel like they cannot do it anymore, they cannot accept it anymore. But they would probably starve, intellectually, before they come to you for some help, because they have a lot of pride. If they cannot do it themselves, you know, they let it go and take chance will be on their side. (Michael, parent)*

These findings demonstrate that Haitian parents of American-born children have an adequate understanding of the American school system. They have found the schools to be responsive to their concerns. However, they expressed a disconnect between their expectations for their children and the school's assessment of problems that require a parent's intervention. Haitian parents felt that they should be contacted about any misbehavior of their child, in particular, any disrespect shown

to a teacher or any other adult. Haitian culture emphasizes respect toward anyone older and this is strictly enforced in every Haitian household I have visited. From the experiences of these families it seems that the American school system treats older students as responsible for their own behavior. The consequences for poor performance or misbehavior in school often do not include a role for the parents until the problem has become quite severe. This is at odds with the roles that Haitian parents see for themselves and expect from the schools.

Haitian immigrant parents maintain more traditional cultural values in which children are cared for by their parents well beyond their teenage years. Their children, on the other hand, generally accept the American notion that one becomes an adult at eighteen. They have absorbed American values of individualism and personal autonomy and feel that, as teenagers, they should not rely on their parents too much. This is reflected in the ways that they are choosing to set goals and accept outcomes for themselves that do not meet their parent' expectations. They may not like to disappoint their parents, but most feel free to make the choices about the amount of effort they put into school for themselves. They do not unquestioningly accept their parents' standards for homework and grades; rather they pursue their individual interests. These students are aware that their accomplishments reflect on their parents and that their academic achievements provide the family with valuable social currency. Yet, most do not feel especially constrained by their parents' preferences.

Additionally, while my observations concur with Portes and Rumbaut's findings that Haitian students tend to do poorly in school, they do not support their



contention that this is due to the development of an adversarial attitude toward education. Haitian American students consistently assert that education is important to them. However, they often do not consider achieving high grades to be as important. Achieving high grades will please their parents and bring accolades, but an effort to excel also increases the odds of failure. Many students have decided that they prefer not to take the emotional risk of failure, so they only try hard enough to pass. Ultimately for both students and their parents, it is achieving the degree that matters. Haitian students expect to go on to college, but no student expressed any concern that a weak high school record might prevent them from continuing their education, and it is simply expected that high school graduation leads to college opportunities.

Although many of the college-age members of the Haitian church were enrolled in community colleges, Haitian parents do not consider this to be an acceptable goal for their children. One parent made this very clear to me. “If my son goes to community college I will not like it. For me, he needs to go to FAU.” Another parent was pleased at her daughter's graduation from an LPN program, but she emphasized that this was acceptable only as an initial achievement. “I am proud, but there is no party until she graduates from RN.” This mother made it clear that she expected her daughter to enroll at the university to begin to study for an RN degree in the fall. Haitian mothers traditionally elevate their status by the achievements of their children. These mothers indicate that a university degree is the minimum level of achievement that will satisfy them.

*It's a cultural thing because it's a bragging chip that the parents will go around and talk about their kids, and say what they are, what they're doing in life. And some kids really understand that. And they would not like to fail their parents.*

*Sometimes the dream that the parents have is not what the kid really dreams for himself or herself. Sometimes the pressure is too much. Some of them even run away because their parent is pushing them into something they do not want to learn. Sometimes the parents might want a lawyer, but that kid wants to be a carpenter, wants to be a plumber. There's something that's easy and they can make money in. But the parents, for us that's what's cultural, there are certain professions that are so low, we do not shoot for that. We do not go for it. We go for the highest. And the kids sometimes, knowing the level of their education, their abilities, feel like you're putting me in a spot where I cannot fit. And because of that many of them rebels. Many of them even leave their parents house because the goal that is set for them is too high. They know they cannot attain it. But as parents, Haitian parents, we do not settle for less than the highest.*

*To a Haitian parent when a kid is going to a vocational school, which means you fail, because that's the lowest you can go after you went through high school. Every parent would like their kid to go to university. It's a bragging chip to say my kid is in FIU, FAU. And it's the pride of the family. And going any lower than that, the parents is not going to settle, even the one that cannot read and cannot write, but having their kids in university, that's something they can even go to Haiti and brag about. "My kid is in the university becoming a doctor, an engineer, an architect," whatever he's going to be. But that's really a bragging chip. And parents will be proud. But also, one thing you have to understand, the concept in Haiti, whenever you have children you have children to help you when you're getting old. The better profession that the kids can learn, you have a better future. In Haiti we call our children "social security." So we do not rely on the government in Haiti. That's why they have so many kids. And if all of them are doing good, you got a good retirement. And even here you will see the same mentality. If the kids is making good money, you as a parent, your retirement is secure. Then that's really what they invest all their lives in children. From Haiti to here, in order to make them something, when they get old they can get something back from the children. We never rely on government because in Haiti we did not have any help from the government. Coming here, they do not rely on social security. They rely on their children. And the children is their social security. The better you do*

*in life, the better it is for them. And they will push you to do better.*  
(Michael, parent)

There is a disconnect between the ambitions Haitian parents have for their children and what the students want for themselves. While their parents hope that they will become doctors or lawyers, many students have more modest expectations. They don't believe that it is worth the enormous effort required to achieve these lucrative occupations.

Most of the high school students I interviewed were still uncertain about their own career goals, but a clear gendered pattern is emerging among the college-age students in this church community. Rejecting the parental suggestion of doctor or lawyer, many of the female students are pursuing nursing or other health-related occupations. There are female role models for them in the church. Women who were raised and educated in Haiti have found good jobs in health care and are very supportive of the young women entering this field. It is a clear path to a respected career with ample job opportunities and decent salaries. Unfortunately, there seems to be no such clear-cut path for young men that presents the kind of positive option that nursing offers to young Haitian American women. Male students seem much more unsure about the career path they might follow.

