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Ethnic Identities among Second-Generation Haitian Young Adults in Tampa Bay, Florida: An Analysis of the Reported Influence of Ethnic Organizational Involvement on Disaster Response after the Earthquake of 2010

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Ethnic Identities among Second-Generation Haitian Young Adults in Tampa Bay,

Florida: An Analysis of the Reported Influence of Ethnic Organizational Involvement on

Disaster Response after the Earthquake of 2010

by

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Abstract

Drawing upon 20 in-depth interviews with second generation Haitian young adults, I examined the ethnic identities and the involvement in ethnic organizations of the respondents. This study pays particular attention to how involvement in ethnic organizations influenced how the second generation Haitians believed the earthquake affected their identities and how they ultimately responded to the earthquake. Several of the findings revealed differences in how and why the respondents chose to ethnically identify such as Haitian, Haitian-American, black Haitian. The respondents' choice to join an ethnic organization was driven by different desires but the perceived influence of the organization on their ethnic identities resulted in an increase in cultural knowledge as well as an ability to stay rooted in the culture. However, the lack of participation on the part of some of the respondents was a choice dictated by conflicts of authenticity, time, and responsibilities. The comparison between involved and non-involved respondents in terms of their response to the earthquake revealed that involved respondents were more active in volunteer projects. Involvement in ethnic organizations influenced how the second generation Haitians perceived the earthquake affected their identities, and ethnic affirmation in terms of a desire to visit Haiti was expressed by involved respondents. The implications of this study revealed the importance of establishing ethnic organizations in middle and high schools in order to foster a sense of pride through knowledge at an earlier age.

Chapter One: Introduction

"I'm Haitian, I used to say Haitian-American but now I'm Haitian."
-Dana

"I'm just now getting to know myself really….I would identify myself as a…Haitian American……..who sees the big difference between the American values and the Haitian values, or should I say Caribbean values."
-Jean

According to Jean Phinney (1989), ethnic identity development is the process in which an individual achieves an understanding of what it means to be a member of an ethnic group as well as a feeling of belonging to that group. As both quotes above demonstrate, ethnic identity is a dynamic construct. Ethnic identity is multidimensional, changes over time and context, and is achieved through the exploration of one's ethnic group (Phinney 1990; Waters 1990). For some, the exploration of one's ethnic group occurs during adolescence (Quintana, Castaneda-English, & Ybarra 1999) where factors such as family environment and school context can play influential role. While the exploration of one's ethnic group can occur throughout one's life span causing a fluctuation in ethnic identification, I am particularly interested in ethnic identification during the stage of young adulthood.

The exploration of one's ethnic group during young adulthood can take place in response to the diverse ethnic and racial groups one encounters in the workplace, residential neighborhood, school, religious congregations, etc. The environments in these particular settings are marked by a greater level of contact with people from different ethnic groups (Waters 1990) which can lead people to contrast one's group (ethnic or

racial) with other groups and as a result self-identify and claim membership with their

ethnic group. A change in school environment or residential neighborhood can lead to a

change in ethnic identification or an increase (decrease) in one's association and

identification with their ethnic group. But this process is not limited to just a change in

environment, it can also occur in response to a significant event. A significant event can

entail a political, historical, or cultural event. Political events such as the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1960s and 1970s have resulted in the resurgence in ethnic

consciousness and ethnic pride among black people (Maultby 1983). Types of significant

events are natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, etc. The aftermath of natural

disasters such as those mentioned above have the ability to spark resurgence in ethnic

pride in individuals. Several scholars have examined the influence of significant events

on the ethnic identities of immigrants (Roehling, Hernandez, Sprik & Campell 2010;

Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Nagel 1995). Generally, studies that have examined the role of

significant events on ethnic identities involved prejudice and discrimination towards

one's ethnic group. But, must a significant event be discriminatory in order for it to have

a perceived influence on the ethnic identity of an individual?

The studies on the influence of natural disasters on ethnic identities have focused

on the native individuals who experienced the disaster firsthand. Few scholars have

examined how a natural disaster in the home country of an immigrant influences the lives

of immigrants living abroad. More specifically, how does a natural disaster affect the

lives of second generation immigrants, who are even more removed from the home

country compared to the first generation? The limited studies on the influence of natural

disasters on ethnic identities have focused on how significant events can influence the

ethnic identities of an ethnic group. But, in my quest to add to the existing literature on natural disasters and ethnic identities, I want to examine this relationship through the lens of organizational involvement.

One factor that is important is the influence of ethnic organizations on the ethnic identities of second generation immigrants. Research has shown the role of ethnic organizations in helping foster ethnic pride in immigrants (Smith 2008; Foley & Hoge 2007; Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sinclair 2004; Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui 2003; Kibria 2002; Yang 1999; Ethier & Kay 1994). Involvement in ethnic organizations (e.g. campus student organizations, churches and worship centers, political organizations) for immigrants is a way to build a stronger tie to their ethnic group. For second-generation immigrants, worship communities can play a key role in helping strenghten ethnic identities through language preservation during worship services, fellowship with similar people, and preservation of cultural traditions (Foley & Hoge 2007; Yang 1999). While researchers have examined the role of those various ethnic organizations on the ethnic identities of immigrants, little is known about how immigrants foster an acceptance and internatilization of their ethnicity without the support of ethnic organizations. In addition, what role can ethnic organizations play in relation to natural disasters and ethnic identities? Is it possible that involvement (or the lack thereof) in a Haitian organization influenced how second generation immigrants responded (e.g. monetary donations, volunterism, relationship with family in Haiti) to the earthquake that struck on Januray 12, 2010?

It is this understanding that calls for the examination of the role perceived of Haiti's earthquake on the lives of second-generation young Haitian adults. In this study, I

will explore the ethnic identities of second generation young Haitian adults living in Tampa, Florida. Specifically, I will demonstrate how ethnic identity development continues on into young adulthood by examining how and why the second generation young Haitian adults choose to self-identify. I will also examine what the second generation young Haitian adults I interviewed report in terms of how Haiti's earthquake influenced their ethnic identities, family loyalties, and desires to visit or help in the relief efforts of their parents' homeland. In addition, I will explore if involvement in ethnic organizations played a role in how these respondents talked about their responses to the earthquake. Specifically, I examined the following questions:

- How are second generation young Haitian adults self-identifying in terms of ethnicity? How does ethnic identification differ within this group? What factors do they perceive influence their ethnic self-identification?

- Why do second generation young Haitian adults choose to become involved in ethnic organizations? How has involvement in an ethnic organization influenced their ethnic identity?

- Does involvement in an ethnic organization appear to influence: 1) what they say in terms of how the earthquake has affected their ethnic identity, loyalty to family, desire to visit Haiti, etc.; and 2) what they report in terms of their response to the earthquake?

In order to examine my research questions I conducted in-depth interviews, exploring the ethnic identities and ethnic organizational involvement of second generation young Haitian adults. I examined how Haiti's earthquake affected the way in which young Haitian adults talked about their ethnic identities, family loyalty, desire to

go to Haiti, etc. This study takes on a comparative approach by interviewing young adults involved in ethnic organizations as well as those who are not. In doing this I was able to explore the ethnic identities of both groups and gain a better understanding regarding the importance of ethnic organizations for second generation immigrants.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Ethnic Identity Development

Ethnic identification involves an application of a label to oneself through a cognitive process of self-categorization. One claims membership in a group and creates a contrast between one's group or category with other groups and categories (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). Commitment, a feeling of belonging to an ethnic group, is perhaps one of the most important parts to the development of one's ethnic identity (Phinney & Ong 2007). But, developmental models on ethnic identity point out that commitment alone does not classify an individual as having a confident, mature identity (Phinney 1993, 1989; Macia 1980). Commitment alone can be a result of identification with one's parents or other role models, which can make self-identification a precarious label. An ethnic identity based on messages received by family members and the community is considered an unexamined identity which is the first stage of Phinney's proposed three stage model of ethnic identity development (1993, 1989). In order to move past the first stage to the second stage of the model, an exploration of one's ethnic group is necessary (Phinney & Ong 2007). This stage entails intense immersion in one's culture through several avenues such as reading, participating and going to cultural events, and interacting with people. The second stage takes place in response to a significant experience that forces awareness of one's ethnicity. For some it may also involve rejection of the values of the dominant culture. The third stage of the model, achieved status, involves an individual showing evidence of exploring what their ethnicity means

to them coupled with a sense of acceptance and internalization of their ethnicity as an identity. Individuals who reach this stage have achieved a secure, positive identity. The three-stage model generally applies to adolescents, especially since the second stage typically occurs in the earlier years of high school partly as a result of concurrent advances in cognitive skills (Quintana, Castaneda-English, & Ybarra 1999). But ethnic identity development is not limited only to adolescent life.

Waters (1990) contends that young adulthood is a time of ethnic fluctuation. She claims that young adulthood is marked by a greater level of contact with people from different ethnic groups. It is through meeting people who are different from oneself, particularly different in approaches to life, values, food, and personality, that one's ethnicity becomes clearer. Self-identification and commitment are important elements in the formation of a secure, mature ethnic identity; however, without exploration one's commitment may be vulnerable and subject to changes in response to new experiences in life.

As the literature on ethnic identity illustrates, ethnic self-identification is a complex process that varies over time and/or by place and surroundings (Barrington, Herron & Silver 2003; Landale & Oropesa 2002; Kinket & Verkuyten 1997; Kvernmo & Heyerdahl 1996). More importantly, the complex process of ethnic self-identification entails a multitude of experiences that impact ethnic identity. Ethnic identification for second generation immigrants is influenced by several factors such as family context, school context, and religious context among others. And these influential factors during adolescence can have a major impact on how an individual identifies as a young adult.

Adolescent Ethnic Identity: The Role of Family, School, and Religious Participation

The development of a secure, positive ethnic identity for second generation immigrants can be attributed to several factors. Previous research on the relationship between ethnic identity and family socialization has shown a strong correlation between family and parental practices and ethnic self-identification (Costigan & Dokis 2006; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin 2006; Killian & Hegtvedt 2003; Umaña-Taylor & Fine 2004 Phinney, Irma, Nava, & Huang 2001). For example, Jiménez (2004) examined the ethnic identity of children of Mexican/Non-Hispanic intermarriages or multiethnic Mexican Americans and found that respondents who had frequent interactions with Mexican American immediate and extended family members tended to gravitate toward their Mexican American ethnicity compared to those who did not have repeated exposure to family members with Mexican backgrounds. The study demonstrated how frequent exposure to the ethnic culture for adolescents can influence ethnic identity development. One of the ethnic groups (Armenians) examined in a study by Phinney et al. (2001) revealed a correlation between cultural maintenance and ethnic identity. In countless immigrant homes, parents work on cultural maintenance through the promotion of native language and strict gender roles (Williams, Alvarez, & Hauck 2002; Zhou & Bankston 2001; Sarroub 2001; Wolf 1997).

Scholars have also explored the role of school context in helping develop the ethnic identities of second generation adolescents (González 2009; Sabatier 2007; Jiménez 2004; Umaña-Taylor 2004). Stepick et al. (2001) examined the shifts in self-identification of Haitian youth in Miami, Florida. Results from the first part of the study showed ninth graders had difficulty labeling themselves. They were aware that others in

the United States frequently labeled them as Black, but the students considered themselves as individuals foremost. As they grew older, the adolescents began to identify with more national, less assimilated ethnic identities depending on the racial and ethnic composition of the school they attended. Haitian adolescents who attended predominately Black schools were more likely to self-identify as either Haitian Americans or Haitians. In comparison, Haitian adolescents who attended predominately white schools were more likely to adopt a mixed or African American label. Stepick et al. (2001) do not explicitly state if the different identity labels by the Haitian students were attributed to how their peers referred to them. But, the representation or the underrepresentation of one's ethnic group in a given setting such as schools can also lead to the exploration of one's ethnic group. The school environment for adolescents, and even young children (Van Ausdale & Feagin 1996), can play a crucial role in how individuals view their ethnicity in relation to other ethnic groups. The ethnic diversity or the lack thereof in student populations at schools can either foster a need to affirm one's ethnic identity or leave students less aware of ethnic and intergroup issues.

In addition to the family and school context, religious participation in an ethnic congregation can contribute to an intensification of ethnic identification in adolescents. Bankston and Zhou (1995) addressed the role of religious participation on the ethnic identities of Vietnamese adolescents in a heavily Catholic community in New Orleans. The data drawn from a survey of Vietnamese high school students revealed that religious participation (frequency of church attendance) contributed to mature, secure ethnic identities of the students. According to the authors, religious participation appeared to link the students to the larger Vietnamese community thereby acting as a cultural

resource for individuals. Ethnic organizations such as ethnic congregations can play a vital role in helping second generation immigrants explore their ethnic group and feel part of a community.

Second generation immigrants are exposed to environments in the home, school, worship communities, etc. that can help foster secure, mature ethnic identities as they move into young adulthood. These different social environments help second generation immigrants explore their ethnic identities and move away from a *foreclosed* (unexamined) self-identification, one in which the individual typically has an unclear understanding of the meaning and implications of their commitment to their ethnicity (Phinney 1993).

Forging a secure and mature ethnic identity for second generation immigrants can be difficult due to an unwelcoming reception by neighbors, classmates, etc. (Valdivia, Dozi, Jeanetta, Flores, Martinez, & Dannerbeck 2008; Portes & Rumbaut 2006; Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002; Stepick et al. 2001; Menjívar 1997). But, acts of prejudice and discrimination can also incite the exploration of one's ethnic heritage and identity (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber 2000, 2006). While the development of an ethnic identity for adolescents is influenced by different factors, the same holds true for young adults. Young adults encounter different people and are placed in different environments (e.g. college campuses among others) that present opportunities for them to explore their ethnic identities.

Trajectories of Ethnic Identity during Young Adulthood

The development of an ethnic identity varies among minority groups as a result of different levels of acceptance by classmates and community members, and the

availability of ethnic activities promoting one's ethnic group in the community, etc. In an ethnographic study of urban high school adolescents (African Americans and Puerto Ricans) by Way, Santos, Niwa, and Kim-Gervey (2008) variations in the sources of adolescents' pride in their ethnic group were found. The Puerto Rican adolescents relied upon the Puerto Rican Pride parade for their source of pride but they were completely unaware of historical knowledge. The African American adolescents relied heavily upon the history of slavery and civil rights. Both groups demonstrated a level of commitment to their ethnic group and had opportunities to explore their ethnicity because of community activities and the availability of information about their ethnic group.

