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# The Multiple Identities of Second-Generation Haitian Women

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**THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF SECOND-GENERATION HAITIAN WOMEN**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

### The Multiple Identities of Second-Generation Haitian Women

This study investigated the experiences and the methods used among Haitian-American women in managing multiple identities; specifically their role as a wife, mother, and professional. Eight second-generation Haitian women participated in this qualitative study that utilized a CQR method to analyze the data. The data analysis produced ten categories, which included personal conceptualization of Haitian identity; perceptions of multiple roles- parent, spouse, professional, and other; management of multiple roles; challenges in balancing multiple roles; role of social support; advice for mental health professional working with Haitians; and reason for participating. Overall, findings revealed that the participants utilized a social support system to guide them in navigating through their multiple roles and that they encountered various challenges when trying to find a balance between their work and other roles.

**Keywords:** Haitian-American, Haitian-women, second-generation, multiple roles/identities; Haiti

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Research shows that women continue to have the primary responsibility for sustaining their marriages, maintaining their homes, and caring for their children (Barnett, 2004). There is also a societal assumption that balancing multiple roles becomes overwhelming for women, and could have detrimental effects on their mental health and on their family's well-being (Barnett, 2004). Research reveals that White/European American women derive both conflict and enhancement from their multiple roles (i.e., wife, mother, professional; DeMeis, Hock, & McBride, 1986; Tiedje et al., 1990). Since there is a lack of empirical research on the effects that multiple roles have on non-White women, this current study will focus on investigating the experiences of women of Color, specifically those of Haitian descent. Due to the increased recognition of multicultural psychology (e.g., immigration, acculturation, and language issues) and the lack of attention given to Haitians, it is important that more research is done on this unique group.

Historical data on Haitians reveals that women are viewed as matriarchs of the family in a patriarchal society, while also maintaining multiple roles (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941). They are financial breadwinners and act as the caregivers for the family (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941). In the Haitian culture, a woman's primary role is that of mother and wife; nevertheless, research reveals that they manage multiple identities (Charles, 1995; Zèphir 1996, 2001). Since most of the research pertaining to multiple identities of women has utilized White samples, I will first begin by detailing the

findings from those studies. Then, I will discuss the limited research on Black women. I will conclude by exploring the significance of researching Haitian-Americans.

### **Empirical Research on Multiple Identities with Predominately White Samples**

In 1990, McBride wrote a conceptual article that reviewed the challenges and benefits associated with women juggling multiple roles. She asserted that support received from a spouse alleviates some of the stresses associated with balancing multiple roles. The article suggested that a woman's marital concerns have more influence in causing her to become distressed than occupational difficulties. It was suggested that work has the potential to act as a buffer for marital and familial problems, whereas family problems exacerbate stresses at work. McBride contended that one of the biggest challenges women confronted when trying to manage their numerous roles was attending to household tasks while trying to spend quality time with their families. Although difficulties within roles had the potential to escalate, women found rewards from each particular role depending on their interests and needs, which assisted in alleviating some of the stresses in the other roles.

Reifman, Biernat, and Lang's (1991) quantitative study examined the types of occupational and role-conflict stresses that were associated with depressive and physical symptoms in women. In addition, they assessed if social support assisted in relieving stress. The study included 200 employed women that were married with children. The findings revealed six stress indices that contributed to both depressive and physical symptoms. The indices involved the participant's perception of lack of authority and influence in their work positions, sex discrimination, a heavy work load, work and familial responsibilities limiting their relaxation time, and strains associated with role

conflict. The findings did not show evidence to suggest that social support assisted in alleviating stress among the participants (Reifman, Biernat, & Lang, 1991).

Barnett and Marshall's (1991) quantitative study went further and investigated the spillover effects of employment and motherhood on a woman's mental health. The study included a stratified random sample of 403 women (84.7 % White, 15.3% Black). The findings revealed that employment and motherhood did not adversely affect one another; however, individually the roles had a psychological impact on women. Conversely, evidence proposed that a satisfying professional role evoked positive spillover effects, which assisted in strengthening the association between mental health and the parenting role. Barnett and Marshall's results also suggested that professional mothers were able to categorize their experiences in the individual roles. Grouping these experiences allowed women with multiple identities to compartmentalize areas in their lives, which in turn assisted in reducing mental distress. The findings proposed that participation in one role could help alleviate stress in another. The authors concluded that struggles in both roles could cause the manifestation of stress in women. Furthermore, the study reiterated that difficulties in one role were not exacerbated in another.

In a similar study, Lennon and Rosenfield (1992) investigated the effects that employment and familial demands have on a married woman's mental health. The data included in this research was derived from both a community and national study. The community study included 268 married women, and the national study had a sample size of 540. The results showed that married women who were employed and had more autonomy within their jobs presented with fewer symptoms of psychological distress. When they assessed the impact of job control and family demands, they found that the



effects of motherhood were contingent upon job control among married wives. Family demands as they related to children were positively associated with distress among women who had less autonomous jobs. The results provided evidence that conditions of both employment and familial responsibilities were associated with the relationship between employment and psychological well-being among women with multiple roles.