These differences in notions of personal autonomy do reflect a degree of cultural dissonance between Haitian immigrant parents and their children. However, this has not resulted in the students rejecting their parents' values for academic achievement. They share their view that a good education is important for their futures. Where there are differences in their expectations, they reflect the ideas of individual

independence of young people in combination with the low expectations they encounter in school. These have not created adversarial attitudes among the students, but they have resulted in the students making choices that nevertheless have had a negative impact on their academic outcomes. They maintain the aspirations for college instilled in them by their parents. But seeing themselves as individuals, they often choose not to work up to the level expected by their parents. They have accepted the idea that passing is good enough. Striving for excellence, for many students, was only seen to increase the odds of failure. Sadly, many students seemed not to understand that settling for mediocre grades would erode their opportunities for college.

### **Haitian Students and the FCAT**

Another obstacle to academic achievement became obvious as I began to tutor students for the FCAT. Many students lacked the educational foundations necessary to succeed in higher levels of education. I found many high school students who could not do basic math functions without a calculator. They had never memorized the fundamental math facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and could be found counting on their fingers to solve problems. However, this did not represent an inability to learn. Some of these same students understood the basic principles of algebra. They could successfully solve high school math problems as long as they had a calculator, but they lacked an intuitive sense about numbers due to their weak foundational knowledge. Consequently, they were unable to catch calculation errors when they entered numbers incorrectly into their calculators.

The students were also hampered by limited vocabularies and their lack of exposure to a variety of experiences. This affected both their reading comprehension and their ability to solve word problems in math. Two stories from the standard test prep workbook I used with the students provide good examples of these obstacles. One reading selection provides factual information about moths. The students are expected to draw upon the context of the reading to discover the meanings of several difficult vocabulary words. None of the students were able to do this even though they had been successful at a previous exercise for this skill. I found that none of the students recognized the word “moth.” After I described it, they were all familiar with the winged creature, but they did not know its name. The absence of this word in their vocabularies had made the reading selection incomprehensible to every student.

Another reading began with a list of famous athletes. The paragraph ended with the mention of an athlete who is not well-known, asserting that she, in fact, was a greater athlete than the rest. The students were asked to explain why the author had first listed the other athletes. To someone familiar with these sports stars, it would be easy to see that the author intended to pique the reader's curiosity to find out why this unknown athlete might be considered superior to the celebrities. But again, my Haitian students were dumbfounded. They have little familiarity with these names. Two students recognized Michael Jordan, and one had heard of Tiger Woods, but the name “Michelle Kwan” meant nothing to them. None of them had ever watched the Olympics.

Another story used from the FCAT 2005 sample test materials supplied by the Florida Department of Education begins like this:

One Sunday afternoon Mother wandered through our kitchen, where Father was making a sandwich and listening to the ball game. The Pirates were playing the New York Giants at Forbes Field. In those days, the Giants had a utility infielder named Wayne Terwilliger. Just as Mother passed through, the radio announcer cried - with undue drama - "Terwilliger bunts one!" [FCAT 2005 Sample Test Materials<sup>8</sup>]

This story was bewildering to students with little familiarity with baseball. In fact, the story does not mention "baseball" at all in this paragraph. The student is expected to understand that the "ball game" being played is baseball by references to particular teams and to Forbes Field. The baseball terminology used, "utility infielder" and "bunts," mean nothing to students who are unfamiliar with the game. In this story, the narrator remembers how her mother amused herself with unusual words. But for students who do not share this cultural background, a great number of the words used are unusual. Consequently, they fail to grasp the point of this story. Clearly, the people who prepared the test materials understood that students had to grasp the language in this story in order to make sense of it. Notably, later in the story they provide a definition for the phrase "lay in the stores," an expression meaning "go shopping" that is not commonly used today. Unfortunately, most of the story is as out of touch with the experience of second-generation Haitian students as that phrase would be to families who grew up in contemporary urban American households.

The limitations of vocabulary and experience affect the children of Haitian immigrants to a much greater degree than one might immediately recognize. Their English betrays no “foreign” accent, and in ordinary conversation no problem with vocabulary is evident. However, as I spent time with these students I realized that they are often filling in the blanks, using what they do know to interpret the words they don't understand. As the students came to know me better, they sometimes asked me to help them handle problems with a phone call or to visit a college admissions office with them. It became clear that they were often bewildered by things they were told. Although their entire lives have been lived in the U.S. and they are native English speakers, they are surrounded by adults who primarily converse in Haitian Creole. The students speak English to their siblings and friends and watch American television programs, but their teachers at school may have been the only fluent English-speaking adults they have had extended contact with. In addition to this, very few of the students had visited a museum or any historic site. Their lives have been lived primarily among their Haitian immigrant families, in their own homes or in the homes of relatives. Haitian parents rarely take their children on outings other than to the store or perhaps to work with them.

*Well a lot of young people here are not exposed to educational programs. Not too many of them will go to a museum, because if the school does not take them no parents will take them. They do not have time. They're just working, working, trying to feed the kids, and clothe them, but not enough time to take them out. And also culturally, some of them never get involved in outings. Going places as part of education, it's a waste of time for many of them. It's a waste of time. You could be helping me cleaning the house, cutting the grass, or doing something like this, and to take you there is a waste of time. Because themselves, exposing to something like this, they may come and not even see what's there for them. And if there is*

*nothing there for them, there is nothing there for you. And it's a problem. The kids are not exposed to enough educational programs. At home, and sometimes even at school. And that's the problem we have. The brain is not really cultivated to produce a good result.*  
(Michael, parent)

The children of Haitian immigrants often have very limited experiences with the world outside of their own neighborhoods. As a consequence, they struggle with the vocabulary of a world they rarely encounter. This poses an unfair obstacle in standardized tests, such as the FCAT. But even more worrisome is the level of true academic deficiency exhibited by many Haitian students. Too many students lacked basic skills that should have been acquired by third or fourth grade. The next section will discuss some of the problems encountered by these students in their schools.