Research on the trajectories of ethnic identity during adolescence suggest that ethnic identity development occurs primarily during mid-adolescence and by late adolescence individuals have essentially achieved a mature and secure ethnic identity (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber 2006; Pahl & Way 2006; Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee 2006). But this is not necessarily the case; the dearth of research conducted on post-adolescent individuals indicates that ethnic identity development is not primarily a task for mid-adolescence, it continues on past adolescence. Several studies on the trajectories of ethnic identities among college students have illustrated that college students' ethnic identities are contextually situated and still unresolved (Syed & Azmitia 2009). Syed, Azmitia, and Phinney (2007) conducted a longitudinal study investigating ethnic identity development among Latinos during the first year of college in two contexts (concentration of ethnic minorities and Latinos on campus). The ethnic identities of the freshman students were analyzed by examining both the change in strength of ethnic identity and change in ethnic identity status from fall to spring semesters. One of the

major findings from the study demonstrated individual shifts in ethnic identity status (unexamined, exploration, achievement) from fall to spring semesters. Many of the students who had unexamined ethnic identities moved to an exploration stage and students who were in an exploration stage moved to an achieved status. Studies conducted by Syed et al. (2007) as well as other scholars (Syed 2010; Syed & Azmitia 2009; Juang, Nguyen, & Lin; Phinney & Chavira 1992) show evidence of the development of ethnic identity past adolescence. The various social contexts that young adults encounter, such as college campuses, can influence ethnic identity development. The fluctuation in ethnic identification, even in young adulthood, makes exploring the ethnic identities of second generation young Haitian adults important because it presents an opportunity to build upon previous findings. The experiences in America for many second generation Haitians have been unwelcoming but, at the same time this group's experiences are multifaceted and must be explored.

Second Generation Haitian Identity

The experiences of second-generation Haitians during the late 1970s and early 1980s in America were plagued with blatant discrimination and prejudice. Haitians had a bad reputation, and stereotypes about Haitians were predominately negative (Waters 2001, Zephir 2004, Stepick 1998). According to a study on second generation West Indians, all of the different groups described Haitians in the most terrible ways (Waters 2001). Haitians were described as not dressing well, smelling bad (Waters 2001), and being carriers of tuberculosis and AIDS (Stepick 1998). The level of harassment and discrimination second generation Haitians met in school was unparalleled. The hostile

environment Haitians encountered in schools such as bullying and physical attacks made it difficult for some students to express their cultural roots (Stepick 1998).

For some Haitians covering up one's Haitian identity was the only plausible solution amid the unreceptive environment. Ethnic self-identification for a rare few was an issue of life and death, as Stepick (1998) revealed a story of a young boy who committed suicide over the revelation by classmates of his Haitian identity. But for other Haitians, rather than denying their Haitian heritage they made attempts to embrace both Haitian and American cultures (Zephir 2004; Stepick 1998). The experiences of second generation immigrants today may not be as discriminatory compared to in the 1980s due to a greater sense of community among the Haitian people and a stronger presence of Haitians— Wyclef Jean[1], Garcelle Beauvais[2], and Edwidge Danticat[3]— in mainstream society (Zephir 2004). However, for the millions of second-generation Haitian young adults who grew up in such hostile conditions, forming a secure and mature ethnic identity was difficult (Pierre-Louis 2006; Zephir 2001). For Haitian youth who might have been exposed to a hostile environment at school and/or neighborhood, a reluctance to self-identify as Haitian may result from such interactions. Hostile and welcoming experiences by Haitian youth can play a crucial role in how they identify in young adulthood. Because of adolescent experiences, an examination of ethnic identities of young Haitian adults can provide important information on how these experiences influenced how they presently ethnically identify.

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[1] Wyclef Jean is a popular musician who first received fame as a member of the hip-hop group *Fugees.*

[2] Garcelle Beauvais is a model and actress who played on a popular sitcom *The Jamie Foxx Show.*

[3] Edwidge Danticat is an acclaimed author and winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Brother, I'm Dying.*

The Complexities of Ethnic Identification

The complexity of ethnic identification is one of many themes explored by Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway (2008) in *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*, which looked at children of immigrants in New York City. This research provided an in-depth and unique perspective on how second generation young adults racially and ethnically identified. The complexity of racial and ethnic identification was marked by immigrant parents' origins, birthplace, race and proximal host—the racial category that immigrants approximate following immigration (for example the American Jewish community is the proximal host to Israeli immigrants) (Mittelberg & Waters 1992). In the study, the respondents had to grapple with American racial and ethnic groupings imposed upon them and decide whether to distance oneself from the label. For example, many South Americans and Dominicans found themselves struggling to decide whether to identify with or distance themselves from Puerto Ricans.

Waters' (2001) examination of black identities found that West Indian blacks with a significant African heritage were taking on a national identity in hopes of disassociating from the negative stereotypes associated with African Americans. In attempts to develop a secure ethnic identity, certain ethnic groups adopted a pan-ethnic identity rather than the identity of their proximal host which is at times associated with negative stereotypes. For example, Dominicans may decide to adopt a Latino identity rather than identifying with their proximal host Puerto Ricans, or Haitians/Jamaicans can adopt a West Indian/Caribbean identity rather than identifying with their proximal host African Americans.

Feliciano's (2009) research on education and ethnic identity formation among children of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants found nearly half of the respondents changed ethnic self-labels from adolescence to early adulthood. Adolescents who identified in plain American or racial/pan-ethnic terms shifted their identities the most, often towards using hyphenated labels as adults. For example, pan-ethnic terms such as black, Latino, or Hispanic were shifting to hyphenated identities which typically referred to their own or their parents' home countries in conjunction with an American identity: Cuban-American, Jamaican-American, and Dominican-American. Feliciano also examined predicators of ethnic identity in early adulthood—ethnic identity during adolescence, demographic characteristics, life experiences, and educational attainment. Such factors are important in determining how an adolescent will self-identify in early adulthood. While these factors are important, shifts in ethnic self-labels can also be attributed to other factors such as a significant experience. Feliciano's study illustrates that shifts in ethnic identification can occur in young adulthood and Phinney and Ong (2007) point out that exploration of one's ethnicity takes place in response to a significant experience. So, with respect to a significant event like Haiti's earthquake, is it possible that there was a change in status (unexamined, exploration, achieved) of ethnic identity among second generation young Haitian adults?

Influence of Significant Events on Ethnic Identity

Historically, many studies illustrate the shifting and emerging identities of different ethnic groups (Feliciano 2009; Min & Kim 2005; Jiménez 2004; Stepick 2001 Kibra 2000; Waters 2001; Hinojosa 1997; Nagel 1995; Espiritu 1992; Waters 1990). More interesting is the shift or renewal of an individual's ethnic identity in response to

significant events, whether political, historical, or cultural. The fluidity of ethnic identities allows for second generation young adults to explore or even re-examine their ethnic identities in response to a significant event in one's life.

The resurgence of importance of one's culture has been seen in several ethnic and racial groups in America. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, African Americans experienced a resurgence of ethnic consciousness and ethnic pride. Slogans such as "I'm Black and I'm Proud" became popular among the Black community (Maultsby 1983). The resurgence of American Indian ethnic identity during the 1970s and 1980s was strongly attributed to the activism during the Red Power Movement (Nagel 1995). In California in 1994 a significant event occurred, the passing of Proposition 187 which proposed to deny public benefits to undocumented immigrants. In reaction to the measure, Mexican immigrants as well as other immigrants around the U.S. joined together forming an anti-187 movement and asserting an ethnic identity that may or may not have existed in response to the hostile environment (Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

Natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes can also be considered significant events. Research on how communities cope with the aftermath of natural disasters has shown a difference in coping methods of different ethnic groups (Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington 1999; Davis 1986; Puller; 1992) Davis' (1986) study on two villages (Kaguyak and Old Harbor) on Kodiak Island that suffered an earthquake and two subsequent tsunamis found that as a result of the rehabilitation agents and processes offered to the villagers there was an enhanced sense of ethnic identity. Also, in both villages, the disaster led to a reaffirmation, an assertion of

religious identities that already existed. In the case of the earthquake that struck Haiti, is it possible that the natural disaster had an influence of the ethnic identities of second generation young adults in the U.S.?

Scholars describe the heightened awareness of ethnic identities by racial and ethnic groups during certain periods in history, particularly the 1960s and 1970s, as *ethnic revival* (Jacobson 2006; Fisherman 1986). In *Roots Too*, Jacobson (2006) described how certain white groups in America-- the Jews, Irish, Italians-- were rediscovering their ethnic heritage and forging a new sense of identity. Ethnic revival is one way to describe the drive for a specific ethnic group to learn about their own culture (Jacobson 2006; Fisherman 1986).

Nagel (1995) proposed the resurgence of American Indian ethnic identity during the 1970s and 1980s as *ethnic renewal*. Nagel describes ethnic renewal to be marked by the "reconstruction of one's ethnic identity by reclaiming a discarded identity, replacing or amending an identity in an existing ethnic identity repertoire, or filling a personal ethnic void" (Nagel 1995: 947). Ethnic renewal can occur in two different ways:

a) resurgence in ethnic pride which does not involve taking on a new ethnic identity but rather a reaffirmation, reconstruction, or redefinition of an individual's ethnicity, or;

 b) resurgence in ethnic pride involves an individual self actually identifying with the ethnic group (Nagel 1995).

The definition of ethnic renewal allows for a comprehensive approach to understanding the reconstruction of one's ethnic identity. However, the two definitions used to characterize ethnic renewal by Nagel are problematic because they assume that ethnic

pride within an individual was lost at one point and later recovered. How can we explain individuals who never explored their ethnic identity or individuals who possess ethnic pride and see it intensify after a significant event? Nagel's definition of ethnic renewal excludes both these types of individuals mentioned above. Resurgence in ethnic pride or reaffirmation in one's ethnic identity assumes an individual possessed a cultural connection prior to the significant event. If a connection was not established prior to the significant event then one could say exploration is taking place in response to the event. According to Phinney, individuals who have not explored their ethnic identity are in an unexamined stage and a marked experience can spark an individual to move to the exploration stage of the model. The exploration stage of the model which entails an intense immersion in one's culture could be seen as a satisfactory substitution for the definition of ethnic renewal that captures the response of individuals to a significant event. However, exploration typically occurs in adolescence in response to acts of prejudice and discrimination and a continual process of examining one's ethnic identity persists through young adulthood. The exploration definition, too, falls short because it is a developmental model that focuses on identity formation rather than on how people respond to identity challenges. More importantly, the use of exploration as a substitute does not take into account individuals who are already exploring their ethnic heritage and individuals with a secure ethnic identity. Both definitions for ethnic renewal and exploration do not allow for an all encompassing definition of an individual's response to, for example, a significant event. The concept of ethnic affirmation encompasses both an assertion in ethnic pride which can involve taking on a new ethnic identification or an intensified feeling of belonging to one's ethnic group and a change in ethnic identity

status (unexamined, exploration, achieved). In short, this concept can serve as a bridge between Phinney's exploration and Nagel's ethnic renewal.

Ethnic identification among second generation young adults can be complex and fluctuate as a result of different experiences and often dictated by stages in one's life. As several scholars point out, the college experience can play a crucial role in helping second generation young adults develop a mature ethnic identity (Kibria 2002; Levitt & Waters 2002). For example, one of the respondents in Kazinitz et al. (2008) study revealed she was half Dominican and half Chinese but identified more with the Chinese side ever since she was exposed to an Asian film in college. Specifically, the role of ethnic organizations on college campuses for second generation young adults can provide a stepping stone for those who have not explored their ethnicity in-depth. However, the influential role of ethnic organizations can also be found outside of college campuses, from local ethnic community organizations to religious organizations.

Influence of Ethnic Organizations on Ethnic Identity

Participation in ethnic organizations has long been a crucial aspect in the lives of immigrants. Since the pre-World War I, European immigrants that came to the United States from Poland, Ireland, Italy, Greece, etc., formed organizations and mutual aid societies in order to keep their cultures alive while away from their homelands (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Alba recognized that, "Avowedly ethnic organizations presumably come into being to service ethnic purposes, which frequently include the preservation of ethnic identities and cultures and the representation of ethnic interests" (1990: 239). Studies on mutual aid societies and hometown associations illustrate the importance of being a part of an organization in the lives of immigrants (Smith 2008; Smith 2006; Greenbaum 2002)

and in particular second generation immigrants (Sidanius, Levin, Van Laer, & Sinclair 2004; Saylor & Aries 1999; Espiritu 1994; Ethier & Deux 1994).

Ethnic Organizations on College Campuses

Espiritu (1994) acknowledges that supportive institutions such as ethnic clubs, ethnic studies programs, and affirmative action services play crucial roles in the process of ethnic identification. Involvement in ethnic organizations allows individuals who were once unaware of their ethnicity an opportunity to claim their cultural roots. According to Crocker and Major (1989) the formation of support groups with similar stigmatized peers, allows minorities to focus on their own positive characteristics and transform "the 'stigma' from a drawback to an asset" (p. 622).

As Espiritu points out, institutions such as ethnic clubs, which are typically found on college campuses can play crucial roles in the lives of young adults. Inkelas (2004) examined the relationship between Asian Pacific American (APA) undergraduate involvement in Asian ethnically focused student clubs/organizations and students' awareness and understanding of Asian Pacific American community interests. Using secondary data collected from 1990 to 1994, surveys in four separate waves, the authors followed the class of 1994 from their freshman year to senior. The first wave of the survey was administered to all incoming freshman and the next three survey waves were administered to all students of color in the class of 1994 as well as a large representative sample of White/Caucasian students from the entire campus population. A sample of 184 APA senior students agreed that they gained awareness and understanding of Asian Pacific issues after four years of college in comparison to Whites (30%) and Hispanic/Latino (38%), but African American students had a stronger perception (81%).

The study revealed that participation in ethnic clubs or even diversity-related activities (significantly intergroup dialogues and various heritage month activities) increased awareness and understanding of Asian American issues and interests. Sidanius et al. (2004) explored ethnic organizational membership and levels of ethnic identity among white and minority students (Asian, Latino, Black). The data consisted of a five-wave study that began in the summer of 1996 at the freshman orientation program and ended the spring of 2000. While the first wave of the study used written questionnaires, all subsequent waves of the study were conducted by telephone interview. Some of the questions posed in the questionnaire consisted of the kinds of courses taken each year, the campus organizations they belonged to, and the nature of the extracurricular activities they were most actively involved in. An important aspect to this study was the examination of two particular types of student organizations: minority ethnic organizations (e.g. African Student Union, United Cambodian Students) and Greek organizations (e.g. fraternities and sororities). Results from the study revealed that membership in ethnically oriented student organizations among minorities further increased their ethnic identity and their drive to be politically active on behalf of the ethnic group. On the other hand, Greek organizational membership for White students increased their identification with the university as an institution, but it also increased their opposition to an ethnically diverse campus and their belief that ethnic organizations promote separatism. Both of the studies discussed above illustrate the role ethnic organizations on college campuses can have in helping to foster young adults' ethnic identities. These longitudinal studies also demonstrate how ethnic organizations can act as avenues for ethnic identity development for young adults regardless of what stage they

are at in life. It cannot be expected that all the freshman students entered college with an unexamined ethnic identity, so ethnic organizations can help students who have not examined their ethnic identity become more aware of their ethnic group and move forward to the exploration stage. And for students who are in the exploration stage, it can help them achieve a mature, secure ethnic identity.