In 1994, Reitzes and Mutran did further research and examined the influence that multiple roles have on self-esteem for both women and men. The qualitative study included 397 women and 421 men between the ages of 58-64 that were married, employed, and parents. The participants were predominately White (64% response rate), but the study also incorporated African-American participants (54% response rate). The findings suggested that self-esteem in both employed women and men was not dependent on role accumulation or specific spouse and parent role combinations. It appeared that self-esteem was associated with an individual's sense of commitment to their roles and to the identity meanings in their roles as an employee and family member. Therefore, feelings of belonging to the employee, parent, and spouse roles and feelings of competence at work, and confidence as a parent seemed to create this foundation for the enhancement of self-esteem.

In a qualitative study that utilized 40 employed married White parents as its sample, Simon (1995) investigated gender differences in balancing the roles of a spouse, parent, and professional; and its psychological effects. The results showed that with regards to the meaning of employment and family roles that women vary in their beliefs. Twenty-five percent of the women expressed feeling financially obligated to the family based on their perceptions of a marriage as an equal partnership. It was this group's

opinion that by contributing financially that they were alleviating some of the financial burdens imposed on their husbands and also improving the standard of living for their children. On the other hand, 35% of the female participants viewed their primary role to be nurturing mothers and good wives, rather than being financial providers.

Approximately 40% of the women felt ambivalent due their perceptions of men as the financial providers, while also feeling the need to be financial contributors themselves. In addition, most of the women in the three groups viewed employment as a possible deterrence to their primary role as nurturer and caregiver for their families. Most of the female participants conveyed feeling guilty about their multiple roles due to their views of employment as a hindrance to their children and husbands.

In a similar study, through the use of qualitative and quantitative measures, Voydanoff and Donnelly (1999) researched the relationship between psychological distress and the objective and subjective aspects of professional, marital, and parenting roles. In addition, they assessed the interaction of the previously mentioned roles with the role of adult caregiver. The sample in this study included 1,342 women and 998 men (73 % White, 19% Black, and 8 % Hispanic). The findings revealed that women that spent a considerable amount of time as a caregiver for a parent suffered from psychological distress. Conversely, the time spouses engaged in activities together showed lower levels of distress among both men and women. In addition, the amount of time involved in household and family interactions had no relation to psychological distress for either women or men. However, work spillover and marital disagreements were positively related to psychological distress in both women and men. The findings for subjective reactions supported the idea that role satisfaction was negatively correlated to distress.

Moreover, data gathered revealed that resources provided to mothers through work and their spouses assisted in reducing distress.

Martire, Stephens, and Townsend (2000) examined the exacerbating effects of centrality (role importance) on women with multiple identities. The cross-sectional study included 296 female participants, where 88% and 12 % were Caucasian and African American respectively. The findings from this study showed that greater centrality in the roles of caregiver, mother, wife, and professional contributed to stronger psychological well-being. The rationale provided was that women who consider their multiple identities to be salient to their self-concept are more invested and able to reap the benefits from those roles. Furthermore, the results revealed that centrality exacerbated stress levels in the wife and professional roles. The participants that expressed high centrality in the wife role experienced less life satisfaction and higher stress levels relative to this role. Conversely, there was no association evident between stress levels associated with the wife role and life satisfaction in participants that reported low wife centrality. In the professional role, the exacerbation effects were observed through depressive symptoms. They asserted that stressors associated with the wife and professional roles could threaten a woman's self-concept if she views these roles as highly central. On the other hand, the centrality associated with the mother role assisted in protecting women from the negative stress effects as they pertain to this particular role. The findings revealed that the mother role offsets the stressful effects associated with the role. The interpretation provided by the authors was that the lack of negative effect of the mother role on a woman's wellbeing could stem from the pre-recognition of the role as highly stressful. Overall, the findings support the belief the multiple roles are influential to a woman's wellbeing.

In 2004, Barnett published a conceptual article advocating for the continued evaluation of women managing multiple identities. Although research demonstrates positive effects of multiple identities, there continues to be this perception that multiple roles can negatively affect women psychologically. The roles of wife and mother are perceived as “natural,” and thought to require a minimal amount of strain. Conversely, the professional role is viewed as “unnatural,” and thought to have the capability of becoming overwhelmingly stressful. In comparison to men and single women with no children, women with multiple identities acquire more duties, causing them to have time restraints, while increasing their stress levels. However, research makes note that positive engagement in one role can help mediate the negative aspects of another (Barnett, 2004).