### **Schools that Reproduce Inequality**

The focus of this study was the communication between Haitian immigrant parents and their American-born children. However, in answer to general questions about school the students regularly brought up serious problems in their schools. Several themes emerged in regard to the learning environments provided by the schools that the participants of this study attended. In addition to my own observations of poor preparation in basic reading and math skills, areas of concern include school violence and low teacher expectations.

Fighting amongst students was often the first thing mentioned when students were asked about their schools. This is clearly seen as a highly negative aspect of the school setting. Although girls were often able to avoid becoming involved in fighting themselves, boys often felt that they had to fight to prove themselves.



Otherwise, one young man explained, “they will continue to come after you every day.”

A female student, Miguette, feels uncomfortable with the level of violence in her school. She reminds me that there had been a stabbing that was widely reported in the news. She reports that there was constant fighting in her school and she doesn’t feel that the teachers and administrators are making much effort to stop it. “Some of the teachers, they say, ‘No, just let the fight happen.’ And at the end when they’re done fighting they’ll call the principal and the whoever to come get them. And sometimes they just let them fight. So in my opinion, they don’t really care that much.”

The expectations of school personnel shape students’ aspirations. Students continue to be subject to stereotypes that depict Haitians as intellectually inferior. Consequently, they are not always pushed to achieve their academic potential. This complaint was made by several parents who recounted similar situations in which they were counseled not to be concerned about a “C” on their child’s report card. Because this grade represented a decline in the students’ performance, the parents contacted the teachers to find out what needed to be done to improve it. But the teachers did not recognize that these students were not working up to their potential. They reminded the parents that “C” was a passing grade that indicated satisfactory performance. One parent complained

*Sometimes the teachers are not asking too much and the expectation is not high enough in the school. And because of that [the students] can go there and play, and go around and show off their outfits, and come back home, if they’re not making the grades they’re still sitting in the classroom. And I feel like the expectation of the schools here,*

*in that neighborhood where we're at, are not high enough. And the teachers are not going to fight anyone. They will settle for anything. If you pass, you pass; if you do not pass, you do not pass.*

The environments of the schools that serve concentrated Haitian neighborhoods do not enhance academic achievement, rather they communicate low expectations for behavior and learning. They reproduce and institutionalize environments of violence, disorder, and low standards. Students are not being encouraged to aim higher, nor are they instructed in the learning skills and habits necessary to achieve academic excellence. Many students do not realize that simply “passing” their high school courses will not be sufficient to allow them to pursue the kinds of careers they envision. They are not aware that their teachers and counselors may not view them as “college material,” and see no reason to prepare them for this level of education.

Edouard struggled with difficulties in reading and never felt comfortable in the classroom. Having a twin sister who did well in school made things even worse. He could not understand why learning was so much harder for him. He was aware of being labeled as a student who not capable of high academic achievement. By high school he had been tracked into low-level courses where very little education was going on.

*I was always in those classes where the teacher was shouting “Quiet down! Quiet down!” and nobody was really learning anything. These were my classes. The bad kids would sit in the back with a bottle of alcohol. The teachers didn't care. I'm sure they knew. Most of the time I was in these classes that were really disruptive. I was the kid who just stayed out of the way. I was too scared of my dad to get in trouble.*

His parents' high expectations and strict discipline kept Edouard from falling in with the students who seemed not to care about school at all. He admits that he was not very motivated, but he knew that he had to earn acceptable grades and keep out of trouble. But despite the passing grades, he was learning very little. His acquiescent behavior in the classroom was enough to insure that his teachers would pass him.

*You're in a school system where they push you through. You know you didn't learn anything but the teacher thinks, 'Well Edouard, he's just a nice little boy. I'm going to push him right through the system.' And they pushed me through the system and I never learned how to read. They pushed me through and I never learned my arithmetic. Thanks, but no thanks.*

His educational deficiencies nearly derailed his graduation from high school. As the end of his senior year approached, he waited fearfully for the results of the reading test he had re-taken. Another failure would mean that he would not be getting his diploma. He was in a rehearsal for the graduation ceremony when he finally get the word that he had passed. He nearly wept with relief; he had never admitted to his parents that his graduation was in jeopardy. Edouard had never been able to earn the grades that would please his parents. He felt resentful of their criticism and he felt that he wanted to rebel and stop trying to please them. But the goal of educational achievement had been thoroughly instilled in him.

Life rarely unfolds as expected for any young person, but it is even harder to achieve one's goals when the way forward is unknown. Haitian parents, and often the students themselves, expect that a college education naturally follows high school. But they often are unaware of the necessary planning and preparation. They

expect the schools to prepare their children for college, but often the children of immigrants are not seen as “college material” by their teachers and counselors. Many Haitian-American students attend schools with low graduation rates and test scores (see Nicholas and Severe 2008). These are not environments that lead students smoothly into college. However, the deeply instilled belief that they are expected to earn a college degree keeps many students trying to reach this goal.

Still, a small cohort of second-generation Haitian students was doing quite well in school. The next section will discuss some common characteristics of these students and the role of familism in their superior motivation to achieve excellent grades.

## **High Achieving Students**

### **Unexpected Findings**

The children of Haitian immigrants share the high aspirations of their parents for their educations. But unlike other ethnic groups that place a high value on education, on average, second generation Haitian students fare poorly in school. Sociological theories suggest that various forms of “capital” possessed by parents affect the prospects for a child’s educational success. These theories predict that children of parents with low socio-economic status, limited education, poor English proficiency, and sparse social networks are likely to suffer academically. However, among the second generation Haitian students interviewed for this project, educational outcomes were highest for the students who had the lowest levels of these forms of capital. The students who maintained very high grades in high school had parents with low-wage jobs, meager English proficiency, and a high school education or less. This section will discuss the theoretical expectations of the impact of three forms of parental capital and the conflicting results of my research. I will also present a preliminary alternate hypothesis that is consistent with the findings of my research.