Ethnic Organizations Outside of College Campuses

The college campus is an optimum place for young adults to explore and forge a stronger connection to one's ethnic group. The availability of ethnic studies programs, ethnic organizations and activities promote cultural awareness for minority students in an enclosed space. Ethnic organizations outside of college campuses which cater to a specific ethnic group and promote cultural awareness are less exclusive than college ethnic organizations; they also provide an opportunity for the exploration and maintenance of the ethnic culture with individuals of a heterogeneous mixture, different immigrant statuses (1st generation, 1.5 generation, and 2nd generation immigrants), socioeconomic status, and education level. For example, Smith (2004) explored how membership in Irish organizations contributed to the maintenance of ethnic identities in members of 10 of the 11 Irish organizations in Savannah, Georgia, ranging in ages of 23-85. Interviews with the members of the Irish organizations revealed the significant role the organization played in maintaining the ethnic identity of the members. One of the respondents, a 69-year old man, expressed the benefits of having a range of ages in the organization, "when you become a member—and one of the thrilling things about it is some of the older guys—that you finally get to sit with them and listen to them—you wouldn't be associated with them otherwise" (pg. 66). In addition, as Smith states, "these

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organizations provide a means of perpetuating friendship, neighborhood, church, school and family connections, and serve to inculcate Irish identity in succeeding generations as men and women recruit their sons and daughters and nephews and nieces to these groups" (Smith 2008: 69). While ethnic college campuses do provide means of building friendships, ethnic organizations situated in communities serve ethnic groups by building a sense of community with others and setting a precedent for successive generations to follow. Religious organizations that cater to a specific ethnic group are of particular interest because maintenance of a strong ethnic tie can also be facilitated by these types of ethnic organizations. In studying second generation immigrants, religious organizations are of importance because they provide a great avenue for this group to stay connected to their cultural roots (Bankston & Zhou 1995).

According to Marty (1972: 9), "ethnicity is the skeleton of religion in America." How ethnic groups self-identify religiously and ethnically in the United States is at times inseparable. Greeley states:

> A more fruitful way of viewing the situation is to acknowledge that religion and ethnicity are intertwined, that religion plays an ethnic function in American society and ethnicity has powerful religious overtones (Greely 1971: 82).

Religious organizations, such as churches, worship centers, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc., serve as both avenues to learn about mainstream culture and support for preserving traditional culture (Yang 1999). For second generation immigrants who are faced with pressures to assimilate into mainstream society (Portes & Rumbaut 2006), the upkeep of the original language, customs, and values by religious organizations can serve important functions such as cultural preservation.

Min and Kim (2005) examined Korean Protestant immigrants in the United

States and the extent to which this group transmitted their religion and cultural traditions

through religion. The study, based on a survey of 1.5 and 2nd generation Korean adults

and a survey of Korean English- language congregations in the New York-New Jersey

metropolitan area, revealed the transmission of Korean traditions was not taking place

due to the congregations' almost entire elimination of Korean cultural components during

worship. Interestingly, Foley and Hoge (2004) who studied the role of local worship

communities in the lives of new immigrants found that worship centers that were more

ethnically mixed were more likely to promote markers of ethnic identity. For example,

the African churches, multiethnic churches and parishes sponsored more events

celebrating the ethnic heritages of its members. While homogenous schools according to

Stepick (1998) promote ethnic identity, heterogeneous churches seem to do the same.

But, a possible key difference between heterogeneous churches and homogenous schools

is the promotion of different ethnic heritages. As the literature points out ethnic

organizations can play vital roles for second generation immigrants who are attempting to

maintain strong ties to their cultural roots. More importantly, they can serve as links to a

larger community of people who are a part of one's ethnic group. This organizational link

for members in hopeless moments such as Haiti's earthquake can serve as a central point

for much needed information on how and where one can go to help with the relief efforts.

The purpose of my study is to explore the ethnic identities among second

generation Haitian young adults in relationship to involvement in ethnic organizations

and a significant event such as Haiti's earthquake. Based on the literature, involvement in

ethnic organizations can positively influence the ethnic identities of second generation

immigrants by helping them preserve their culture. Also, significant events can enhance a sense of ethnic identity, or form one where there is none, among the groups affected. Based on this information I will address three central questions: How do second generation young Haitian adults identify and what factors appear to influence their self identification? What factors are reported to influence the desires of second generation Haitians to join an ethnic organization and how does their involvement influence their ethnic identity? Lastly, how does involvement in an ethnic organization appear to influence how they view their ethnic identity, family relations in Haiti, desire to go to Haiti, and response to helping with relief efforts after the earthquake.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Background

  For the past six years I have been a member of a student Haitian organization at the Florida University called Konbit Lakay (KL). The purpose of KL is to dispel the negative myths about Haiti and its people through cultural events and meetings. All of KL's events and meetings are open to the public. Members and non-member are educated about the history and beauty of the country through all types of events. Events such as the Miss Haiti Pageant help inform Haitians as well as non-Haitians about the dynamic personalities of Haitian women and educate the people in attendance about the different cities of Haiti and different aspects of Haiti's culture. The impact of the organization on the ethnic identities of the members has always been an intriguing aspect to me. As a Haitian-American who grew up in an ethnic enclave surrounded by Haitian immigrants and attended a church with a predominately Haitian population, I always knew I was Haitian but I never felt I knew enough about my culture. My involvement in Konbit Lakay for the past six years has allowed me to increase my knowledge about the Haitian culture immensely and because of my tenure in the organization I have witnessed the growth in knowledge of the Haitian culture occur for countless members. After the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12th 2010, my interest in this topic grew even more. As I volunteered during the relief efforts for Haiti, I could not help but notice an increase in new faces at certain organizations to which I frequently donated my time tutoring and packaging items to send to Haiti. Such an observation was expected because

the devastation that struck Haiti stirred many Haitians and non-Haitians to take action

and help out in some way. During my conversations with second-generation Haitians

during my volunteer activities, the topic of wanting to helping Haiti and even go to Haiti

to help with the relief efforts kept coming up. Many expressed a need to reconnect to the

country of Haiti and/or to their Haitian roots. I was hearing these sentiments from

individuals who were involved in Haitian organizations as well as individuals who were

not. As I reflected on the comments that were being made, I wondered how my

involvement in a Haitian organization influenced my level of response to the earthquake.

I wondered if I would have been as involved if I was not affiliated with KL. It was

through this thought process that I decided I wanted to learn more about how second-

generation immigrants were reacting to the earthquake.

Research Design

For my study I utilized in-depth interviews. The data for this study were derived

from digitally recorded interviews with 20 second-generation Haitian young adults (ages

18-30) in the Tampa Bay area. The duration of the interviews ranged from an hour to two

and half hours. The study was limited to second generation Haitian immigrant men and

women. Participants had to have at least one parent who was born in Haiti and they

themselves had to have been born and/or raised in the United States. If the individual was

born in Haiti, they had to have migrated to the United States before the age of 7. Other

scholars have used different ages of arrival in the U.S. to define who is considered a

second-generation immigrant in America. Ellis and Goodwin-White (2006) define

immigrant children who migrated by the age of 10 as second-generation. As for Portes

and Alba, (1993) children who migrated by the age of 12 are considered to be second

generation immigrants. I use age 7 to define second-generation immigrants because formal schooling in America starts at the age of 6 years old for children. Since several of the interview questions comprised of asking information about participants' childhood experiences (e.g. elementary, middle, and high school experiences), formal schooling in the U.S. was necessary. In addition, I did not want to include individuals who experienced issues learning the English language and fitting in once they entered the school system in the U.S. My definition allows me to examine participants who share the same experiences as second-generation immigrants on the level of "secondary socialization" in the United States (i.e. school, peers, and the mass media) (Bartolomeo 2009).

In addition to the birthplace criteria, I also recruited respondents who were currently members of a Haitian organization and respondents who were not members of a Haitian organization in order to better understand how both groups responded to the earthquake. For this study, Haitian organizations consisted of an organization that promoted and/or educated their members about their Haitian culture through music, foods, dance, etc. This included cultural, political organizations and Haitian churches in the Tampa Bay community. I used a sample of convenience in order to recruit respondents for my study who were involved in a Haitian organization. Due to my involvement in the Haitian organization, my position as the interviewer may have influenced the respondents' responses. But, it also allowed me access to the study's population. I recruited individuals who attended the general body meetings, cultural events, religious services, and rallies put on by the organization or church they were a part of on a regular basis (several meetings and events a month). Respondents labeled

non-members are comprised of individuals who had never been a member of Haitian organization as well as individuals who have been members of a Haitian organization in the past. I used a snowball sampling method in order to recruit these participants. Most of the participants in this study were recruited through the referrals made by people who knew of individuals who met the criteria of being a second generation Haitian young adult and who were between the ages of 18 and 30 (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981). This method was most helpful because, outside of the KL organization, the only place one can find an aggregate of second-generation Haitians at a given place in Tampa is on Sunday at churches with a significant Haitian membership. Since I do not attend a Haitian congregation, this method allowed me to get in contact with individuals that potentially would have been difficult to find on my own. Information about respondents' involvement level was obtained during the interviews.

Interviews were utilized in order to allow for a better understanding of how individuals define and redefine their ethnic identities. In order to understand if, when, and why ethnic changes occur, one needs to listen to people's own interpretation, definitions, and perceptions of their ethnic experiences. Rather than using a survey with limited categories, I utilized in depth interviews because they allow the researcher to capture the voices of people. By implementing this research method, I bypassed the limitations to written questions where penmanship can be problematic and probing is impossible (Patton 2002). In-depth interviews allow the researcher to gather participants' perspective on an issue and probe about a variety of things that may or may not be a part of the questionnaire. The interviews allowed me to listen to the stories of my participants and

gain a better understanding of how they interpret, define, and perceive their multifaceted ethnic experiences.

The interviews were conducted from a list of open-ended questions. Even though I had this list, interviews resembled a conversational format. Questions probed background information about the participants, such as where they were raised, respondents' relationship with parent (s), and linguistic preferences. These questions were posed in order to gather information that would allow the researcher to put the participants' experiences as young adults into context. Gathering these data was based on the assumption that the historical and cultural context in which each participant was raised played a major factor in understanding their experiences. Moreover, the experiences of the participants during adolescence allowed me to better understand their young adult life (LeCompte & Schensul 1999).

I asked questions about adolescent life, for example: "Describe in detail the middle school you attended." I probed for information on the school's makeup (public/private, racial/ethnic composition, geographical location). I asked questions about participants' adolescent identities; for example, "How did you identify in middle school," and "Describe your circle of friends in middle school." Also, questions were asked about their experiences as Haitian students in their schools and in their neighborhoods with respect to treatment by students based on their ethnic identity. The same questions were asked about experiences in high school as well. The questions on adolescent identity were asked to better understand how adolescent experiences influenced the development of ethnic identity in transition to young adulthood.

The young adult identity questions provided a range of information about the participants. Questions relating to young adult identity were as follows: "How would you identify yourself?" "Do you attend events around the community or outside the community promoting the Haitian culture?" and "Do you speak Creole with your friends?" These questions were asked in order to reveal how the participants identified themselves ethnically and how they expressed their ethnic identity on a daily basis. Specific questions within the section on young adult identity addressed organizational participation, particularly in Haitian organizations. Questions such as, "Are you involved with any associations, organizations, etc.? What are their names? How long did you belong? Why did you join?" And, "Are you involved with any associations or organizations that promote the Haitian culture in some way? How long have you been involved? Why did you join? If no, why not? Did you belong in earlier years?" I also asked questions about the racial/ethnic composition of the church they attend and the reasons why the respondents do or do not attend a Haitian church. These questions were asked to find out if participants were affiliated with any organizations, how long they have been involved, provide the information needed to compare participants based on participation in Haitian organizations and help answer the major research questions.

Most of the questions in the section on young adult identity were also used to determine if there was a shift in identity after the earthquake. The questions that were posed to the participants in reference to their identities are as follows: "Are there aspects of the Haitian culture that you embrace? Has this always been that way? Are there aspects that you reject? Why? Has this always been the case?" Lastly, questions were

asked about participants' reaction to the earthquake and involvement with Haiti relief organizations.

The questions relating to participants' reaction to the earthquake were for example, "Do you have friends/family/business connections in Haiti?" "If yes, how often to you speak to them?" and "Do you send money or any types of things to them?" "How often?" "If not, why not?" "Have you taken on any responsibilities for family members or friends?" Respondents were also asked, "Did you make any monetary donations to any organizations?" "Which ones?" "Did you have a preference?" "If no, why not?" "Did you donate other things?" And "Did you volunteer for any organizations helping with the relief effort since the earthquake?" "If yes, which one(s)?" "How long?" "What did you do?" "If no, what prevented you from volunteering?" "Are you currently volunteering now?" Questions from this section were asked in order to gain insight into participants' behavior before and after the earthquake. Also, questions from the "earthquake reaction" section were posed to participants in order to find out if the extent to which they helped out with the relief effort in the U.S. or in Haiti was mediated by past trips to the country, and/or family or organizational connections?

As a second-generation Haitian young adult who has familial ties to the country of Haiti and an involved member in a Haitian organization, I was particularly interested in learning more about the relationship between the significant event, the earthquake, and second-generation Haitians' ethnic identities. My own volunteer experience with the relief efforts and informal conversations with other Haitians in the community revealed an eagerness by many individuals to gain a deeper connection to Haiti and learn more about family members and the Haitian culture. My personal and cultural experiences

granted me an opportunity to illuminate the lives of second-generation Haitian young adults by presenting their shared and unique experiences and show the importance of their experiences using my sociological lens as a guide (Hill Collins 1986). My own background as a second generation Haitian young adult gained me access to this group and the ability to not be viewed as an outsider. In fact on several occasions throughout interviews, participants would attempt to bypass "understood" information because of my background. Whenever this happened I encouraged the participants to elaborate on their comments even if I did believe I knew what they were implying.