Cinamon’s (2006) literature review reveals that when attempting to balance multiple identities women experience conflict within their professions that in turn impact their families. Such conflicts include mandatory work hours and flexibility within those required hours. Furthermore, their roles within the family could also trigger conflict in their jobs, which may be in response to a lack of support from their spouses, the number of hours dedicated to engaging in family activities, and the number and ages of the children. Research findings reveal that employment demands contributing to family conflict are more frequent than family responsibilities impeding on employment. Moreover, research suggests that women in Western Societies are brought up to believe that their roles as a wife and mother should take precedence over any professional aspirations (Cinamon, 2006).

Nonetheless, as the years progressed, women continued to rapidly enter the labor force. In 2008, it is projected that women will constitute approximately 48% of the work

force (Occupational Outlook Quarterly, 1999/2000). Furthermore, Barnett's (2004) conceptual paper suggests that male spouses are supportive of maternal employment and are becoming more involved in the handling of household tasks. However, the media depicts employed married mothers as women that experience psychological difficulties (Barnett, 2004). Barnett's paper asserts that there is this belief that a woman's employment will cause the emasculation of their husbands and impede the nurturance received by their children. In addition, the paper speculates that the offspring of working women will develop problems varying from insecure attachments and improper behaviors (e.g., acting out). Nonetheless, research does not validate this conjecture. Research findings show that maternal employment contributes to a healthier self (Barnett, 2004). It has been proven that women who transition from full-time home maker to professional (part-time and full-time) may experience lower levels of depression. Barnett makes note that positive involvement in one role can help mediate the negative components of another.

### **Empirical Research on the Multiple Identities of Black Women**

Research utilizing predominately Black participants as its sample relative to women balancing multiple identities is practically non-existent. However, Williams, Dilworth-Anderson, and Goodwin (2003) conducted a quantitative study that researched the relationship between the role of a caregiver of an elder family member and other roles (wife, mother, professional). The sample included 148 African-American women. The results revealed that caregivers who exhibited high depressive symptoms expressed feeling strained. The participants experienced a wide range of strain associated to the caregiver role. Furthermore, none of the roles investigated in the study were independent

indicators of role strain. In addition, the roles collectively revealed no association with caregiver role strain. In another study, Hayes (2000) performed a qualitative study that explored expectations of marital life and the effects it has on the provider role. The study composed of 15 Black men and 19 Black women. The findings revealed that the participants held the belief that women were the nurtures and men were the providers of their family. Although men were assigned the provider role, the participants in the study expected wives to work and financially contribute to the family.

### **Relevance of the Present Study**

There is literature that contends that multiple roles enhance a woman's overall life satisfaction (Barnett & Marshall, 1991; Barnett, 2004; Cinamon, 2006; Martire, Stephens, & Townsend, 2000; Schoon et al., 2005). While there is an extensive amount of research on how women manage multiple roles, the extant research is limited by a narrow demographic population of middle to upper social class White/European American women. Although there were various empirical studies on this topic that incorporated a minute sample of Black participants, the studies never differentiated between the nationalities of the participants in the Black samples. It appears that studies focusing on specific nationalities within the Black population are non-existent. Hence, this study will focus on examining the experiences of a specific group of Black women, those who are of a Haitian ancestry. Furthermore, based on the US Census (US Census Bureau, 2000), the influx of Haitians into the United States continues to be growing; hence making their presence in the United States known. The Census revealed that the number of Haitian immigrants that obtained legal permanent resident status by class of admission from 2000 through 2006 was as follows: 2000: 435; 2001: 5,345; 2002: 1, 406; 2003: 2,451; 2004:

2,820; 2005: 3,375. There was no additional demographic information, such as socioeconomic status, highest level of education, and size of household. Nonetheless, due to the growth of Haitians in the United States and the limited research on this group, it is critical for clinicians to become knowledgeable of the Haitian culture (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002).

### **Conclusion**

While residing in the United States, many Haitian-American women encounter various challenges. First, similar to other racial groups, Haitians experience racial discrimination due to the fact that they are “non-White” (Zéphir, 2001, p. 50). Zéphir reports that Haitians are discriminated against because they differ in external appearance and culture from the Anglo norms. In addition, as women, they are discriminated against in the area of wages. Research reveals that men continue to earn higher salaries than women (Monthly Labor Review, 2003). Furthermore, as the children of immigrants, Haitian-American women go through the conflicts associated with immigration and acculturation issues (Zéphir, 2001). They experience value conflicts with regards to incorporating both the Haitian and American culture within their lives (Zéphir, 2001). Haitians are raised in a collectivist culture, where women are brought up to believe that their role as a wife and mother takes precedence over any another role (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002). On the other hand, the American culture is more individualistic, where independence is highly valued.

To provide further research on a Haitian-American woman’s experience in the United States, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) will be utilized to perform this study. CQR provides the opportunity to perform in-depth research of an individual’s

personal experiences relative to a specific topic through the use of open-ended questions.

The goal of the study will be to investigate how Haitian-American women balance multiple roles, while also examining the effect it might have on their mental health.