## **Theories of Educational Outcomes**

Educational outcomes are influenced by many factors. Some are unique to immigrants, but most apply generally to all students. Theories of parental capital predict better educational outcomes for students living in intact nuclear families with parents who have higher levels of English proficiency, higher levels of education, and higher socio-economic status (Coleman 1988; Portes and MacLeod 1996; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Zhou 1997). Coleman (1988) discussed the effects of different types of “capital” on a child’s educational outcome. These included *financial capital*, *human capital*, and *social capital*. *Financial capital* is indicated by wealth or socio-economic status (SES). Greater levels of financial capital are associated with higher educational achievement among both immigrant and non-immigrant families (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Schmid 2001; Teachman et.al. 1997). Higher SES is usually associated with the opportunity to attend better schools, experience educational enrichment programs and activities, and to have greater access to equipment and supplies that enhance a child’s education.

Another form of capital is *human capital*. This consists of education and skills that can generate financial capital and can build human capital in one’s children (Coleman 1988). Some measures of human capital include level of education, language proficiency, and occupation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Schmid 2001; Zhou 1997). Parents with a higher level of education or ability to speak English are usually able to attain jobs that pay more. They are also more likely to be able to help their child with homework and to provide guidance in regard to education. High

levels of human capital, like financial capital, are associated with positive academic outcomes.

A third type of capital, *social capital*, is generated through relationships with other people. Relationships both between family members and within the community have been found to influence educational outcomes (Coleman 1988; Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Schmid 2001; Zhou 1997). Dense family networks and community ties are also associated with greater success in school. Measures of social capital include family composition and connection to extended family, religious, or ethnic communities. Intact nuclear families are generally associated with better educational outcomes, as are substantial connections to a community that shares the family's norms and values.

Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) have emphasized the importance of social capital both from within the family and from the larger community. They find that academic achievement is enhanced by generational consonance within the family, shared parent-child learning activities, shared expectations, and corresponding acculturation. They also find that ethnic solidarity is a positive factor, reinforcing the family role of transmitting values and providing role models.

Negative academic outcomes have also been associated with generational dissonance, a disparity between parents' and child's expectations for academic achievement, as well as their levels of acculturation into American society. Haitian parents have high expectations for their children and both parents and students consider education to be important to their future success (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns

1998, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Because of this, other possible sources of generational dissonance have been considered.

Haitian immigrants have encountered a great deal of prejudice and discrimination in the U. S. (Stepick 1998). Stepick *et al.* (2001) suggest that when faced with this harsh entry into American society, the second generation is likely to acculturate much more rapidly than their parents. The resulting cultural dissonance between the generations increases parent-child conflict and identity crisis, which could have a negative impact on educational performance.

Haitian immigrant families are often economically disadvantaged as well. Portes and Rumbaut merge the effects of parental financial and human capital into a form of social capital, *consonant acculturation*, or its negative effect, *dissonant acculturation*.

When parents have greater resources – in the form of higher education, economic status, intact families, or the support of strong co-ethnic communities – intergenerational acculturation tends to shift toward the consonant or selective modes. Parent-child conflict is reduced, and children are less prone to feel embarrassed by their parents' ways. On the other hand, parents whose educational and economic resources are modest, and especially those who are socially isolated, are more likely to experience dissonant acculturation and role reversal. [2001:54]

Consonant acculturation tends to be associated with positive academic outcomes, while dissonant acculturation is thought to lead to a rejection of parental authority and subsequently to poor educational results. As previously noted, every student in this study responded that that they expected to go to college, and every parent expected the same. In fact, many expected at least a Masters degree. All parents and students agreed that grades were important. And even though many students were



satisfied to earn a “C” or better, all knew that their parents expected As and Bs. So, the social capital derived from shared academic aspirations and expectations was in evidence for all families studied.

Most students in the project had GPAs from 2.0 to 2.7, a few were failing, and four students had GPAs of 3.5 or higher<sup>9</sup>. This section will discuss the unexpected ways that the group of high achieving students differed from the others.

### **High Academic Achievers**

High academic achievers shared a surprising set of characteristics. Although theories of social capital predict that intact two - parent families have a positive influence on academic achievement, the high academic achievers, with one exception, live in single parent households or with a remarried parent. In fact, this group includes all the participants of this study who did not live in intact two - parent households. These parents had lower levels of education; none had completed high school. The parents of high achieving students had limited English proficiency. While they were all able to conduct simple conversations in English, their reading and writing skills ranged from basic to none. None of these parents felt they could help their children with homework. The parents of high achieving students worked in low skilled labor and service jobs. Another factor that was sharply different between the high achievers and other students was connection to larger networks. While all the study participants belonged to an active church community, none of these families had extended family networks in the local area. In contrast, most of the families interviewed for this project had extensive local family networks.<sup>10</sup>

These characteristics are strikingly different from what we generally expect. Much research shows that higher SES, parental education, and occupational status tend to be associated with better academic outcomes. Social capital in the forms of intact nuclear families and extended family networks are also associated with educational success. The high achieving students were from families with some of the lowest levels of financial, human, and social capital in this group of participants. So, how can we explain this surprising result?

One more characteristic distinguished the high achievers from the other students. Once the student had responded that they felt that it was important to do well in school, I asked “*Do you try to do well in school to please your parents, or do you do it for yourself?*” The high achieving students all responded that they had to do well in school or reach their academic goal for their parents, or for a particular parent who had struggled and had been unable to achieve their own goals.