My involvement in the Haitian organization granted me easy access to a huge pool of second-generation young adults. However, due to my extensive involvement (I have held several positions on the Executive Board of KL) and close personal ties to a number of members in the KL organization, I deemed it necessary to branch out of this group in order to conduct this study. I obtained referrals from several members of the KL organization and individuals I knew casually, some of whom are members of a Haitian congregation in the Tampa area. After receiving the contact information of my potential participants, I contacted them all by phone to set up the interviews. Before setting up an interview, I reiterated the purpose of my study, provided each participant with a thorough overview of the interview process, and asked them if they had any questions. If the participant still agreed to be a part of the study an interview was scheduled at their earliest convenience.

Interviews took place at several locations; some were conducted in the Sociology Department patio area, and a few interviews were conducted at my residence or the residence of the participant. The data collection of 20 interviews took place between

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September 9th and October 31st 2010. The interviews were transcribed verbatim with the omission of verbal fillers (e.g. "um," "you know"), as well as false sentence starts that are common in speech. The interviews were conducted in English, but Haitian Creole was sporadically spoken throughout the interviews by some of the participants. Respondents would name the types of Haitian foods they liked in Haitian Creole as well as when reiterating the aphorisms by their parents growing up. The translation of Haitian Creole to English was done by me. The data were coded by hand using general themes of interest, some which were the influence of Haitian organizations on religion, ethnic identity, young adult identity, etc.

Interview Data

The study consisted of 20 respondents (10 females, 10 males) ranging from the age of 18 to 30 years old. Most of the respondents were in their mid-20s. Several of the respondents were currently enrolled at a college ranging from freshman to senior status. Two of the male respondents were in graduate school. At the time of the interviews all of the respondents held a degree higher than a high school diploma except for one of the male respondents; all were single except for two of the female respondents who are married (See Table 1).

As for involvement in a Haitian organization, 10 of the respondents were currently involved in a Haitian organization while the other 10 were not members of a Haitian organization. Most of the respondents have been a member of their respective Haitian organization for about a year or more. Two of the respondents who I categorize as being involved in a Haitian organization are members of a local Haitian church in the

Tampa community called L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi[4]. The respondents have been

attending the church for more than ten years.

Aside from the Haitian church membership of the two respondents, all of the

other organizational respondents are members of a Haitian student organization (Konbit

Lakay and Gason Vanyan: Home Community and Valiant Men). The non-organizational

respondents were not currently members of a Haitian organization but some of the

respondents were involved in non-Haitian organizations.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	Age	*Gender*	*Occupation*	*Marital Status*	*Education*
Organization					
Anne (KL)	20	Female	Student	Single	Sophomore
Ashley (KL)	18	Female	Student	Single	Freshman
Isabelle (church)	23	Female	Student	Single	Junior
Michelle (KL)	21	Female	Student	Single	Senior
Rose (KL)	22	Female	Student	Single	Senior
Jada (church)	28	Female	Healthcare Manager	Married	Technical School
Isaiah (KL)	25	Male	Construction worker	Single	1 yr of college
Fritz (KL/church)	23	Male	Student/Sales Acct Manager	Single	Senior
Rick Ross (KL)	19	Male	Student	Single	Sophomore
Samuel (KL)	26	Male	Graduate Student	Single	B.B.A
Non-Organization					
Dana	30	Female	Registered Nurse	Single	BSN, RN
Daphnie	22	Female	Student	Single	Bachelors (Finance)
Ivy	19	Female	Student	Single	Junior

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[4] For the purpose of maintaining anonymity, all names and identities were changed.

Jenny	28	Female	Case Manager	Married	M.S.W
Danny	28	Male	Accountant	Single	Bachelors (Accounting)
Leslie	25	Male	Graduate Student	Single	Bachelors (Civil Eng.)
Jean	25	Male	Student/Admin. Clerk	Single	Junior
Marc	26	Male	Student	Single	Sophomore
Timothy	27	Male	Student	Single	Bachelors (Finance)
Tony	24	Male	Student	Single	Sophomore

Chapter Four: Identities and Culture

Overview

Research has shown that ethnic identity development can continue into young adulthood (Azmitia 2009; Syed et al. 2007; Syed &; Juang et al. 2006). For young adults, ethnic organizations can play a key role in helping individuals re-connect or stay connected to their cultural roots (Espiritu 1994). Second generation immigrants may choose to participate in ethnic student organizations or attend ethnic churches that promote their culture in hopes of learning about cultural origins or staying rooted in the cultural practices (Altman et al. 2010; Min & Kim 2005; Inkelas 2004; Sidanius 2004; Bankston & Zhou 1995). While in college this same group may also join an ethnic student organization in order to find out more about their cultural roots. However, as my study will show the experiences of Haitian young adults vary due to their experiences growing up which influenced their young adult lives as well as their knowledge of the Haitian culture. A significant moment in a second generation Haitian young adult life such as Haiti's earthquake can serve as an impetus to strengthen one's connection to the Haitian culture and Haiti (Nagel 1994; Davis 1986). Using the in-depth interviews I conducted in fall 2010, I will discuss three main themes that emerged from this study. First, I will focus on how second generation young Haitian adults identify in ethnic terms. I will explore the complexities of the second generation respondents' ethnic identities with respect to the differentiations in self-identification and the factors that influence how they self-identify. Secondly, I will discuss why the respondents chose to become

members of a Haitian organization and how they perceive their involvement has influenced their ethnic identity. Lastly, I will explore if involvement in an ethnic organization influenced how the respondents perceived the earthquake affected their ethnic identity, loyalty to family, and desire to visit Haiti, as well as the nature of their response to the earthquake itself (volunteerism, monetary donations).

The Complexities of Ethnic Identity

Many first generation immigrants are emigrating from nation-states that have strong national identities (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). First generation immigrants come to America with strong ethnic identities and holdfast to these identities. However, the children of immigrants are placed in the middle of two cultures (mainstream culture and their parent(s)' culture) which allow them to identify in a myriad of way (Kasinitz et al. 2008).

In this section, I will present the complexities of ethnic identity expressed by the respondents. How the respondents self-identified was influenced by several factors such as the level of connection to the Haitian culture and ethnic labels by outsiders. All but one of the respondents was born in the United States but interestingly one's connection to an ethnic group was more important than one's place of birth when examining the ethnic identities of some of the respondents. With regards to the respondents who identified as Haitian-American, a strong connection to the Haitian culture played a greater role in ethnic identification than place of birth (U.S.A). In order to find out how the respondents identified I asked the question, "How do you identify yourself?" One of the respondents, Fritz, a 23-year old male college student answered the identity question by saying:

> I identify myself as a Haitian-American, I'm Haitian first and then American….so….what I mean I'm Haitian first is that…I speak Creole, born from two Haitian parents….I love the culture, I love some of the aspects, not most but some of the things that we do as a culture. My last name is

> Joseph that says it all, I'm Joseph that means I'm Haitian. I'm not no American, the only reason why I'm American cause I was born here, If my parents didn't make that decision to come to America I'd be a Haitian citizen, I'm Haitian first and then I'm American, I see myself as someone that loves some of the culture aspects.

Fritz's hyphenated identity was influenced more strongly by his connection with the Haitian culture in comparison to the American culture. He claims a Haitian-American identity; however, his only connection to the American identity was based solely on his birthplace. Fritz's connection to the Haitian identity was much stronger and played a major role in how he ethnically identified. He listed several cultural aspects that connected him to the Haitian culture such as his common last name and his language competence. A strong connection to the Haitian culture also held true for Timothy, a 27-year old man who grew up in a migrant, farm community of South Florida with heavy Haitian and Mexican populations. He, too, adopted a Haitian-American identity but expressed that his American identity was more so representative of his birthplace. When I asked Timothy how he identified now he responded:

> I find that to be a question that can be answered in many different ways depending upon who's asking......I actually identify myself as...........(***long pause***)........I would say I identify myself as a Haitian-American, second generation Haitian that's how I really do identify myself. It's because I was born in the United States but pretty much raised in an American culture but at the same time that Haitian culture was very dominate in my life so I have that mixture. I mean I speak the language, I know the traditions I know the history that blood of the people runs through me every single day. I have the high cheek-bones. You name it I pretty much have it.

The strong presence of the Haitian culture in Timothy's life growing up influenced how he ethnically identified presently. His knowledge of the Haitian culture, his language competence, and the self-identified physical features that made him Haitian, connected him on a deeper level to his Haitian identity in comparison to the American culture. It is necessary to point out that this connection to the Haitian culture that both respondents felt was facilitated by the environment in the home growing up. The findings from Jiménez's (2004) study on the ethnic identity of offsprings of Mexican/Non-Hispanic intermarriages

or multiethnic Mexican Americans demonstrated how frequent exposure to the ethnic culture for adolescents can influence ethnic identity development. For both Timothy and Fritz the frequent exposure to Haitian Creole, Haitian food, and traditions growing up helped foster a mature Haitian –American identity as young adults even though they were surrounded by American culture.

Both Timothy and Fritz were confident in expressing how they ethnically identified and in what ways they felt connected to the Haitian culture. However, this was not always the case. As the literature points out, ethnic identity is dynamic, multidimensional, and changes over time and context. How some of the respondents ethnically identified were not influenced by birthplace or connection to the Haitian culture, but rather it was influenced by others. Anne is a 20-year old college student who grew up listening to Haitian music and watching carnival videos in her home and lived in predominately Haitian communities all her life. Anne's response to the identity question is interesting because it presents a conundrum that second generation immigrants face in relation to ethnicity and nationality. Anne's response to my question of identity is as follows:

> *R:* Sometimes I just be like I'm Haitian, people be like you were born here, I'm like no I'm Haitian-American. Sometimes I don't know why but I really (*laughter*) don't feel like putting that American part (*laughter*)
> *I:* **Why**?
> *R:* I don't know it's just I don't feel…I just feel like I'm Haitian and that's it, I don't need to be American but I'm Haitian-American I guess, I have to put it that way.
> *I:* **Why do you have to put it that way?**
> *R:* Cause, just to not confuse people... like you were born in [Haiti], naw I'm Haitian-American so it can make it easier so I don't have to explain "I was born here but my parents were born in Haiti"….or sometimes I say I'm Haitian descent
> *I:* **Which one do you prefer?**
> *R:* Haitian
> *I:* **And which one do you normally say you are?**
> *R:* Haitian descent.

Anne was born in America but by identifying as Haitian, the assumption is made that she was born in Haiti. In order to avoid the confusion and questioning that follows whenever she identifies solely as Haitian she prefers at times to identify as Haitian-American. While Anne would prefer to identify as Haitian only, the pressure of having to identify with her birthplace in relation to her ethnicity limits her ethnic options. At times ethnic identification can be influenced by labels outsiders place on individuals. For example, panethnic identities such as "African," may stem from outsiders' and the nation's homogenization of diverse groups (Nagel 1994). On the other hand others may assert a national identity (even if they were not born in the country of origin) in order to resist outsiders' categorizations of them (Waters 2001). One of the consequences of ethnic identification being imposed on an individual is the inability for an individual to freely choose an identity. Ethnic identification was imposed on several of the respondents while in middle and high school and these identities carried on into young adulthood. For example, throughout middle school and high school Jenny self-identified as Haitian. She attended predominately white schools, but she was antagonized by African-American students while in middle school. Jenny was told she smelled and ate cat. She pointed out that she could not hide her Haitian identity because she displayed ethnic markers such as ribbons in her hair and had an ethnically sounding last name, Pierre. Even though Jenny identified as Haitian throughout her adolescent life, she had a hard time giving a clear response on how she identified now as a young adult:

> Do I consider myself Haitian-American or Haitian? I can't decide….when I go on interviews or when I'm talking to people, sometimes I hear, "Oh where's your accent coming from?" or in an environment where there's all Haitian people, who grew up in Haiti, they tell you, "Oh your Creole is kinda funny."

Whereas Anne's response to the identity question was influenced by others, Jenny's identity was contextual—meaning it depended on the surroundings. Kasinitz (2008) points out during the interviews with Asian Americans that some of the respondents would label themselves as "American" or "Asian American" depending on who is asking. They may label themselves American in order to contrast themselves from immigrant family members. However, when around whites or blacks they are Asian Americans, and around other Asian Americans they take on a national identity such as Chinese, Japanese, etc.

For Jenny, language played a key role in how she identified in certain surroundings. In an environment with native born Haitians, claiming a Haitian identity can be problematic because such a claim while possessing a non-native accent allows for the authenticity of her ethnic identity to be challenged. Rather than identify with an ethnic group, she preferred to be seen as an individual who does not fit into a box. But further along in her response she says:

> I guess I would call myself Haitian-American…….it's a mixture, I'd like to say I take what's good from each thing and then combine them….that's what I would like to think but then again if I'm talking….having a conversation with my husband he's like where were you born again, some of the ideas that I have are so enriched in the culture….again sometimes it can just depend on the environment in which I am at, sometimes like I said I think I take both sides.

Jenny's statement contradicts her previous statement regarding being seen as an individual. But, her final statement asserts her ethnic identity as being Haitian-American. Based on both her statements, her ethnic identity is situational and she is still exploring what it means to be Haitian-American. She embraces both sides of the Haitian and American culture. She acknowledged the influence of both cultures in her life and both of these cultural experiences have impacted her ethnic identity.

While Jenny seemed to have no problem acknowledging the American side of her identity, some of the respondents chose a foreign-born national identity even if they were not born in Haiti. Some of the respondents expressed how their experiences in school growing up influenced their ethnic identities. The school context signifying the racial and ethnic makeup of the middle and high schools played a major role regarding acceptance or rejection of the respondents' Haitian identity. The experiences in middle and high school influenced the respondents' ethnic identities in young adulthood.

Rose, a 22-year old college student, went as far as elementary school in recollecting her identities during adolescence. She admits in elementary school she would try to hide her Haitian identity because Haitian students were getting harassed and beat up in West Palm Beach. But, Rose laughed at how impossible it was to hide her Haitian identity because her mom would dress her up in a dress with puffs, stockings with socks, and put ribbons and barrettes in her hair on the first day of school which at that time marked her as a Haitian. Rose's experiences growing up and the desire to cover up her Haitian identity is not unique to Haitian students in South Florida during that time. In *Pride and Prejudice: Haitians in the United States*, Stepick (1998) highlights the extent that countless Haitian students took in a Miami-Dade county high school in order to cover up their Haitian identities in efforts to avoid the verbal and physical abuse associated with identifying as Haitian. While at Riverside Middle School, a predominately black, public school with a large student population, Rose self-identified as Haitian. Rose's decision to freely claim her Haitian identity in middle school can be attributed to her not allowing outsiders label her. Rose recalled how in 6th grade on Haitian Flag Day she saw students displaying cultural pride with Haitian flags and

thought it was cool to be Haitian. She elaborates on how she identified in middle school

by saying:

> Haitian, but my mom always said two Haitians don't make a Haitian-American. What American blood is flowing through my veins? The only thing American about me is through my experiences.….because I was born in America, I happen to be American but if I was born in Japan that wouldn't make me Japanese, you get what I'm saying. So, I'm still Haitian regardless of where I am, I'm Haitian. So I consider myself to be just Haitian in America.