*The Research Question is:* How do women of Haitian descent experience and manage their multiple identities?

### **Limitations of the Study**

As noted by Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, and Ladany (2005), there are various limitations in conducting a study that uses CQR. CQR tends to be limited in the following: it is time consuming, requiring the recurrence of various tasks, and presenting a challenge relative to the blending of results among studies (Hill et al.). Furthermore, the observations in a qualitative study are generally limited to descriptions of occurrences in small groups of people, which produce limitations in generalizability (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Although there are limitations, CQR provides researchers with a psychological method to attain rich data of an understudied phenomenon, such as Haitian-American women managing multiple roles.



### **Definitions**

*Second-generation*: sons and daughters of immigrants born in the United States (Zépher, 2001).

*Haitian-American*: Americans of Haitian ancestry or Haitian immigrants who become citizens of the United States (Zépher, 2001).

*Multiple roles*: a combination of profession and family responsibilities (i.e., profession, parenthood, and marriage; Verbrugge, 1983).

## **Chapter II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As discussed in Chapter I, there has been ample research on how women balance multiple roles; however, the participants in those studies have consisted primarily of White/European women. Therefore, this study will investigate the effects that multiple roles have on women of Color, particularly second-generation Haitian women. In this chapter, I will discuss the history of Haiti, the migration and acculturation process for Haitians, their life style and gender roles, and the roles and responsibilities of their children. In addition, I will talk about the empirical studies that have examined the psychological and physical effects that multiple roles have on women, while also discussing research findings relative to the preservation of the family structure.

#### **Epigrammatic History of Haiti**

In 1492 during a voyage, Columbus discovered the island of Hispaniola, and governed it for a few years until Spain acquired the land in the early 1500's. In 1697, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Ryswick, which gave the "western third of Hispaniola to the French" (Antony, 1989, p. 12). The French renamed the island, Saint-Domingue. Soon after, the island was viewed as the most thriving colony in the new world. Thousands of slaves were brought from Africa to work for White colonists as coffee, cotton, indigo, and sugar croppers. The French ruled over Saint-Domingue for several years. However, after the revolution in France in 1789, the slaves began hearing terms such as democracy, republic, and freedom and sought their independence by initiating their own revolution. After the revolution in 1804, the land known as Saint-

Domingue was renamed Haiti. The name Haiti stems from the word “Ayiti,” which means “mountainous lands” (Zèphir, 1996). During that time, Haiti became the second independent nation in the Western Hemisphere behind the United States. Moreover, it is the first Black republic in our times (Mara, 2007).

Prior to the revolution, Saint-Domingue had a thriving economy. However, after gaining their independence, Haiti encountered political difficulties, economic hardship, repression, and racial animosity. The country continues to be plagued by these tribulations, prompting an extensive number of inhabitants to migrate elsewhere. Scholars have argued that Haiti’s difficulty in sustaining a strong government that affords safety and stability for its people stems partly from the lack of assistance from prominent countries. Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) assert that in 1804, and still today, White American and European leaders do not value Haiti gaining its independence because it represented France’s inability to maintain control over Haiti and created a risk to the economic structure of the United States that was reliant on Haitian slaves. The lack of support from Europe and the United States provides a rationale for Haiti’s inability to sustain a system that will adequately support the needs of its people. For that reason, the birth of Haiti only helped to dissuade prominent countries from assisting them with their political and economic hardships. It is thought that it is in those countries benefit to have Haiti perceived as weak and unstable, which also helps to justify prejudice against Blacks (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 2001). Glick-Schiller and Fouron state that “European and US governments and intellectuals used Vodou [sic] to discredit the viability of Haiti as a black sovereign state and as a key indicator of the failure of black people to achieve civilization” (p. 105). Although Haiti has a governmental system that consists of a

president, prime minister, legislature, voting citizenry, government ministries, and officials, the country has been plagued with corruption and instability (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 2001). Despite the hardships, most Haitians are proud of the fact that Haiti became the first independent Black state by way of a slave rebellion rather than by means of White liberation efforts (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 2001).

In Haiti, the social divisions are upper, middle, urban lower, and rural lower class. The upper class would be considered the wealthy group. They constitute a small portion of the population, comprised mostly of Mulattoes and including a small percentage of wealthy Blacks. The wealthy group typically resides in a private, “castle-like” society in the city (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995, p. 64), where they also work. The members of this elite group own the majority of the urban land, and lease them to businesses. The men usually have professional careers as lawyers, doctors, and architects. Women, although educated, have a propensity to work within the home. More importantly, the elite typically possess political and economic power. Interestingly, members of the elite group are typically recognizable based on their light skin and straight hair.