Miguette is 16 years old. She finished her sophomore year with a GPA above 4.0 due to taking advanced placement courses. She lives with her father and stepmother. Her father started high school in Haiti, but he could not afford to stay in school to complete his degree. He works in construction and struggles to make ends meet for his family of five. The family’s telephone service is sometimes disconnected because he can’t pay the bill. He speaks basic English, but can’t read the reports sent home from school. Miguette reports that she tries to do her best in school to please her dad and to achieve the goals that he had not been able to realize himself.

*It's really, especially for my dad, really, really, really important for him. I have to get an education because he didn't really finish, he didn't get his chance to go to college. ... So I have to be the person that kind of walks in his shoes. (Miguette, age 16, GPA 4.2)*

There were striking differences in the students' motivations for achieving in school. Students with average to below average grades responded that their academic achievements were for themselves and their own futures.

*You're not living your life for your parents. You're living your life for you. (Gabrielle, age 18, GPA 2.7).*

*I shouldn't, like, disappoint them, but to be happy, too, because it's my life. So, I don't think I should like go and strip on the streets or anything, but like, I have to do what makes me happy. (Violet, age 18, GPA 2.5)*

In contrast, the high performing students reported that they had to excel academically for the sake of their parents; they were motivated to achieve what their parents had been unable to do. The sense of obligation to fulfill a parent's aspirations seems to have a positive effect on academic outcomes.

More work is needed to explain these surprising results. While higher levels of financial, human, and social capital are expected to be associated with better academic outcomes, the students in this study did not fit that pattern. Among the second generation Haitian students interviewed for this project, educational outcomes were highest for the students who had the lowest levels of financial, human, and social capital. The students who maintained very high grades in high school had parents with low-wage jobs, meager English proficiency, and a high

school education or less. In contrast to the students with lower grades, most were not in intact two - parent households, but lived with a single parent or a stepparent.

Most students in this project conform to the basic findings of Portes and Rumbaut's study. They achieve poor to average grades regardless of any advantages conferred by their parents' financial, human, or social capital, and despite a consistent agreement between the students and their parents that education is extremely important. Yet, these aspirations do not translate into a high level of *motivation* for most students. It is the superior motivation of the high achieving students that sets them apart from the rest.

### **Obligation and Motivation**

Portes and Rumbaut note that "grades by the end of secondary schooling can be interpreted as an indicator of educational attainment that combines actual knowledge with motivation and adjustment to institutional routines" (2001: 247). The high grades of the high achieving students do not coincide with high scores on standardized tests (FCAT). Because of this, as well as attitudes regarding school work revealed in interviews, I consider the students' *motivation* to be central to their success.

The high achieving students, as I have illustrated, are working hard in school to fulfill the dreams of a parent. They maintain a sense of *obligation* that is not found among the other students interviewed. The roots of this sense of obligation can be found in the traditional relationships within the Haitian family.

## **Familism and Achievement**

The high achieving students work hard in school to fulfill the dreams of a parent. They maintain a sense of *obligation* that is not found among the other students interviewed. The roots of this sense of obligation can be found in the traditional relationships within the Haitian family. With the *lakou* as its organizing social unit, familism is characteristic of traditional Haitian culture. Familism describes a form of social structure, but also the behaviors and values associated with it (Cortes 1995, Rogler and Cooney 1984). In a familistic culture, one's vision of self is not primarily as an individual, but as an extension of the larger family unit. It includes feelings of loyalty as well as practices of reciprocity that bind the extended family socially and economically.

Haitian families traditionally operate in a collective fashion, pooling resources to allow one member to advance, for instance, to migrate or to attend school, with the expectation that the benefits of that advance will accrue to the family as a whole. Haitian parents expect to make great sacrifices for their children, providing for their needs until well beyond the American threshold of adulthood. But this is an investment for the parents' futures as well. For a Haitian mother, her children are her "account," her Social Security, her insurance policy that will provide for her in her old age.

*The concept in Haiti when you have children, you have children to help you when you're getting old. The better vocation that the kids can learn, you have a better future. In Haiti we call our children 'social security'. We don't rely on the government in Haiti; that's why you have so many kids. If all of them are doing good, you've got a good retirement.*  
(Michael, father)

Children are not only a source of economic security, but they are vehicles for the social advancement of the family as well. It is a parent's pride to send their children to college and the status of the family rises with their accomplishments. Although familism tends to decrease as affluence and acculturation to American society increases, Haitian immigrant parents extend the benefits of family interdependence even when they do not expect their children to maintain the traditional duties and obligations. Children who were raised to have a more individualistic orientation nevertheless derive the advantages of an extended period of care in their parents' home. Most Haitian parents expect to care for their children as long as they remain in school and if pressed for an age that children can be self-sufficient will say "maybe thirty." Children are never really expected to leave the care of their parents.

Collectivist expectations could be found among the parents in this study. When asked about their hopes for their child's future, many parents expressed hopes that their child would give back to the community.

*I want them to be successful enough for themselves to help themselves and help the community. Help back to the people who cannot. (Gina, mother).*

However, no student mentioned an obligation to their community. Most students hoped to please their parents, but they did not put this above their own desires. The high achieving students were alone in articulating an obligation to their parents as their primary motivation. To explain this sense of obligation, I will turn to theories of collectivism vs. individualism.

In a cross-cultural analysis, Triandis (1990) explains that in every society there are both individualist and collectivist tendencies. He concludes that the most important factors in determining the mix are cultural complexity and affluence. In more complex societies the individual experiences a variety of life-styles, norms, and world-views. The individual must then rely on internal factors rather than consistent norms to guide behavior. Affluence is associated with individualism, whereas collectivism provides security where resources are scarce. These factors influence social norms across a group, but they also affect segments of each society differently. Triandis reports that “individualism is higher among the affluent, socially and geographically mobile, more modern segments of every society” (1990:57).