Rose's Haitian identity carried on from high school into her young adult life. When asked

how she identified herself she responded:

> Haitian, I don't even add the American part on it cause…..living in America every Haitian in America had the identity crisis because….Haitians in America is kind of a brand new thing until now people are starting to find out what Haitian is so I've always had the mentality especially in elementary school I was around a lot of Black Americans, I'll try to hide my Haitianess, they'd beat you up….it didn't become cool to be Haitian until I was in middle school.

Even though she was born in the United States she feels no connection to the American

culture and fully embraces her Haitian identity. Rose expressed a disassociation with

American culture. According to Rose, her distance from American culture, in particular

African American culture stems from the negative treatment she experienced while in

school. As French et al. (2000, 2006) point out, acts of prejudice and discrimination can

motivate the exploration of one's ethnic heritage. Rose's school experiences coupled with

her exposure to the Haitian culture through the Haitian Flag Day celebration sparked a

desire to explore her ethnic identity. In addition, before 2004, Rose's month-long summer

vacations to Haiti with her family helped keep her rooted more so in her Haitian culture

rather than the American culture.

The American racial and ethnic categorizations imposed on immigrant groups put

them in a precarious situation because they have to decide whether they should dissociate

themselves from the label (Mittelberg & Waters 1992). For countless immigrants the

adoption of a national-origin identity is enacted in order to resist outsiders'

categorizations of them (Waters 2001). A dissociation with the proximal group—African Americans— by Haitians was expressed by a few of the respondents. Jada, born in Brooklyn, New York, is a 28-year old married woman and the mother of a 2 year old girl. She recalls her days in middle and high school vividly. In middle school she identified as black American, as she attended a school with predominately black and Hispanic students. Most of Jada's friends were black and Hispanic students but a handful of students knew she was Haitian. She does recall being made fun of, albeit infrequently, at school because of her Haitian identity. The discrimination she was subjected to in middle school did not persist into high school. However, she still identified as black American but would say her parents were Haitian. She attended a public school with a predominantly black and Hispanic student population. She did not have many Haitian students to speak Creole with except for this one Haitian girl whose father was a pastor as well. Jada expressed a love for the African-American culture, especially the Civil Rights movement in high school. However, this love was not present in her young adulthood. When I asked her how she identified now as a young adult she replied:

> *I:* It's so funny…..(*laughter)* this is what I say, I say "Well my family is from Haiti [shyly "that's what I say"] and then I break it down, well my mom and dad are from, my sisters and brothers are from Haiti, but I was born in the States" and that's exactly how I answer…….I'm Haitian, I speak Creole, I don't even say I'm Haitian….
> *R:***Every time?**
> *I:* Never fails….honestly no…to a black person…..that's a lie…no no that's how I respond….Cause I don't get it, I guess I would be Haitian-American…(*thinking*)…because I'm from America and my parents are Haitian, is that why people say they're Haitian-American….because the thing is I don't consider myself as an American, even though I know I am..even though I know I'm born in New York…
> *R:***You don't consider yourself American because?**
> *I:* Because of my parents being Haitian, I consider myself Haitian…it's like I would rather say that I'm Haitian than to say I'm American….I don't know maybe I'm still trying to find myself. I get offended when people think I'm black American.
> *I:* **Because?**
> *R:*I don't want them to think I'm black American ghetto I guess, maybe….I just yea…

Jada shifted her ethnic identification from her adolescent life to her young adult life. She transitioned from a full association with her proximal host, African-Americans, to a desire to disassociate with the group by young adulthood in order to stay clear of the negative stereotypes associated with African-Americans. Jada expressed a yearning to learn more about her Haitian culture during her early 20s. Jada's husband, who immigrated to the United States in his early twenties from Haiti, has been a huge asset during the process in which Jada was learning more about her culture. She talks to her husband constantly about the Haitian culture. Currently, her drive to stay rooted in the culture comes from wanting her daughter to know the culture and speak Haitian Creole.

According to these respondents, the school context provided an avenue for affirmation or rejection of one's ethnic group. But, more importantly, the experiences at school influenced the ethnic identities of the respondents during adolescence which either did or did not transfer into young adulthood. Rose's discriminatory environment at her elementary school coupled with the strong expression of culture at her middle school generated a passion in her to connect to her Haitian culture which persisted into adulthood. On the contrary, Jada's lack of Haitian representation at her middle and high school limited her connection with the Haitian culture. However, her drive to learn more was sparked in her 20s which marked a shift in identification from adolescence (this occurred prior to meeting her husband). Based on the responses provided by Rose and Jada, it can be said that Rose has a mature, secure ethnic identity. Rose was adamant in claiming a foreign-born national identity, Haitian. On the other hand, Jada has not fully committed to her ethnic identity; she is exploring what it means to be labeled Haitian or

Haitian American. Jada's case supports studies on ethnic identity development and how it continues into young adulthood (Syed et al. 2009; Syed et al. 2007; Juang et al. 2006)

While some of the respondents expressed a need to distant themselves from African-Americans, very few of the respondents identified with the label black or African American. Rick Ross, a 19-year old freshman student, lived in North Miami Beach most of his life. Both of Rick Ross' middle and high schools were predominately black and public. He identified as black throughout middle school and high school and had several friends from different ethnic backgrounds. Rick Ross' admiration for the Black Power Movement carried on into young adulthood:

> *R:* Well... generally I'll say I'm Black and if you ask me what's my background, because everyone is a different background or like where their ancestors are from, I'll say Haitian American.
> *I:* **Why do you identified with being black?**
> *R*: Yeah and that's because I respect I guess the movement that was earlier I guess like the Martin Luther King kind of thing, like black is proud, and I feel that having dark skin, I should be proud of it. So when they say black is beauty that's how I feel.

Rick Ross identifies in both ethnic and racial terms. He respects and understands that as a black, Haitian man, without the Civil Rights Movement many things would not be possible for him. His embrace of racial pride started during his adolescent years. According to Rick Ross he never felt discriminated against due to his Haitian identity while in middle or high school. Rick Ross was surrounded by black students while in school and even witnessed a racial war at his school between the black students and the Hispanic students. Rick Ross' experiences coupled with his amicable encounters with black students could be the reason for embracing a black identity.

The excerpt provided above from Rick Ross not only offers a possible reason for his ethnic identification but also illustrates the role of the school context and peer groups in helping to foster a mature, secure ethnic identity. While the school environment played

an important role in helping establish the ethnic identity of Rick Ross which carried on into young adulthood, he seemed confident in how he ethnically identified.

According to Phinney (1993, 1989), an unexamined ethnic identity is marked by the adoption of one's ethnic identity based on messages received by family members and the community about being a member of their ethnic group. Interestingly, while some of the respondents ethnically identified as Haitian based on their connection to the Haitian culture, a few of the respondents chose to identify as Haitian based solely on the nationality of their parents. Ivy, a 21-year old college student attended a small Seventh-Day Adventist private school with an array of Caribbean students until the 10th grade. Ivy has always identified as Haitian and most of her friends at her school were Haitian, Jamaican and Trinidadian. When asked Ivy how she identified, with no hesitation she replied, "Haitian….well my parents are from Haiti so…and they're Haitian so I'm Haitian." Ivy ethnically identified as Haitian based on her parent's birthplace rather than a connection to the Haitian culture.

The same response was given by Isaiah, a 25-year old construction worker who has identified as Haitian since his adolescence. Both his middle school and high school were predominately black and he labeled himself a loner. His circle of friends during this time of his life consisted of his cousins and brothers who were Haitian. When asked how he identified he replied, "Haitian-American…..to me I'm just straight Haitian….cause my mom and dad were born in Haiti….I got a older brother he's 30-years old, he got a daughter and he's married. My sister she's 29, she's married. Those two were born in Haiti plus my mom and dad, me and my twin brother were the only ones born in the United States. I consider myself straight Haitian." Isaiah's response may seem

contradictory at first, but as mentioned earlier some of the respondents identify a certain way due to an imposed identification and a desire to avoid in-depth inquiries and confusion related to one's identity. Because Isaiah was born in America, he may feel pressured to identify as Haitian-American. However, from his perspective he feels he is Haitian based on his parent's birthplace and familial ties. The responses provided by Ivy and Isaiah, demonstrate how ethnic identification was based on their parents' birthplace and familial ties; but they do not express a connection to the Haitian culture. Based on the responses provided by the two it can be inferred that they are still in the unexamined stage of Phinney's (1993, 1989) three stage model.

There was one respondent who was a native-born of Haiti and immigrated to the United States when he was 5-years old. Leslie, a 25-year old graduate student has always identified as Haitian. Leslie describes his days at the public and ethnically diverse middle school he attended as a constant battle. Leslie recalled his middle school experience as a time where he did not spend a month without fighting because he was Haitian. He fought the same group of African-American and Hispanic boys every other week until 8th grade and it restarted in 9th grade until 11th grade. Even with all the turmoil Leslie faced during his adolescence, he never covered up his Haitian identity. When asked how he identified now he noted:

> ....I'm Haitian…because I was born in Haiti….I'm full blood Haitian right, my mom's Haitian, my dad's Haitian, I was born there so I consider myself Haitian….right….I'm just telling you….and plus we live our Haitian culture at home…basically Haitian, I can't call myself American, I just speak English, I'm not American…

Leslie attributed his ethnicity to his nationality. As the only native-born respondent he made it a point to say he is a "full blood Haitian." Leslie's comment presents an issue of ethnic authenticity among ethnic groups. Does an individual have to be born in the land

of their parents in order to identify "fully" with the culture? For some people the answer is "yes," while for many of the respondents the answer is "no."

The interview data on how second generation Haitians self-identified illustrated the complexities of ethnic identification and how it is fluid, changes over time and context, and is multidimensional. How the respondents talked about their ethnic identities highlighted how ethnic identity development continues on into young adulthood. The respondents were in different stages ethnic identity development; some expressed an unexamined identity, others were still exploring their cultural heritage, and some of the respondents expressed a mature, secure ethnic identity. More interestingly, the information provided by the respondents demonstrated how ethnic identification differed within the group and how different factors influenced how they ethnically identified. The respondents ethnically identified in a myriad of ways and the justifications for their labels varied.

One way in which ethnic identification was influenced was through the labels imposed by outsiders; respondents felt the pressure to make the distinction between their nationality and ethnicity in an effort to avoid questions about their ethnic identity. The labels imposed on some of the respondents created an issue of self-identification that was also related to the context of the situation. The issue of outside labels can be attributed to an overarching theme that emerged in the study, ethnic authenticity. Some of the respondents expressed a desire to claim a national identity but because they did not possess certain ethnic markers (native accent), they found themselves self-identifying as Haitian depending on the context. For some of the respondents in Jiménez's (2004) study, an awareness of ethnic boundaries and what makes an individual "Mexican" was

reinforced by family members and peers who made fun of the respondents if they lacked

characteristics associated with being of Mexican descent (e.g. dark skin and ability to

speak Spanish). For some of the respondents in my study, being Haitian meant you were

born in Haiti and know how to speak Haitian Creole. The issue of authenticity at times

limits their ability to claim a solely Haitian identity because they were not born in Haiti

and proficiency in Haitian Creole was not up to par with native-born immigrants.

For the respondents who were born in the U.S., their Haitian and Haitian-

American identifications could be seen as being influenced by their level of connection to

the Haitian culture as well as parents' birthplace. They did not allow the labels imposed

by outsiders to dictate how they identified. As second generation immigrants, the

responses provided by the respondents illustrated how within a group of people ethnic

identification varies and is influenced by different factors. In addition, an interesting

finding was an issue of ethnic authenticity for some of the respondents. The question of

who is allowed to claim a foreign identity by second generation immigrants can be

contested in many circles. The findings from this section demonstrate the complexity of

ethnic identification and the factors that influence self-identification differ for

respondents.

Chapter Five: Organizational/Community Involvement

In exploring the organizational involvement of the respondents I incorporated a comparative analysis by interviewing second generation Haitians in Haitian organizations and those not in Haitian organizations after the earthquake. Ethnic organizations can play a crucial role in helping foster one's ethnic identity. Ethnic organizations on college campuses for young adults can help them explore and forge a stronger connection to one's ethnic group (Kibria 2002). Ethnic organizations outside of college campuses, such as ethnic congregations, can also promote cultural awareness, but the less exclusive manner of non-college ethnic organizations allows for exploration and maintenance of the ethnic culture with individuals of different socioeconomic, educational, and immigrant statuses. A majority of the respondents are currently in college or have obtained a college degree. Because many of the respondents attend or attended college in the Tampa Bay area many of them had the opportunity to join a Haitian organization. In addition, aside from opportunities to join a Haitian organization such as Konbit Lakay, opportunities were available to join volunteer, political, and religious organizations on college campuses as well. Involvement in organizations such as ethnic organizations and volunteer organizations was prevalent among the respondents.

Most of the respondents who are involved in Haitian organizations were members of the student organization Konbit Lakay (Home Community) at a Florida university. Some of the respondents held or currently hold leadership positions in the organization. The purpose of Konbit Lakay is to provide an avenue where members and non-members

can learn about all aspects of the Haitian culture through the general body meetings (topics such as Haitian proverbs, Haiti's elections are discussed) held every Fridays and numerous events held on campus.

The impetus to join an ethnic organization varies across the board for second generation immigrants. In joining an ethnic organization, one theme present in my study was the desire to obtain more knowledge about the Haitian culture. Some of the respondents had a difficult time expressing where the desire to learn more about the Haitian culture emerged. Many of the respondents found themselves on a college campus where ethnic pride is vehemently expressed. Even though most of the respondents expressed a Haitian/Haitian-American identity, an exploration of one's ethnic group may not have taken place in many cases. In line with Phinney's (1993, 1989) three-stage model of ethnic identity development, the next stage that follows an unexamined identity is the exploration of one's ethnic group. An exploration can entail involvement in cultural practices and activities. In joining a Haitian organization for some of the respondents, it marked a shift from an unexamined identity to an exploration of one's ethnic group which involved participation in cultural events and activities sponsored by Konbit Lakay.