The middle class is a fairly new phenomenon in Haiti; it emerged from industrialization and an enhancement in educational opportunities (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995). During the 1970's numerous members of the middle class became supporters of the Duvalier regime, who granted them the opportunity to gain economic security through institutionalized corruption. By the 1980's, various members of the middle class gained political power, while other members remained culturally ambivalent and lacking confidence. This group was not united as a class and did not appear to have a good understanding of their identity and did not have established traditions. Furthermore,

in order to be classified as middle-class, these individuals must have an occupation that is not manual, attain modest earnings, be moderately educated, and be fluent in speaking and writing in French. In addition, members of the middle-class perceive education and residence in an urban area as essential criteria for progressing into a higher social economic status (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995). Cheong-Lum and Jermyn's research indicates that this social group is increasing in size and political power.

The individuals that would be categorized in the urban lower class make up approximately half of the urban population. These individuals seek employment in the cities and reside in the slums on the edge of town. Many of these individuals occupy jobs as entrepreneurs, lottery ticket sellers, artisans, and market sellers. They work gruelingly to enhance their standard of living, which often place them in unsanitary and unhealthy conditions. In addition, it is also reported that members of the urban lower class are less attentive to class and prefer to focus on making sure that their children receive a proper education (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995). It is their aspiration that their children through education will be afforded the opportunity to progress upwards towards a higher social economic status. Cheong-Lum and Jermyn's research reveals that when individuals in this social class are educated and actively involved in politics, they are able to attain middle class status.

The rural lower class makes up approximately 80% of the Haitian population and is considered the lowest in the social ladder (CIA, 2008). They reside along the countryside in abject poverty, while living in shacks made of ridged iron that is barely standing (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995). Many of them work as farmers or manual laborers. In addition, due to economic restraints, these parents are unable to provide their

children with an education. Instead children are taught how to work as farmers (Mara, 2007). Furthermore, many of the locals are plagued with illnesses due to the lack of monetary funds to seek medical attention. Moreover, appropriate medical care is scarce in Haiti and conditions are often unsanitary. For example, most homes in Haiti do not have clean running water. Water that is utilized for bathing and cleaning is retrieved from the local river and is normally polluted; this puts Haitians at risk for developing chronic illnesses from waterborne germs and parasitic worms (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn, 1995).

### **Migration to the United States**

The United States has an extensive history with Haiti, especially after the slave revolt. Prior to and during the French colonization, many “colonists and free people of color” migrated to United States to enhance their standard of living (Laguette 1983, p. 120). Based on reports from Laguette, there are three marked periods of Haitian Immigration: (a) the post-slave revolution, (b) during the US occupation of Haiti in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and (c) following Duvalier’s presidency. The first significant wave of migration to the United States occurred during and following the slave revolt, where numerous Saint-Domingue natives, French colonists, and their slaves resettled in Louisiana. Furthermore, by 1810, the influx of Haitian immigrants assisted in increasing the number of Blacks to the point where they outnumbered Whites residing in New Orleans. Some of the Haitian natives also voyaged to New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and other states.

During the years of 1915 through 1934, when the United States had control over Haiti, there was yet another wave of Haitian immigration to the US. This group of immigrants consisted primarily of highly educated Haitians that were politically

ostracized and viewed as traitors (Laguerre, 1983). A good portion of the immigrants chose to enroll in college with the intent of establishing careers that would enhance their wealth. Many immigrants shared a common aspiration of earning a sufficient amount of money so that they could send money and goods to the family members left behind in Haiti. Laguerre makes note that a lot of the Haitian immigrants did not have the full intention of becoming permanent residents of the US; rather it was their hope to save enough money to take back to Haiti and live a financially stable lifestyle.

In 1957, there was another wave of Haitian immigration to the US that occurred after the swearing in of Dr. Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier into office. Duvalier ruled Haiti under a tyrannical dictatorship for approximately 30 years. During that period, approximately one million immigrants fled Haiti in the attempts of escaping Duvalier's repressive regime (Laguerre, 1983). This group of immigrants consisted primarily of political associates, students, and professionals that opposed Duvalier's governmental policies. It was not until 1972 that Haitians from a low social economic status began migrating to the US. Many of them voyaged to Bahamas and sought employment there while completing and collecting the documents required for legal migration to the US. (Laguerre, 1983). The Bahamas welcomed Haitians into the country around the 1960s; however, by the late 1970s, it no longer held this position and began limiting the influx of Haitians (Laguerre, 1983).

The Bahamas unwillingness to allow Haitians into the country also caused many Haitians to migrate to Florida. However, in September 1981, the United States and Haiti entered into an agreement to prevent Haitian boats from entering into US territory and returning prospective immigrants back to Haiti. By 1984, while under this agreement, an

estimated 3,107 Haitians were returned back to Haiti. It was reported that approximately 1 million Haitians migrated to the United States between the years of 1957 and 1982. Zéphir (1996) asserted that Haitians made up the second largest portion of the Black immigrants in the US. Furthermore, reports suggest that Haitians migrating to the United States have assisted in creating an infusion of capital for Haiti's economy. Many of these immigrants are sending monies back to Haiti to financially support the relatives left behind. It also helped to moderate the growth population in Haiti. On the other hand, emigration also resulted in a loss of professional and skilled individuals from both urban and rural areas in Haiti. Based on the records reported by the Census Bureau, between the years of 1931 to 1996, approximately 356,350 Haitians settled legally in the United States (Zéphir, 2001).