By migrating to the United States, all of the families in this study have been exposed to greater cultural complexity. Both parents and children have had to adapt to a diverse society where they are exposed to many competing values and life-styles. The parents in this study who were more financially secure, more educated, and more comfortable with American culture seem to have released their children from many traditional Haitian family expectations. They may have expectations that their children will care for them in their old age, but they are preparing their children to live their own lives. With greater financial resources of their own, these parents have this option. They need not rely solely on their children’s support for a secure future. These financial conditions are necessary for a weakening of collectivism.

In addition, the parents who have attained some financial stability have felt the burdens of the collectivist expectations they were raised with. They have provided money, housing, and other forms of assistance for family members in need, particularly for others who migrated to the U.S. after them. Sometimes they feel torn between their obligations to the extended family and their desire to provide a comfortable life for their children and themselves. These parents described the cooperation between extended family members to provide them with their educations and to help them to establish themselves in the U.S. But free public education and other services available in the U.S. have diminished the need for this level of collectivism. The children in these families seem to have a more individualistic outlook, at least in regard to their educations.

The parents of high achieving students, in contrast, do not have the resources to feel secure about their futures. Their limited educations and difficulty with English has led them to rely on their children as go-betweens in many circumstances. Consequently, these children have been raised with a strong sense of family interdependence. Their parents have not been able to achieve their own dreams. They must rely on the success of their children to raise them up socially and economically. They lack the affluence that Triandis contends is associated with individualism. By maintaining a collectivist orientation, the high achieving students have the benefits of a form of social capital, according to Coleman's formulation, that the other children of Haitian immigrants lack.

Further support for this conclusion can be found in the work of Portes and Rumbaut (2001). They noted an "achievement paradox" among the children of



Southeast Asian immigrants. Rejecting the advantage of a “Confucian ethic” proposed by other scholars because of the religious diversity evident among Asian-Americans in their study, Portes and Rumbaut concluded that a favorable reception in the U. S. might account for their educational success. But similarities between attitudes expressed by some of their Asian-American participants and the Haitian high achieving students in my study warrant further consideration.

Southeast Asians, like the high achieving students in my study, benefit from a collectivist outlook. Quoting a participant in their study, Portes and Rumbaut portray the communal organization of a Vietnamese family. “The Vietnamese family is like a corporation. ... Your family is your social security. We know that we need each other to pull ahead.” (2001:71). This discussion of pooling family resources is quite similar to the practices of a traditional Haitian family. And the educational results, children who are motivated to achieve good grades, grades that are in fact better than would be expected given their scores on standardized tests, are similar as well.

The interesting difference seems to be in the greater persistence of collectivist norms among the Southeast Asians, while Haitians seem to be readily shifting to an individualistic mode of behavior when they have more financial and human capital resources. This may be due to higher burdens of providing for extended family among Haitians. With their home country close by and in economic and political disorder, Haitian families maintain transnational relationships that include honoring regular requests for money and other forms of assistance. The pressure of these continued obligations, along with a greater ability to provide for their own needs,

may encourage the adoption of more individualistic attitudes in Haitian immigrant families. A collectivist orientation erodes as its costs outweigh its benefits.

Theories regarding educational achievement focus on various aspects of financial, human, and social capital. However, they are generally in agreement that parents with higher socio-economic status, better jobs, and greater levels of education provide their children with educational advantages. But the circumstances of the high achieving students in this study were contrary to these expectations.

An important factor in the success of the high achieving students is their superior motivation. These students identified an obligation to achieve what their parents had been unable to do. This sense of obligation marked a clear difference between the high achieving students and the other students in this study. This sense of obligation may arise from the nature of the traditional Haitian family. Families with meager financial and human capital are less likely to develop more individualistic modes of behavior. Communalistic family norms emphasize the good of the family over self-interest. These values may provide a form of social capital that enhances a student's motivation to attain good grades. The sense of obligation to fulfill a parent's aspirations seems to have a positive effect on academic outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative study is intended to further the understanding of the role of the family in the educational attainment of second-generation Haitian students. Quantitative research has revealed that Haitian parents and their children have high educational aspirations, but the students tend to do poorly in school. While there are many factors that have an impact on educational outcomes, strained communication within the family and parents' limited understanding of American schools have been implicated in the poor academic achievement of second-generation Haitian students. Another hypothesis has been that adversarial attitudes towards school may diminish Haitian Americans students' desire to excel academically.

The themes that have emerged in this study suggest that something a bit different is happening. This research confirms the high academic aspirations and expectations of second-generation Haitian students and their parents. Education is highly valued and is seen as a critical foundation for both economic and social success. Among these families, education and chain migration have been linked in an effort to transform the fortunes of the family and to ensure a secure and prosperous future.

Every family expects the American born offspring to get a college education and to surpass their parents' level of occupational prestige. Unfortunately, access to free public schools has not ensured that all children are well educated. The No Child

Left Behind Act and the implementation of FCAT testing explicitly verify this as a national problem. Many of the second generation students whom I have come to know suffer academically as a result of inadequate basic skills in reading and math. Without these essential foundations, they find more advanced work to be hopelessly challenging. These students strive to protect themselves from the emotional crisis of being considered “dumb.” Instead, they avoid completing their work or asking questions in class. They can maintain the assertion that they could do the work if they tried, but they are just “lazy.” As long as they do just enough to pass, they have not “failed.”

The high academic achievers, on the other hand, do not feel they have the option of being lazy. They push themselves hard, because for them, anything less than an “A” is failing. They do not set their own goals, as the students who choose to accept merely passing grades do. They strive to achieve the goals of their parents. These students don't apply themselves to earning high grades for themselves; they excel for their parent who never had a chance to achieve his or her own dream.

The students in this study demonstrate that a high level of motivation is necessary for second-generation Haitian students to succeed academically. They have not been well prepared with the necessary foundations for higher levels of schooling. Many students absorb the low expectations they encounter in the schools and accept this as an escape from their fears of failing. Only those who maintained a strong familial sense of obligation have persisted through these fears.