The two trips to Haiti for Michelle, the twenty-one year old sophomore in college, were not enough when it came to learning about her culture. Michelle joined Konbit Lakay in Fall 2009 and at first felt awkward being around so many Haitian people. Michelle felt awkward because she did not fit in with the members, particularly the native-born members. The native-born members' lack of acceptance of members who do not speak Creole well and the strict gender role perceptions expressed by these members did not sit well with Michelle. But she stuck through the awkwardness because she

wanted to learn more about her culture after her last mission trip to Haiti. Ever since joining, Michelle has been involved in several committees such as the Miss Haiti Pageant. Michelle joined Konbit Lakay because she wanted to connect even more with her culture and the people. She proudly boasts about the new knowledge she obtained and even shares the information with her parents who are astonished by the amount of information she knows. Michelle's mother has actually told her that she knows more about the Haitian culture than she does.

> When I asked Anne why she joined, she echoed the same sentiments as Michelle:
>
> I feel like I can learn more about the Haitian culture, feel more educated. Sometimes I'll feel kind of....if some people are having a conversation about Haiti or my family have conversations about Haiti, I wouldn't know that much information. All I know is what I've experienced in Haiti or what I've seen. But, I would like to be more educated about where my parents are from, the history of Haiti."

Anne grew up in a home with sisters who migrated from Haiti at an older age and even lived in Haiti as a young child before the age of five. But, even with that cultural exposure Anne did not feel knowledgeable about the Haitian culture. Michelle, on the other hand stopped attending a Haitian church at a very young age, so her exposure to the Haitian culture was intensified during her trips to Haiti and it was after those trips that she felt a desire to learn more. So both respondents' exposure to the Haitian culture varied but before joining Konbit Lakay they had an unexamined ethnic identity. Even for Michelle who went on mission trips, her first time interacting with Haitian people on a consistent basis and participating in cultural activities was through Konbit Lakay. By joining the Haitian organization, however, they are able to explore the different aspects of the Haitian culture and become more educated. Ethnic organizations which are typically found on college campus can help students build awareness and understanding regarding their ethnic group. As Inkelas' (2004) study demonstrated, the involvement by Asian

Pacific American undergraduates in Asian ethnically focused student clubs/organizations helped foster awareness and understanding of Asian Pacific American issues.

For a few of the respondents joining a Haitian organization was sparked by an invitation from a friend or in Dana's case a circumstance drove her to become a member. Dana, a vivacious 30-year old, visited Haiti, after 18 years, and six months after the earthquake on a relief trip with a Christian organization as a nurse. Before coming to Tampa, Dana was in college in Orlando but left for reasons she did not

want to disclose. Dana's reaction to seeing the Haitian Student Organization (HSO) revealed an unexamined identity on Dana's part. Dana's exposure to the Haitian organization HSO in Orlando created a shift in her ethnic identification. Before joining Dana identified as Haitian-American but shifted to a Haitian identity. Dana explained:

> When I came to college, I used to say yea I'm Haitian but I'm Haitian-American. I was all into my American music, my American culture. I was pro-America and I got around HSO in Orlando…..and these people made Haiti seem like the most beautiful thing. When I tell you the way they danced, the way they carry themselves, these meetings….they made me love Haiti. That's when I ran for Miss Haiti. I want to be Miss Haiti, I was excited…..I like how they make Haiti seem like it's the best.

The passion Dana had for the Haitian culture while in Orlando was transmitted to Tampa when she joined Konbit Lakay. While a member of Konbit Lakay she was involved with several committees, helping the chair of the social committee coordinate cultural events such as Konbit Night (a "night" in Haiti—in which people play dominoes, card games, tell stories and jokes, and eat a variety of fried foods). Dana's passion for the Haitian culture was sparked when she was introduced to the Haitian organization in Orlando; before that moment she was unaware of her culture. Ethnic organizations provide an avenue for individuals who are unaware of their ethnicity an opportunity to get introduced and claim their cultural roots. Jenny, too, was unaware of her Haitian culture

until she attended a Konbit Lakay meeting with a friend who had previously joined; from that moment on her involvement in Konbit Lakay increased.

> I think being a part of that organization exposed me to a different side of the culture that I was not aware about…because I grew up in a very Southern Baptist, very religious family, very ingrained in the church and things like that, I really didn't know there were other types of music except for the gospel. I honestly thought all Haitian music were hymns so it exposed me to learn about the other types of Haitian music, the Kompa….I didn't know music like that exist. It opened doors to really learn about the other things.

Growing up in a religious home left Jenny isolated from the many aspects of the Haitian culture. While she did attend a Haitian Baptist church which helped reinforce the Haitian language and some of the traditions, Jenny was left unaware of the other aspects such as the music. Jenny's involvement in the Konbit Lakay provided a way for her to learn about the different aspects of the Haitian culture such as music and become more aware about current events and gain cultural knowledge.

Dana has not been a member of a Haitian organization since 2008 because she feels she is getting too old. Also, she wants to refocus her life and pursue her dream of starting her own publishing company. Dana's primary focus has changed since entering college which is not surprising. In *Mexican New York: Transitional Lives of New Immigrants,* Smith (2006) presents the transitional life courses of the second and 1.5 generation Mexican immigrants. He points out that the life courses—passage through life stages— of the Mexican immigrants influenced their level of participation in transnational life. Life courses can also impact the level of involvement in organizations due to new responsibilities such as jobs, children, spouses, etc. Some of the older respondents were not as involved in a Haitian organization or any other organization due to their responsibilities. Jenny, who is now married, finds her time very limited balancing two jobs and spending quality time with her husband. Jenny's work responsibilities and her desire to spend time with her husband take precedent in her life which leaves little

time to participate in organizational activities. While in college Timothy was active in

Konbit Lakay, participating in everything he could be a part of in the organization. Even

after finishing college he would still attend meetings and events sponsored by Konbit

Lakay as well as other Haitian events in the community. Timothy was also involved in

other organizations such as mentoring young black children in the community. But,

currently Timothy expressed a lack of involvement in any organization as a choice in

order to focus on different projects in his life such as his vision to transform Haiti through

his mission trips to Haiti.

For the respondents who were members of a Haitian church, participation in

weekly services, bible study—even leading bible study, lead singing, and other modes of

participation facilitated an environment where the Haitian culture was transmitted. The

reinforcement of the Haitian language as well as the constant transmission of cultural

traditions is shared among the church members. As Yang (1999) points out religious

organizations, such as churches, worship centers, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc., can

serve as both avenues to learn about mainstream culture and more importantly support

the preservation of traditional culture. I was able to attend two Sunday morning services

conducted by the church in October. On both visits I walked in during the Praise and

Worship[5] portion of the service. The Praise Team[6] consisted of four young ladies and in

the background was the band, all men, playing different instruments such as the

keyboard, bass guitar, ashiko drum, drum set on stage. The Praise Team led the members

in singing, both in English and Haitian Creole. On my first visit the sermon was delivered

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[5] A team of singers who lead the church service in songs.

[6] A section in the service dedicated to singing.

by the assistant pastor and it was predominately in Haitian Creole but he used English sporadically. The reading of the scripture from the bible was read in French. On my second visit there was a guest speaker from Haiti named Pastor Joseph. Pastor Joseph was a young looking man with amazing charisma. As he preached he switched from English and Haitian Creole, appealing to both the older and younger generation at the church. Overall, both services were conducted in English and Haitian Creole and it was apparent L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi promoted the Haitian culture through their worship services.

The respondents who decided to attend a Haitian church expressed a desire to stay rooted in the Haitian culture. While in elementary school, Fritz's parents were in nursing school so English was predominately spoken in the house in order for his parents to learn it. As he got older he consciously told himself he needed to improve his language proficiency in Creole. So, he started listening more intently to what his parents would say in Creole. Fritz attends L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi in order to stay rooted in his culture:

> That's the only way I'm gonna keep my Creole, be around people I can easily associate myself with…… I've been going to a Haitian church my whole life, so for me to go to an American church it'll feel like I'm out of place…I feel like I'm not connected, yea we're going for one thing, we're following one thing, but the difference is we're speaking Creole.

Fritz wants to keep his proficiency in the Haitian language and fortunately he attends a church whose services are predominately in Haitian Creole. The preservation of the Haitian language is very important and one way in which second generation immigrants can do this is by attending a Haitian congregation. But, in order for the preservation of the native language to take place, it should be incorporated into the services. Min and Kim's (2005) study which surveyed Korean English-language congregations revealed that the transmission of Korean traditions was not taking place due to the entire

elimination of Korean cultural components during worship. Min and Kim's study illustrate the importance of cultural preservation in ethnic congregations.The benefits of attending an ethnic congregation were acknowledged by the respondents. For Isabelle, the transmission of the Haitian culture at L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi was the main reason why she attends the church.

> I love how we stick to our roots with the Haitian music and everything because I don't like to go to a Haitian church and then all I'm hearing is American music. If that's the case I woud've went to an American church. So, I love the fact we still use our Chan D'esperans [Haitian hymn book] once in a while. I love the fact we sing in Creole, the fact that we remix our songs too.

When Jada was pregnant the ladies at her church gave her extensive advice regarding her pregnancy before and after. She was thankful for the valuable knowledge that emphasized her cultural background. In comparison to an ethnic organization on a college campus, non college ethnic organizations, such as the Haitian church, consists of all types of people. As one of the respondents in Smith's (2004) study points out, members in ethnic organizations outside of college campuses meet individuals they would not associated with otherwise. In Jada's case, the demographic composition of her church consisted of older immigrants who previously lived in Haiti and are knowledgeable about the cultural practices. The knowledge Jada received, she believes, would not have been the same at an American church. By being a member of L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi in contrast to a non-Haitian church, Jada is able to stay connected to her culture and learn different cultural traditions and practices. For example, the traditions that are performed after childbirth differ between cultures. So, the information that was passed on to Jada from the church members was invaluable to her. The cultural environment in which Jada is surrounded by at L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi helps foster her

Haitian identity. A positive attitude is being cultivated and a feeling of belonging motivates Fritz, Isabelle, and Jade to stay members of the Haitian church.

The reason for lack of participation in a Haitian organization varied among the non-involved respondents. For some of the respondents an active choice was expressed. Daphnie is an involved college student, volunteering at the Veterans Hospital since the summer of 2010 for about five hours a week and attends lectures and volunteers with the Public Health Association of Students. However, she has not joined Konbit Lakay because she does not feel the members are her type of people. She elaborates even further by saying, "I feel like some of them are so fake sometimes and I feel like a lot of them kind of mimic a lot of things that African-Americans do…..use the N word, dress the way they dress….there's no connection there for me" (*laughter*). Daphnie prefers to just be herself rather than feel like she has to be connected to solely one culture—Haitian culture. She does not feel connected to every aspect of being Haitian or American. Daphnie's rejection of the members of the Haitian organization who demonstrate or represent African-American culture shows her rejection of this culture. More interesting is Daphnie's expressed attitude of not feeling obligated to one culture. She lives in between two worlds but does not feel fully connected to either. Daphnie faced racial discrimination at the hands of African American students and her friendship circles in middle and high school were predominately white students. The lack of exposure to Haitian students at her schools left Daphnie with little exposure to Haitian culture which can account for her attitude of not feeling connected to either Haitian or African American culture fully.

Tony, also a non-member, would rather not be associated with anything and just keep to himself because he feels labels, in particular cultural labels, separate people. Tony has been to Konbit Lakay's meetings a few times due to him wanting to encounter different people in college and hearing people talk about Haiti. However, that was a year ago. When I asked Tony about his experience while at Konbit Lakay his answer reflected a feeling of rejection by the members because he did not possess certain cultural markers.

> *R:*I went to Konbit Lakay a couple of times here and so I sat in there and then I was like I don't want to be around all these Haitians (*laughter)*
> *I:* **You don't feel comfortable or?**
> *R* Yea, because a lot of Haitians would be like oh you're not Haitian because you don't speak Creole and I'm like wow whatever……so I had to defend myself and be like I have family members….
> *I:* **How does that make you feel?**
> *R:* My friend would say "You're not Haitian-American, you're American-Haitian…but I was like you know what I'd rather not be associated with anything, I just want to be.

The issue of ethnic authenticity is illustrated in Tony's response. Tony's experience at Konbit Lakay illuminates a point expressed by Jiménez (2004) with respect to negotiating ethnic boundaries among multiethnic Mexican Americans. While organizations that celebrate Mexican and Mexican American ethnicity are important places for ethnic expression, membership does not necessary mean acceptance by Mexican American peers. A feeling of rejection or a feeling of being an outsider at gatherings made some of the respondents in the study doubt their own right to be members. Tony's inability to speak Creole played a major role in the members not accepting him as Haitian.

In *Becoming Asian American,* Kibria (2002) studied second-generation Asian-Americans and their lack of involvement in Asian American organizations. One of the themes expressed by the respondents was the sentiment that being part of an ethnic community at times can limit one's freedom of choice and promote group conformity. Group conformity can entail behaving like the members of the organization or possessing

the same "Haitian cultural capital." Tony preferred not to be associated with anything and just have the freedom to be himself. But, it would be interesting to see if Tony would express these same sentiments if the topic of authenticity was not a major issue in claiming a Haitian identity.

The issue of authenticity expressed by the respondents played a role in their decision to not join a Haitian organization. This barrier of authenticity experienced by second generation Haitians in Haitian organizations poses a major problem. Where are second generation Haitians who want to immerse themselves in the culture and interact with other Haitians suppose to go if they do not feel accepted in Haitian organizations? An important aspect to achieving a secure, mature ethnic identity involves immersing oneself in one's culture. So, individuals who are deprived of this experience are not given an opportunity to explore their ethnic identity which leaves them stuck in a precarious, committed stage.

Another group of respondents were not involved in a Haitian organization or any other organization for that matter due to lack of opportunity and time constraints with jobs and school schedules. Jean currently attends a community college where there is not a Haitian organization; however, he plans on joining Konbit Lakay when he transfers to the local university. Also, because Jean does not have a car, proximity plays major role in the things he can participate in. While Jean is not a part of a Haitian organization, he is a member of a local bible study club for Baptist students called *Christian Mission.* Jean is involved in this organization because he gets to talk about the spiritual aspects of issues and bond with fellow Christians. Marc, a 26 year-old college student, is not involved in a Haitian organization but he does volunteer once a week with the organization *Feed*

America which makes and delivers meals to feed the elderly. When I asked Marc why he

started working with this organization he responded:

> Well one thing that I do love is old people. I love talking to old people, I just think they have so much to say. Also, just to keep busy and be involved, just to make a difference. So that when I die people come to my funeral. Just to feel needed.