When immigrants of Color arrive to the United States, they typically encounter hostility, discrimination, and exclusion due to their ethnicity, which in turn contributes to their lack of desire to adapt to the customs within the United States (Sue & Sue, 2007). The maltreatment of Haitian immigrants further enhances their painful plight.

### **Acculturating to the United States**

In Constantine, Okazaki, and Utsey's (2004) quantitative study that focuses on the acculturative stress and depressive symptoms exhibited by newly African, Asian, and Latin American international college students, they report that the African participants express lower levels of social self-efficacy and higher levels of stress associated with acculturation. They state that these problems could stem from adjustments to a new climate, communication difficulties with Americans, discrimination, and homesickness, sadness, petulance, and fatigue. This is similar to Zéphir's (2001) research, which



revealed that Haitian immigrants find it difficult to adapt to the American culture. He claims that Haitian families are perceived as “invisible families” in the United States due to Haitian immigrants not being acknowledged as skilled professionals (p. 126). Haitian immigrants are forced to combat “anti-immigrant hysteria,” while being viewed as a discarded group (p. 130). Furthermore, Zèphir (1996) asserts that immigrants prefer to maintain and retain their Haitian customs.

Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) describe Haitians as transmigrants that employ transnationalism based on their refusal to release ties to their homeland and adopt the American culture. However, they will make attempts to learn the American language, seek employment, pay taxes, open financial accounts, and raise children in America, while preserving Haitian beliefs, customs, and values. Haitians also have a tendency to reflect over the positive memories they have of Haiti, while denying the negative memories correlated to their fleeing their homeland. Glick-Schiller and Fouron also assert that many Haitians maintain their connection to their homeland by sending money and goods to family members; they also recognize that not all Haitians can be classified as transmigrants. There are some Haitian immigrants that make the decision to dissociate entirely from Haiti (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 2001).

While residing in the United States, many immigrants try to maintain their connection to their ethnicity. The state of being Haitian to many immigrants is not only a lifestyle that stems from being born in Haiti, rather it manifests from a deep interest to sustain a connection with the affairs occurring in Haiti and a desire to return to Haiti one day (Zèphir, 1996). They maintain their “Haitianness” by living their lives in their same

manner as they would have in Haiti, which includes employing Haitian traditions and establishing Haitian communities and neighborhoods (Zèphir, 2001, p. 26).

### **Family Life and Gender Roles**

In rural areas of Haiti, men focus primarily on farming and heavy work, which typically includes tilling. However, women are responsible for harvesting, weeding, and selling the produce. Many women become full-time traders of goods, which assist them in attaining economical independence. Research reveals that in the Haitian culture, a woman's participation in the labor force is valued heavily (Heinl & Heinl, 1978).

Due to the lack of financial responses, most Haitian peasants and members of the urban lower class engage in marital relationships known as "plasaj," which is viewed as a common-law marriage (Wiens & Sobrado, 1998, p. 52). A plasaj relationship typically refers to a woman that resides with a man, bears his children, and takes responsibility for most of the household tasks. Prior to this arrangement, the couple will enter into a verbal agreement about their economic relationship. In addition, the women also require that the husbands acquire at least one plot of land and a home for them. Although most peasants are members of the lower class engage in plasaj, the Haitian government does not recognize it as a legal marriage due to the fact that couples in a plasaj relationship do not have the financial means to complete the documents necessary to legalize their marriages. Nonetheless, the members of the community view this type of marital relationship as appropriate and common (Heinl & Heinl, 1978; Wiens & Sobrado, 1998).

Since civil and religious marriages are expensive, those individuals in the lower class that have the opportunity to partake in them typically do so for prestige rather than to legalize their marital relationship. Additionally, these individuals usually have to wait

several years before getting legally married due to the high cost of marriages. Moreover, research reveals that relative to plasaj relationships that legal marriages did not prove to be more stable or productive (Heinl & Heinl, 1978). In addition, it was not uncommon for men to have extramarital relationships. However, this typically occurred in marital relationships with men that were economically stable and had the resources to financially support an extra-marital relationship (Brigg & Casimir, 1996; Heinl & Heinl, 1978).

Relative to childrearing, both women and men participate in raising children, but women have more of the burden. Similar to most cultures, Haitian parents tend to be extremely proud of their children, whether or not the child is a product of an extramarital relationship. Fathers usually take all the measures necessary to ensure all their children receive an equal amount of their inheritances (Heinl & Heinl, 1978; Zèphir, 1996).