A much more effective early education is necessary to give all students of strong start for their educations. In South Florida, where so many students have immigrant

parents, or are immigrants themselves, special attention must be given to vocabulary development. Although English is their primary language, second generation Haitian American students often lack exposure to the complex vocabulary they need to succeed in school. Haitian students in South Florida are concentrated to a great degree within particular school districts (Nicholas and Severe 2008). Further research is needed to explore the extent to which school assignments affect the academic outcomes of second-generation Haitian students. Educators must be aware of the limited experiences and vocabularies of the children of immigrants in order to incorporate appropriate enrichment activities into their lesson plans. Students who enter high school without the strong academic foundations they need will find high school work to be hopelessly challenging.

Haitian parents put their faith in the schools. They believe that teachers can and will provide their children with everything they need to be properly educated. If their child achieves a passing grade, they expect that this means the student is prepared for the next level. The FCAT results of many students demonstrate that this has not been the case. Students have passed through twelve years of school without developing the skills that the State of Florida now deems obligatory for a high school degree.

Tragically, the FCAT exam has become an insurmountable challenge for some Haitian students. Although they have completed twelve years of school with passing grades, those who fail to pass this test receive only a certificate of completion and not a high school diploma. This test may be useful in catching learning deficiencies when students are in the early grades. When problem areas are identified early,

many can be remediated quickly given the appropriate resources. But for the high school students in this study and their peers, the FCAT becomes something quite different. It is not a tool for assessing a student's academic needs; instead it creates a requirement that the student demonstrate a proficiency for which they were not prepared. The consequences of a poor school system that has passed children through without insuring that they are educated now fall upon those very students. Some may suggest that this is the fault of the students; they have not made the necessary effort to succeed in school.. However, the foundational skills they lack should have been acquired by third or fourth grade. Can we blame the student who was 8 or 9 years old for failing to master basic skills?

Haitian families believe that the free public education available in the United States will provide their children with all they need to enter college and attain professional careers. But their high expectations and aspirations are often unrealized. More academic support will be necessary to help them achieve their dreams.

---

<sup>1</sup> Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) conducted by Portes and Rumbaut (studied over 5200 second generation immigrant children in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade and followed up in their last year of high school, and again several years beyond high school. The samples were drawn from 49 schools in Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, FL and San Diego, CA.

<sup>2</sup> On average, boys perform more poorly in school than girls (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Parents of very low achievers were reluctant to discuss this problem with a researcher. The expected time period for completing interviews had to be extended for these families to get to know me well enough to agree to participate.

<sup>3</sup> This was the family of one of the high achieving students to be discussed in this paper. The student was also interviewed separately from her parents.

<sup>4</sup> Note exception

<sup>5</sup> One-family chose to be interviewed together with no tape recording. My concerns that this would inhibit honest and open answers seemed to be misplaced. There was a lively exchange of anecdotes, memories, and opinions. My ability to scribble notes fast enough was the only limitation.

<sup>6</sup> All participants' names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>7</sup> These students, however, are among the group of high achieving students to be discussed later in the paper.

<sup>8</sup> "An American Childhood," excerpt from *An American Childhood* by Anne Dillard. 1987. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> The high achieving students include one male (age 15, GPA 3.5) and three females (age 18, GPA 3.5; age 16, GPA 4.0+; age 18, GPA 4.0+).

<sup>10</sup> Portes and MacLeod found that Haitian American students "experienced not only a net ethnic disadvantage but a reduction in the positive effect of parental SES on academic performance" (1996:264). They attributed this decline to the lack of a strong ethnic community. My study found this effect among students with dense extended family, ethnic community, and church networks. So, while their statistical results conform with my evidence, their conclusions do not.

## References Cited

- Bankston, Carl L.III and Min Zhou  
2002 Being Well Vs. Doing Well: Self-Esteem and School Performance among Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Racial and Ethnic Groups. *International Migration Review* 36(2): 389-415.
- Bernard, H. Russell  
2006 *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fourth Edition. Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press.
- Brown, Karen McCarthy  
1991 *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Cadet, Jean-Robert  
1998 *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Catanese, Anthony V.  
1999 *Haitians: Migration and Diaspora*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Cazden, C. V John, and Dell Hymes, eds.  
1972 *Functions of Language in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Chang, Janet and Thao N. Le  
2005 The Influence of Parents, Peer Delinquency, and School Attitudes on Academic Achievement in Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian or Mien, and Vietnamese Youth. *Crime & Delinquency* 51(2):238-264.
- Charles, Carolle  
2006 Political Refugees or Economic Immigrants?: A New “Old Debate” within the Haitian Immigrant Communities but with Contestations and Division. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25(2):190-208.
- Coleman, James S.  
1988 Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *The American Journal of Sociology* 94: S95 – S120.
- Cortes Dharma E.  
1995 Variations in Familism in Two Generations of Puerto Ricans. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 17(2): 249-255.
- Day, Jennifer Cheeseman and Eric C. Newburger  
2002 The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings. *Current Population Reports*. US Census Bureau. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf>. Accessed December 28,2008.