As the analysis shows, the respondents chose to become members of a Haitian

organization or not affiliate with a Haitian organization for different reasons. The college

experience definitely facilitated an opportunity for a majority of the members to get

involved. Being a part of a Haitian organization was perceived by the respondents as an

avenue to build a committed ethnic identity and increase their knowledge base of the

Haitian culture. Respondents chose to participate in a non college ethnic organization

such as a Haitian church because it allowed them to stay rooted in the Haitian culture

through the preservation of the Haitian language during worship services and cultural

practices such as singing in Haitian Creole. As for the respondents who are not members

of a Haitian organization, a choice was exercised. An issue of authenticity among other

second generation Haitians and a need for individuality are factors that influenced why

the respondents did not choose to be members of a Haitian organization. However, one

can also argue that learning more about the Haitian culture is not of concern for them at

this moment in their lives, particularly, for the respondents who are currently focusing on

school and meeting financial responsibilities.

Chapter Six: Earthquake Reaction

Historically, significant events have played a crucial role in helping individuals foster a connection to one's cultural heritage or strengthen one's sense of belonging (Roehling 2010; Davis 1992; Fothergill 1999). During the Civil Rights Movement countless college students joined organizations such as Black Student Union in order to stay connected to the Black culture (Maultsby 1983). A significant event such as Haiti's earthquake was an event that received worldwide media coverage and immediate relief response. How each respondent heard about Haiti's earthquake differed; many found out through a text message or through social network sites such as Facebook. A majority of the respondents' initial reaction to the news of the earthquake was a feeling of shock and disbelief. After the initial shock, the respondents made phone calls to parents and friends in attempts to find out how they were doing and how their family members in Haiti were doing. Two of the respondents were especially worried after hearing about the earthquake because their fathers were in Haiti at the time. Luckily, both respondents' fathers were not near the epicenter of the earthquake at the time so they were unharmed. All of the respondents have family members living Haiti. In exploring how the respondents reacted after the earthquake, it is important to understand their connection to the country of Haiti. Even though all of the respondents have family members living in Haiti, the manner in which they keep in touch with them varies.

A majority of the respondents keep in touch with family members in Haiti by way of their mothers who relay family news. Some respondents even talk to family members

in Haiti but that is typically whenever a parent has initiated the call. The indirect nature

of communication between the respondents and family members in Haiti is a result of

unfamiliarity. Leslie, who left Haiti at the age of five, used to keep in contact with family

members in Haiti, more specifically his cousins who are around his same age. But, when

those same cousins moved to the United States his calls to Haiti ceased. Leslie's

unfamiliarity with the family members who are still in Haiti causes him to communicate

with them through his mother:

> **Do you initiate the calls?** It's when my mom makes the call because I don't know who I'm calling so basically my mom makes the call and she gives me the phone and I'll talk to them but I don't know who I'm talking to. They give me the name of the person but it's like you talking to a perfect stranger...

Even when Leslie is aware he is talking to a family member on the phone, the lack of

face-to-face contact with family members in Haiti makes him feel like he is talking to a

perfect stranger. The unfamiliarity with family members in Haiti makes initiating a call

intimidating and leaves respondents feeling disconnected to the country itself. Marc, a

26-year old college student, last visited Haiti 13 years ago. Marc's lengthy hiatus from

Haiti is attributed to the disconnection he feels for the country.

> *I:* **So you haven't been back since [last trip]?**
> *R:* No I haven't been.
> *I:* **Is that your choice?**
> *R:* ………I'd say that it is mostly my choice……and just the fact that I'm not really that close with too much family down there. Just more so like my immediate family like my grandparents, my immediate cousins. Those are the people that I really communicate with.
> *I:* **Do you want to go back?**
> *R:* [laughs]….I don't know….
> *I:* **If I had asked prior to the earthquake would you have been more willing to go back?**
> *R:* I mean….I wouldn't mind going to Haiti, I mean I wouldn't but I really can't see the reason for me to go because like I said, I'm really not too close with the family that I have down there. So other than that, I don't really know what I would go down there to do. Like I would go probably just to go or to see the country and visit. But other than that, I don't see a reason. Well the motivation for now. Unless maybe if I have a death in the family or something immediate that needs me to go, I'll go otherwise, not now.

Marc's disinterest in visiting Haiti and his feelings of disconnect to the country can be

attributed to his unfamiliarity with family members in Haiti. The lack of visitations to the

country for Marc and Leslie do not allow them to foster a relationship with family members in Haiti or a connection to the country due to unfamiliarity.

A feeling of disconnection between family members in Haiti and respondents was prevalent, but there were respondents who did have relationships with family members prior to the earthquake, who after the earthquake saw their relationships intensify. The family relationships of these respondents after the earthquake can be attributed to both a personal desire and the level of connection to family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake. Being the youngest and the only child born in America in comparison to her three brothers who were born in Haiti, Dana's connection to her family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake was made possible through her siblings who visit Haiti often and who are very close to family in Haiti. The closeness displayed by her siblings with family members in Haiti pushes Dana to be more close to them as well. After 18 years, Dana finally visited Haiti six months after the earthquake on a relief trip with a medical organization volunteering as a nurse. Dana's connection to Haiti was strengthened during her first trip and subsequent trip in July with a for-profit organization educating teens about leadership in Cap Haïtien. As far as her relationship with family in Haiti, before the earthquake Dana talked to her family in Haiti sporadically but that changed after the earthquake, now she talks to them all the time.

> *R:* Well I stayed in contact with them off and on, I always sent money and things there but I became more into their life, into doing stuff for them after the earthquake, after....going over there and seeing how bad the situations were and it hit home. I was like if I'm going to help other people I might as well help my family as well. And of course you have to naturally help your family but I wasn't born in Haiti. The person that's really close to them is my siblings and so its push me to be more closer to them
> *I:* **More so now meaning?**
> *R:* Highly involved, call them all the time…we talk…

She also used to send money to her family before the earthquake, but after personally viewing the situation in Haiti she has decided to help out even more. She wants to be

closer to her family in Haiti which is why she calls them more now. More interestingly, before the earthquake Dana would send her two goddaughters toys mainly on Christmas. However, now she has taken up the responsibility of funding their education. The response to the earthquake by Dana was marked by a greater push to get closer to her family members in Haiti. She exhibited her desire to be more involved by an increase in phone calls to Haiti and taking on the responsibility of her goddaughters' education. While Dana is currently not involved in a Haitian organization, her love for the country of Haiti and her passion for the Haitian culture was fostered years ago when she was involved in a Haitian organization. Dana's past involvement in Konbit Lakay coupled with her familial ties made her response to the earthquake resemble that of the respondents who were involved in Haitian organizations.

Timothy talks to aunts, uncles, and cousins once every month and prior to the earthquake would send money to support individuals with events such as weddings or education expenses. However, things have changed for Timothy since the earthquake:

> Prior to the earthquake the money thing was always there but after the earthquake it became more of an initiative rather than something that was not really….more so a plan and just something I just do but now it has to be something that has to be consistent. So, now it's more so consistent with me and it has become a part of my budget, not just something I just did every once and a while so it's more so consistent.

Both Dana and Timothy's remittances to Haiti increased after the earthquake. Dana was able to view the destruction of the earthquake in person and felt moved to increase her remittances. Timothy, on the other hand, because of his established relationships with family in Haiti prior to the earthquake coupled with his understanding of the dire situation after the earthquake increased his remittances. Taking responsibility for family members in Haiti after the earthquake was only expressed by Dana and Timothy who not surprisingly are among the older respondents. The respondents' stage in life can

contribute to a feeling of obligation to support family in the U.S. as well as in Haiti. In addition, due to Dana and Timothy's stage in life their job stability afforded them the resources to send remittances.

Aside from significant events having the potential to influence the ethnic identities of individuals, the findings from this study also highlight how significant events have the possibility of influencing the transnational ties of second generation immigrants. Studies by scholars on transitional ties of second generation immigrants show a minority of individuals send remittances, show an interest in and are involved in home-country politics, and make visits to their home country (Kasinitz, Waters, Mollenkopf, & Anil 2002, Ueda, 2002, Rumbaut 2002). While increased transnational ties cannot explicitly be attributed to involvement in a Haitian organization in the past for Dana and Timothy, their prior organizational involvement according to the respondents did help spark a passion for the Haitian culture which has continued on after discontinuing their membership years later. Inkelas (2004) points out in her study on Asian Pacific American students that one of the implications of involvement in ethnic-specific and multicultural diversity activities appears to be heightened sense of engagement with their APA community in the long run.

A majority of the respondents—who were college students—did not send money to family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake or even now due to their financial circumstances. As college students, the respondents adamantly expressed the difficulties in taking care of themselves at times. Even though the respondents who are in college do not send money some of them send other stuff such as clothes and school supplies with family members who travel to Haiti yearly.

In response to the earthquake, the avenues through which each respondent made donations varied and were influenced by convenience and credibility regarding the organization providing relief to Haiti. Because the Red Cross was viewed as a credible organization, a majority of monetary donations given by the respondents were made to the American Red Cross. In addition, the convenience offered by the American Red Cross to make donations through texting contributed to respondents predominately donating to this organization. All of the respondents made monetary, clothing, and/or food donations to the Red Cross, another non-profit organization, or a Haitian church (most were affiliated with the Red Cross).

While a distinction was not found in donation patterns between the respondents involved in a Haitian organization and those who were not, there was a difference in volunteer patterns between the two groups. Of the respondents who were able to volunteer with an organization helping with the relief efforts, most of the respondents were involved in a Haitian organization. Isabelle started a relief drive collecting money at her local community college which she attended at the time for about two weeks. She also helped pack donations made to the Red Cross at her local Community Center. Rose helped organize and fold clothes at a local church for a few weeks.

> *I:* **Were you able to volunteer with any organizations that were helping out with the relief efforts in Haiti?**
> *R:* Oh yea….there was this church that was collecting clothes so yea I worked over there. I worked with them when they were organizing stuff and like folding and cleaning and stuff like that.
> *I:* **Why did you pick that?**
> *R:* I didn't know of anywhere else but Konbit Lakay was already doing the clothing drive with them and it was the last day and I guess nobody was willing to go, well nobody else had time and there was a lot of clothes still left so I was just like okay I didn't have class that day. So, I just kept going back over there and I saw they needed a lot of help and so from then on I started working with them.

The respondents mentioned above are involved in a Haitian organization. Both respondents volunteered on behalf of the Haitian organizations in which they held

membership. The Haitian organizations served as bases of information for members who wanted to get involved with the relief efforts in Tampa as well as a network tool for those who wanted to travel to Haiti.

Interestingly, while Dana and Timothy are not currently involved in a Haitian organization they did volunteer their time during the relief efforts. Timothy volunteered his service with the Haitian Coalition and other faith-based organizations in Tampa. He helped transport all types of items that were being donated at the local Community Center. Dana took her volunteer efforts abroad by actually going to Haiti with a medical organization. She translated for doctors and nurses during their visits to orphanages and hospitals. For Dana it was a very emotional trip and she found herself crying every day. While Dana and Timothy are not members of a Haitian organization, they used to be members. So, their level of involvement during the relief efforts resembled the respondents who identified with a Haitian organization. Moreover, they still have social ties to the Haitian organization in which they were involved in as well as others in the local community which allowed them to stay informed about the relief efforts in Tampa. This continual connection was expressed by Timothy who shared how he found out about volunteer and missionary opportunities after the earthquake through the various organizations he once was a member of.

> I discovered the opportunities through the various community organizations such as The Haitian Coalition, several Haitian churches, and [Florida University]. The Haitian Alliance communicated with me through text messages and email. The Haitian churches gave announcements during church service on the various missionary efforts. [Florida University] put the message out through email and announcements through various student organizations such as Konbit Lakay.

For the respondents who were not able to volunteer during the relief efforts a majority of them were not members of a Haitian organization. They commonly stated

work/school schedule as a reason for not being able to volunteer during the relief efforts for Haiti. In the case of Ivy, a non-member, she did not feel a connection to Haiti because she does not know anything about the country. Ivy's parents never took her to Haiti and she does not have a desire to go herself even after the earthquake. While Ivy did donate clothes to her church back home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, she did not volunteer with any organizations helping with the relief efforts:

> *I:* **Were you able to volunteer with any organizations during the relief efforts?**
> *R:* No, I probably was but I didn't.
> *I:* **Is there a reason why you didn't?**
> *R:* No, I just don't usually volunteer….I know that's bad.
> *I:* **You don't usually volunteer because?**
> *R:* ……no, just….either busy or doing something else…..nothing against volunteering, it's all good. But I'm usually caught up, busy doing something else and yea I didn't even donate to the Red Cross that's so bad….but I did watch the specials on t.v.

Ivy had a nonchalant attitude when she expressed her reasoning for not volunteering. The lack of connection to the country of Haiti and the culture can be seen as contributing factors to her lackluster attitude especially since she noted she probably could have volunteered. Based on her response the opportunity was there but not the desire. The argument could be made that if she was involved in a Haitian organization the desire to help may have been greater since she more than likely would have felt a connection to the country through her involvement.

While only two of the respondents intensified their contact with family members in Haiti after the earthquake, two of the respondents, including Isabelle, expressed a desire to go to Haiti after the earthquake. Isabelle, an active member at L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi, has never been to Haiti. Most of her family members live in the United States. At first she did not want to step foot in Haiti because she knew she was going to be labeled an American and she does not speak Creole very well. However, ever since the

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earthquake she wanted to go to Haiti especially to help out. Isabelle's reasoning for not going yet is the fact that she does not have a passport.

Anne expressed a constant desire to go to Haiti in order to see her father's grave; however, her desire intensified after the earthquake.

> Yea, after the earthquake I really wanted to go see how it look like with my own personal eye and see where my momma's house was originally…..and if anything I can help her with getting things back together or selling stuff or anything like that cause all my siblings are here. The only person she really has in Haiti to help her is my aunts.

An increased desire to go to Haiti was expressed by respondents who were members of a Haitian organization. Both Isabelle and Anne continue to explore their ethnic identity through their involvement in their Haitian organization and are pleased to learn more about their cultural heritage through the organizations. Isabelle's intensified desire to go to Haiti after the earthquake was fostered by her emotional reaction to the earthquake. As a student majoring in public health, she desires to help others. The combination of Isabelle's passion to help and a strong sense of connection to the Haitian culture contributed to her wish to go to Haiti. In contrast to Isabelle, Anne has been to Haiti twice but has not been back since 2000. Her intensified desire to go to Haiti after the earthquake was attributed more so to helping her mom rebuild her home and finally visit her father's grave. In response to the earthquake a desire to connect to their parents' native land was expressed. In response to a significant event, ethnic affirmation can take place where an individual explores their cultural roots for the first time or an individual reconnects with one's ethnic group. In the case of Isabelle and Anne, ethnic affirmation in terms of exploring her parent's native home for the first time is taking place for Isabelle; Anne, on the other hand is reconnecting to a country she once knew.