Research reveals that in the rural areas of Haiti that the family structure has changed since the nineteenth century (Heinl & Heinl, 1978). Prior to the twentieth century, on average the family form was known as the “lakou,” which was defined as an extended family dominated by a male figure. The term lakou was not coined to describe the immediate family exclusively, but to also depict the individuals that reside in the various homes within their community. The individuals that were part of the lakou worked collaboratively and provided each other with support, such as financial support. However, they did not share their land with one another in order to ensure that their children would receive the land as an inheritance. Due to a growing population and the fragmentation of landholdings in Haiti, the lakou system no longer exists. Instead, the establishment of a nuclear family became the norm for many Haitians, where parents

depend on their offspring for assistance with maintaining the land and home (Heinl & Heinl, 1978; Zèphir, 1996;).

Haitians that fall in the elite category have a family life that is dissimilar to those in the rural areas. Civil and religious marriages are common among this group. It is reported that this group also has a tendency to engage in intermarriages, where the individuals are interrelated. In the past, divorce was uncommon; however, during the mid-twentieth century there was a change in marital relationships and divorce became acceptable (Heinl & Heinl, 1978; Zèphir, 1996).

In addition, in the 1950's many elite and middle class women worked diligently as advocates for women's legal rights, ultimately earning them the right to vote (Chancy, 1997; Charles, 1995). During that time, the Haitian constitution acknowledged women as fully emancipated human beings with equal rights. As noted by Sir Harry Johnston in 1950, Haitian women are strong and able to combat disappointment with sheer determination to care for and protect their families as cited in Chancy, 1997. Additionally, wives of the elite group that once worked exclusively as homemakers with the assistance of several servants began entering the labor force in significant numbers between the years of 1970 and 1980. Furthermore, in the 1980's, there was an expansion of legal rights for elite married women, which included the right to own property. Although the participation of women in the workforce was culturally valued, prior to this legislative act, a woman's role was legally viewed only as wife and mother (Charles, 1995). This neglected their economic contribution to Haiti and circumscribed their societal roles.

Research in the past on Haitians denotes that women are regarded as matriarchs of family, while also attempting to balance multiple roles (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941). They are the financial breadwinners and caregivers for the family. However, he makes note that although Haitian women are perceived in a sense as the matriarch of the family; they exist in a male-dominated patriarchal society. In Haiti, a woman's primary role is to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother (Charles, 1995). Usually, they are not participants in the decision making process with regards to establishing rules for their homes (Gilligan & Brown, 1992).

The traditional Haitian family is quite similar to other West Indian families with regards to being viewed as a "hierarchical and vertical entity," where women and children are subordinate to men (Zèphir, 2001, p. 130). Men are perceived as "chiefs de famille," which holds a literary translation of ruler of the family (p. 130). Although women are employed and financially contribute to the household, societal views in Haiti regard a woman's primary responsibility as a nurturer for her child (ren) and husband, while simultaneously managing all the household tasks. There is also this understanding that women will attend to their husband's physical and sexual needs, diet, and grooming. Based on this cultural demand, women are expected to adhere to their husband's authority and decisions (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002; Zèphir, 2001).

Overall, most Haitians would be classified as collectivist, where the primary focus is on the maintenance and well-being of the family. Research denotes that individuals from a Haitian ancestry comprise of the following characteristics: courage, optimism, and pride (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002). In addition, most Haitians are strong supporters

of education, and believe that education equates with success, especially for men (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002).

### **Children of Immigrant Parents**

Zèphir (2001) asserts that immigrant parents have a tendency to become dependent on their children for stability and economic prosperity. He reports that an immigrant parent's aspiration for their children to become affluent helps them to rationalize the pain and suffering they endured while trying to migrate to the United States. It is believed that the child's attainment of success will assist in fostering a legacy for their immigrant parents (Zèphir, 2001).

Portes and Zhou (1993) state that being brought up in an immigrant family can be difficult for children because there is a possibility that they will struggle with trying to adhere to Haitian cultural values as well as trying to acculturate to the United States. As the offspring of immigrant parents, Zèphir (2001) notes that some Haitian children attempt to establish a spot for themselves in the American culture by incorporating a more distinct acculturation approach. He asserts that these children adopt the American culture while maintaining their Haitian customs and values.

Moreover, Portes and Zhou (1993) believe that these children utilize a process that they entitled as "segmented assimilation," which refers to assimilation approaches (p. 74). Some individuals may choose to fully acculturate to the American culture. Conversely, others may decide to assimilate with the underclass and encounter the racism, discrimination, and extinction that their parents had to combat. Some children may attribute their ability to achieve economic success to the preservation of their Haitian values. It is believed that the maintenance of Haitian traditions and values are determined

more so by the offspring of immigrants, rather than the immigrants themselves (Zèphir, 2001). Zèphir asserts that Haitian children (e.g., second-generation immigrants) will determine the preservation of the Haitian ethnicity and the legal rights of Haitians in the United States.