- Deutsch, Martin  
1967 *The Disadvantaged Child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Erickson, Frederick  
1987 Transformation and School Success: The Politics and Culture of Educational Achievement. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 18(4):336-355.
- Farley, Reynolds and Richard Alba  
2002 The New Second Generation in the United States. *International Migration Review* 36(3): 669-701.
- Felix-Marcelin, Marlene  
2000 Parent, teacher, and student perceptions of Project New Beginning (Creole version) in Miami Dade County Public Schools. PhD. dissertation, Department of Education, The Union Institute Graduate College.
- Foley, Douglass E.  
1991 Reconsidering Anthropological Explanations of Ethnic School Failure. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 22(1):60-86.
- Foner, Nancy  
1997 *The Immigrant Family: Cultural Legacies and Cultural Changes*. *International Migration Review* 31(4):961-974.
- Fuligni, Andrew J., Melissa Witkow, and Carla Garcia  
2005 Ethnic Identity and the Academic Adjustment of Adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, and European Backgrounds. *Developmental Psychology* 41(5): 799-811.
- Glick, Jennifer E. and Michael J. White  
2004 Post-secondary School Participation of Immigrant and Native Youth: The Role of Familial Resources and Educational Expectations. *Social Science Research* 33:272-299.
- Hao, Lingxin, and Melissa Bonstead- Bruns  
1998 Parent-Child Differences in Educational Expectations and the Academic Achievement of Immigrant and Native Students. *Sociology of Education* 71(3): 175-198.
- Herrnstein, Richard J. and Charles Murray  
1994 *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Herskovits, Melville J.  
1971[1937] *Life in a Haitian Valley*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
- Hess, R. and V. Shipmann  
1965 Early Experiences and the Socialization Cognitive Modes in Children. *Child Development* 36:869-886.
- Jensen, Arthur  
1969 How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Scholastic Achievement? *Harvard Educational Review* 39:1-123.

- Kao, Grace  
 2004 Parental Influences on the Educational Outcomes of Immigrant Youth. *International Migration Review* 37(4):427-449.
- Kao, Grace and Jennifer S. Thompson  
 2003 Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Educational Achievement and Attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:417-442.
- Kao, Grace and M. Tienda  
 1995 Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth. *Social Science Quarterly* 76 (1): 1-19.
- Laguerre, Michel S.  
 1984 *American Odyssey: Haitians in New York City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lawless, Robert  
 1986 Haitian Migrants and Haitian-Americans: From Invisibility into the Spotlight. *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 14(2): 29-70.
- Lewis, Oscar  
 1965 *La Vida*. New York: Random House.
- Miller, Errol  
 1992 *Education for All: Caribbean Perspectives and Imperatives*. Washington, DC.: Inter-American Development Bank.
- Ngana-Mundeke, Annie  
 1999 Influences of Social Networks on the School Experiences of Children of Haitian Immigrants to the Tampa Bay Area. PhD. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida.
- Nicholas, Tekla and LéTania Severe  
 2008 School Segregation and the Education of Haitian Immigrants. February 2008. <http://www.fiu.edu/~iei/index/ieiworking.html>.
- Ogbu, John U.  
 1982 Cultural Discontinuities and Schooling. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 13(4):290-307.  
 1983 Minority Status and Schooling in Plural Societies. *Comparative Education Review* 27(2): 68-90.  
 1990 Minority Education in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Negro Education* 59: 45-57.
- Ogbu, John and Simmons  
 1998 Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 29(2):155-188.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Dag MacLeod  
 1996 Educational Progress of Children of Immigrants: The Roles of Class, Ethnicity, and School Context. *Sociology of Education* 69(4): 255-275.
- Portes, Alejandro, Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, and William Haller.  
 2005 Segmented Assimilation on the Ground: The New Second Generation in Early Adulthood. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6): 1000-40.

- Portes, Alejandro, and Lingxin Hao  
 2002 The Price of Uniformity: Language, Family and personality Adjustment in the Immigrant Second Generation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(6): 889-912.
- Portes, Alejandro and Ruben G. Rumbaut  
 1996 *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Second Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
 2001 *Legacies: the Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
 2005 Introduction: The Second Generation and the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6).
- Portes, Alejandro and Min Zhou  
 1993 The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530:74-96.
- Rogler, Loyd H., and Cooney, Rosemary S.  
 1984 *Puerto Rican Families in New York City: Intergenerational Processes*. Maplewood, New Jersey: Waterfront.
- Schmid, Carol L.  
 2001 Educational Achievement, Language-Minority Students, and the New Second Generation. *Sociology of Education* 74: 71-87.
- Schneider, Barbara and Yongsook Lee  
 1990 A Model for Academic Success: The School and Home Environment of East Asian Students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 21(4):358-377.
- Stepick, Alex  
 1992 The Refugees Nobody Wants: Haitians in Miami. Pp. 57-82. *Miami Now!: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Social Change* Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Stepick III, eds. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Stepick, Alex  
 1998 *Pride Against Prejudice: Haitians in the United States*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Stepick, Alex, with Carol Dutton Stepick, Emmanuel Eugene, Deborah Teed, and Yves Labissiere  
 2001 Shifting Identities and Intergenerational Conflict. *In Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*. Ruben G Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes, eds. Pp. 229-266. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stepick, Alex, Carol Dutton Stepick, and Philip Kretsedemas  
 2001 Civic Engagement of Haitian Immigrants and Haitian Americans in Miami-Dade County. Immigration & Ethnicity Institute, Florida International University, Miami.
- Stepick, Alex and Alejandro Portes  
 1986 Flight into Despair: A Profile of Recent Haitian Refugees in South Florida. *International Migration Review* 20(2):329-350.
- Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin  
 1998 *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

- Stycos, J. Mayone  
1964 Haitian Attitudes toward Family Size. *Human Organization* 23:42-47.
- Teachman, Jay D., Kathleen Paasch, Karen Carver  
1997 Social Capital and the Generation of Human Capital. *Social Forces* 75(4):1343-1359.
- Triandis, Harry C.  
1990 Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism. In *Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1989*. John J. Berman, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press (Pp. 41-133).
- Trueba, Henry T.  
1988 Culturally Based Explanations of Minority Students' Academic Achievement. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 19(3):270-287.
- White, Michael J. and Jennifer E. Glick  
2000 Generation Status, Social Capital, and the Routes Out of High School. *Sociological Forum* 15(4):671-691.
- Zhou, Min  
1997 Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation. *International Migration Review* 31(4):975-1008.
- Zhou, Min and Xiong Yang Sao  
2005 The Multifaceted American Experiences of the Children of Asian Immigrants: Lessons for Segmented Assimilation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6): 1119-1152.