In response to the earthquake, a shift in ethnic identification was not expressed by any of the respondents. However, the actions and desires of a few respondents did transform. For the respondents who had relationships with family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake, they increased their remittances and phone calls to family members after the earthquake. However, for the respondents who had not established a relationship with family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake, a relationship was not cultivated after the earthquake. In fact, a majority of the respondents expressed an indirect form of communication with family in Haiti by way of parents. Many of the respondents' unfamiliarity with family members in Haiti prior to the earthquake did not spark a longing to reconnect after the earthquake. Unsurprisingly, one feature that all the respondents (members and non-members of Haitian organizations) did share was a willingness to help out during the relief efforts, particularly with monetary and clothing donations. However, a distinction was made between members and non members of a Haitian organization or even past involvement. Respondents who were able to volunteer with an organization during the relief efforts were mostly individuals who were members of a Haitian organization. Active involvement in a Haitian organization provided members with an avenue to stay informed about volunteer opportunities in Tampa for the relief efforts in Haiti. Ethnic affirmation was expressed by a few of the respondents, as the respondents talked about a desire to visit Haiti after the earthquake.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The goals of this thesis were to examine the ethnic identities of second generation young Haitian adults, specifically looking at how and why they chose to ethnically identify. Secondly, I examined why second generation Haitians chose to be involved in a Haitian organization and how they self reported their experiences had influenced their ethnic identities. Lastly, I compared second generation Haitians involved in a Haitian organization and the respondents who were not and examined how they described the effects of the earthquake on their ethnic identities, loyalty to family, desire to visit Haiti, and how they responded to the earthquake.

My findings on the ethnic identities of the second generation Haitians contribute to the existing literature on ethnic identity development in young adulthood. My analysis of the self-reported data provided by the respondents illustrated that the development of a mature, secure ethnic identity is still ongoing even in young adulthood. In line with the literature on ethnic identity development in young adulthood, my findings showed ethnic identities can be contextual and still unresolved (Syed & Azmitia 2009; Syed et al. 2007). Ethnic identification among the respondents varied and different factors influenced their self-identification. The respondents were in different stages in terms of ethnic identity development; some expressed an unexamined identity, others were still exploring their cultural heritage, and some of the respondents expressed a mature, secure ethnic identity.

Rumbaut (1993) identifies four ethnicities that immigrants can adopt: pan-ethnic, foreign national, hyphenated American, or American national. These identities were

adopted by the respondents for different reasons. A hyphenated-American identity (Haitian-American) was adopted by several of the respondents but the ethnic label had different meanings within the group. Some of the respondents talked about a strong presence of the Haitian culture in their lives growing up, specifically in the home, which influenced how they ethnically identified as young adults. Prior research on family context and ethnic identity development supports this finding (Jiménez 2004; Umaña-Taylor & Fine 2004; Phinney, Irma, Nava, & Huang 2001). The Haitian-American identity was also adopted due to the labels outsiders placed on the respondents. While Nagel (1994) points out, pan-ethnic identities such as West Indian or black can stem from outsiders' and the nation's homogenization of diverse groups, my findings also suggest that labeling can also take place by members of one's own ethnic group but in relation to foreign-born national identities (Haitian). Respondents who reported a Haitian-American identity claimed this identity in certain situations. Kasinitz et al. (2008) found that around other Asian-Americans, Asian Americans self-identified on a national level (Chinese, Japanese) and around blacks and whites they were Asian-American. My findings revealed the same trend, but interesting, claiming a foreign-national identity (Haitian) when one was not born in Haiti or does not possess a non-native accent brings up an issue of authenticity. This finding is an area that the literature on ethnic identity needs to further address.

Even with the issue of ethnic authenticity, some of the respondents did self-identify as solely "Haitian" due to a resistance to outside labels, past acts of prejudice and discrimination, or a desire to disassociate with their proximal group (African Americans). Waters (2001) points out that a national identity (even if they were not born in the

country of origin) may be adopted in order to resist outsiders' categorizations of them. French et al.'s (2000, 2006) studies illustrated that acts of prejudice and discrimination can motivate the exploration of one's ethnic heritage. For the respondents who adopted a pan-ethnic/foreign national identity (black, Haitian) they acknowledged the role race played in their lives. Even though how the respondents ethnically identified differed, based on the stages of ethnic identity development outlined by Phinney (1993, 1989), the respondents overall were in the exploration stage of development. Based on the reports, a few of the respondents seemed to possess mature and secure ethnic identities. However, a few of the respondents reported ethnic identities that they solely attributed to the nationality of their parents. According the Phinney's (1993, 1989) ethnic identity development model, the respondents who chose to identify as Haitian because their parents were Haitian can be seen as still in the unexamined stage. The findings on ethnic identity development among the respondents were supported by past research, especially with respect to ethnic identity exploration being present in young adulthood. Some of the findings add to the existing literature on ethnic identity development among young adults.

The second goal of my study was to examine why second generation Haitians chose to be involved in Haitian organizations and how they reported their experiences had influenced their ethnic identities. The perceived influence of being involved in Haitian organizations, more specifically on a college campus, on the ethnic identities of the respondents aligned with the research on ethnic organizations (Inkelas 2004; Sidanius 2004). While some of the respondents could not pinpoint where their desire to join a Haitian organization came from, they had no problem expressing how their involvement

(learning about different aspects of the Haitian culture) helped build awareness and understanding of the Haitian culture. For the respondents who joined a Haitian organization based on a desire to learn more about the Haitian culture, the way in which they talked about how their involvement influenced their ethnic identity illustrates the movement from an unexamined stage to an exploration stage. Exploration, the second stage in Phinney's (1993,1989) three-stage model, entails an intense immersion in one's culture through several avenues such as reading, participating and going to cultural events, and interacting with people. Respondents involved in a Haitian organization outside the college campus reported their participation in a Haitian congregation. Past literature on religious organizations in relation to ethnic identity points out how these organizations support the preservation of traditional culture (Yang 1999; Bankston & Zhou 1995). My findings support previous literature on religious participation and ethnic identity. The respondents who were members of the Haitian church, L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi, attended because of the preservation of Haitian language (through songs and sermons). In comparison to ethnic organizations on college campuses where the demographic composition is typically homogenous, the heterogeneous demographics at churches allows for the interaction of individuals from different backgrounds and a wealth of cultural knowledge to be disseminated between generations. The distinctions in ethnic organizations represented in this study highlight how these organizations cater to different cultural needs for second generation immigrants, but both types of organizations serve an important purpose.

The lack of involvement in a Haitian organization by the respondents was mediated by different factors. In her study on second generation Asian Americans and

their lack of involvement in Asian American organizations, Kibria (2002) found that involvement in an ethnic organization at times can limit one's freedom of choice and promote group conformity. One of the respondents expressed an attitude of not feeling obligated to one culture (Haitian or American); she preferred to be herself. Another reason respondents did not join a Haitian organization was due to an issue of ethnic authenticity which is highlighted by Jiménez (2004) in his study on multiethnic Mexican Americans. Another group of respondents were not involved in Haitian organizations or any other organization for that matter due to a lack of opportunity and time constraints with jobs and school schedules. My findings on organizational involvement were supported by the existing literature on this topic and more importantly they reinforced the significance of ethnic organizations in the lives of second generation immigrants.

An interesting group within the non-member group involved respondents who were in a Haitian organization in the past. Smith's (2006) work on the life course of transitional second and 1.5 generation Mexican immigrants informs my findings. Some of the older respondents were not as involved in Haitian organizations or any other organization due to their new responsibilities as spouses, in addition to having careers.

In comparing the respondents who were involved in Haitian organizations and those not involved, I explored if involvement in an ethnic organization appeared to influence what the respondents said in terms of how the earthquake affected their ethnic identities, loyalty to family, desire to visit Haiti and what they reported in terms of their response to the earthquake. Involvement in a Haitian organization did appear to influence what the respondents said about their loyalty to their family. The respondents who intensified their connection with family members in Haiti were past members of a Haitian

organization. The respondents' past involvement in the organization cultivated an awareness and understanding of the Haitian culture that stayed with them even after they discontinued their membership. In comparison, the way in which the rest of the respondents described their loyalty to their family members in Haiti after the earthquake illustrated relationships that did not change. A feeling of disconnection between family members in Haiti and respondents was prevalent due to unfamiliarity. Haiti's earthquake presented an opportunity for the respondents to learn more about and connect to family members in Haiti. However, the unfamiliarity with family members in Haiti left a majority of the respondents less inclined to establish relationships. While the literature on ethnic renewal does not address its influence on family relations, I believe this finding contributes to the literature on significant events. The focus on ethnic identity in response to a significant event neglects to address other aspects of one's life that can be influenced. This finding I believe draws attention to the group I focused on for this study, second generation immigrants; I will revisit this point further along in this section.

In terms of transnational ties, significant events, specifically natural disasters, can intensify transnational ties. Based on my findings those ties would have to have been established prior to the disaster. All of the respondents found a way to make monetary or clothing donations to the relief efforts. However, the difference between the two comparison groups was their volunteer efforts. Involvement in a Haitian organization or even past involvement provided an avenue for individuals to readily volunteer with the relief efforts. Ethnic organizations according to Smith (2008) "provide a means of perpetuating friendship, neighborhood, church, school and family connections….." (pg. 69). My findings support Smith's assertion; connections fostered in ethnic organizations

help individuals stay connected to the ethnic community they identify with which was the case for some of the respondents after the earthquake. Non-members blamed school and work schedules for their inability to volunteer after the earthquake. But, this finding can also account for the reason some of the non-members were not involved in Haitian organizations.

In terms of how the respondents described the effects of the earthquake on their ethnic identities, ethnic affirmation with respect to a shift in identification was not expressed, but ethnic affirmation in terms of a desire to explore Haiti for the first time was expressed by one respondent and reconnecting to the country by another; both were members of Haitian organizations. It should be pointed out that the literature on ethnic renewal in relation to significant events typically focuses on political events (Roehling 2010; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Nagel 1995; Maultsby 1983) rather than natural disasters (Davis 1993). More importantly, the research on ethnic identity and natural disasters focuses on the people directly affected by the disaster in the home country. My research is unique in that it adds to the existing literature on significant events because it focuses on second generation immigrants. But it also speaks to the need for scholars to further explore Diaspora populations in response to significant events, more specifically natural disasters.

The limited amount of respondents that expressed ethnic affirmation can be attributed to my attention to second generation immigrations. The respondents' distance from Haiti leaves them shielded from the harsh reality of survival many of the Haitians in tent cities have to face. Another reason can be attributed to the timing of the study which also speaks to one of the limitations. The data from the study by Roehling et al. (2010),

which examined ethnic identity development among Latino and White youth, was collected during the height of the national debate about immigration policy. The timing of my interviews may be seen as a limitation. The earthquake occurred in the month of January and I interviewed my respondents from the beginning of September until the end of October leaving a seven month gap in which the enthusiasm and concern surrounding Haiti might have diminished drastically. If I had a chance to conduct the interviews immediately after the earthquake I may have obtained different findings. But, would such findings illustrate a change in ethnic identities of the respondents or would I obtain artificial responses? I witnessed countless individuals express a desire to go to Haiti after the earthquake, but the number of individuals who actually took the trip was limited. So, this disadvantage could also be seen as an advantage. Because respondents were removed enough from the initial event, it allowed me to capture the long term effects of a significant event on ethnic identity.

Another limitation to my study was the predominance of college educated respondents. The college environment provides a unique opportunity for individuals to explore their ethnic heritage. The college campus is inundated with student organizations such as ethnic organizations for minority students. In addition, diversity on college campuses allows for the exploration of all types of cultures and the affirmation of one's own culture. How might the experiences of a high school graduate in comparison to a college graduate differ? Would interviews with non-college graduates highlight other modes of socialization (e.g. workplace, neighborhood) in helping cultivate ethnic identities?

I had no issues recruiting individuals who were members of a Haitian organization; however, the more challenging part to my study was recruiting individuals who were not members of Haitian organizations. The label non-member and member of a Haitian organization was given to the respondents based on their status during recruitment. Consequently, by using this method of labeling, the current status of involvement for "non-involved" respondents negated prior involvement in a Haitian organization. I found this issue both a limitation and an advantage to my study. A limitation was that "non-involved" respondents shared experiences that were similar to the involved respondents which limited my ability to compare the experiences of both comparison groups. For example, the volunteer efforts demonstrated by "non-involved" respondents who had past involvement with a Haitian organization were similar to "involved" respondent. However, by having "non-involved" respondents who did have prior involvement in a Haitian organization it allowed me to illuminate the shift in involvement in relation to transitional life stages. For the respondents who used to be involved, new responsibilities and desires to pursue new goals influenced their involvement in a Haitian organization.

The impact of Haitian organizations in the lives of the young Haitian adults was undeniable. The organizations helped the respondents connect to their heritage and maintain cultural practices and traditions. At L'eglise de Dieu de la Foi, the respondents were able to maintain the Haitian language by singing hymns every Sunday. For the respondents involved in Konbit Lakay, singing the national anthem every Friday and learning about Haiti's election helps them stay connected. Unfortunately, for the respondents it was not until college that this cultural information was discovered. Even if

an individual claims a Haitian identity that does not necessarily mean they have committed an explored their ethnic identity. Ethnic organizations are spaces where individuals can explore unexamined identities through the sources of information provided by the organization. They can also provide individuals who are exploring their ethnic identities a space to be around individuals from their ethnic group and move towards secure, mature identities. For individuals who have a mature, secure identity, ethnic organizations can also provide a space to be around individuals from the same ethnic group and help maintain their cultural roots.

A major implication of my study would be the implementation of more ethnic organizations in middle and high schools. A majority of the respondents were active in several organizations in middle school and high school but no one mentioned an ethnic organization. The desire to learn more about the Haitian culture was the motivating factor for most of the respondents to join Konbit Lakay. But, why must students wait until college in order to gain this information? More importantly, not all high school students attend college so organizations and programs promoting different ethnic groups should be put in place earlier in the lives of young adults. Rather than have high school Haitian students show symbolic ethnicity by expressing pride for their culture only on Haiti's Flag Day, May 18th, by having Haitian organizations in the schools they would strengthen their pride in the culture through knowledge rather than symbolic means. An increased presence of ethnic organizations in middle and high schools could possibly buffer the progression of assimilation by second generation immigrants. Also, the sense of pride and knowledge expressed by the respondents in this study would be well established prior to young adulthood thereby diminishing the issues of authenticity faced by many.

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