The above mentioned expectations can be quite distressing for second-generation immigrants. Furthermore, Zèphir (2001) goes on to discuss how the process of identifying Haitianness in this group of immigrants is more complicated than for their parents. Their understanding of being Haitian is more subjective since it stems from the knowledge they attain from their family and surroundings about Haiti, while residing and immersed in the American culture.

In Zèphir's (2001) research he gathered data and comments from second-generation Haitians with regards to the fluidity of Haitianness. One participant made this statement about being Haitian: "To be Haitian does not mean that you were born in Haiti, it means that you are of Haitian descent. Although I was born here, I am Haitian because both my parents were born in Haiti" (Zèphir, 2001, p. 61). Whereas another participant held a more stern and dichotomous view about being Haitian. This individual stated that, "If I am Haitian, I am Haitian. I don't like mixing two nationalities together. To me the label "Haitian American" does not make much sense. One needs to make up one's mind. You are either Haitian or American" (Zèphir, 2001, p. 61).

Conversely, Zèphir (2001) had participants that held views that differ from those of the previously mentioned participant. In particular, he had a participant that felt being Haitian-American meant that you were part of both nationalities. The participant made the following comment:

I am Haitian American. This means that I am both Haitian and American. I am Haitian because my parents were born and raised in Haiti, and I know a lot about Haiti, and I understand Creole and can speak it if I have to. I have even been there a few times and I have relatives who still live in Haiti. But, at the same time, I am also American. I was born and raised here. I have always lived here, and I feel comfortable here. I understand the system (Zèphir, 2001, p.61).

These statements assist in providing a better understanding of the relevance of ethnic heterogeneity among immigrant children. More importantly, these statements reveal that not all second-generation immigrants associate the same meaning to being Haitian to the term “Haitianness” (Zèphir, 2001, p. 26). Some second-generation immigrants associate their Haitianness to a state of mind, which is not necessarily associated to being born in Haiti and speaking Haitian Creole. It is believed that being Haitian can be expressed through the English language via music and other artistic means. Furthermore, many of these children consider themselves to be bi-cultural and not feel that being American as an attribute that lessens their connection to Haiti; rather they hold the belief that they can be both Haitian and American equally, which is consistent with literature on other immigrant populations (Zèphir, 2001).

Conversely, there are some who do not agree with the concept of being both Haitian and American. They argue that one must select only one ethnic identity. Since there are differences in opinion with regards to the term Haitianness, it is accurate to assume that some friction exists among second-generation immigrants that have differing perceptions of the term. Their difference in opinion is further intensified as they progress



through their own identity development and attempt to integrate and acculturate to the American way of living (Zèphir, 2001).

Labissiere (1995) conducted a study that focused on race and ethnicity among second-generation Haitian Americans and identified two types of Haitian group members, centralized group and marginalized group. Centralized group members were those individuals that identified highly with the Haitian culture and were recognized as Haitian based on language, manners, and or style. Conversely, marginalized group members appear to have a modest connection to Haiti and could not be easily identified as being Haitian. These individuals seem to associate more strongly to the American culture. In his study, Labissiere asserts that there is this perception that in order to be Haitian, individuals must dissociate themselves from the American culture and fight against the racism, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by Haitians.

#### **Multiple Identities: Wife, Mother, and Professional**

**Role of wife.** In McHale and Crouter's (1992) qualitative study utilizing 153 couples where the racial composition of the participants was not identified, they examined the similarities and differences between sex-role attitudes held by spouses and the division of labor within the home. McHale and Crouter asserted that men were socialized to carry out the traditional role of financial provider for their families. In addition, they argued that for the last several decades that women have been entering the workforce at rapid speed, creating families with dual-earners. Although employed, societal norms continue to adhere to traditional ideals and assign the responsibility of attending to the home and children to women (McHale & Crouter, 1992). However in an

earlier empirical study, Ferree (1990) asserted that as partners in the financial provider role, women gain leverage in negotiating for more equality in the family roles.

In addition, McHale and Crouter's (1992) research findings showed a lack of marital satisfaction among women that feel that they complete more of the housework in comparison to their partners. Furthermore, men who value traditional roles conveyed displeasure with the equal division of household responsibilities (McHale & Crouter, 1992). Based on Mason and Lu's (1988) longitudinal study, where the racial identities of 1,576 men and 1,267 women were not disclosed, the male participants held the belief that a woman's first and foremost responsibility was to be a mother and caregiver. However, the female participants who held non-traditional attitudes and were married to men with traditional ideals experienced marital dissatisfaction. McHale and Crouter's findings also suggested that the alteration of roles requires couples to find a balance between their desires and the needs of the family. There was this implication that consolidating resources around the needs and interests of one partner may undermine the happiness and interests of the other partner (McHale & Crouter, 1992).

Furthermore, Simon's (1995) qualitative study of 40 employed married White parents produced results suggesting that when a woman's employment adversely affects her marriage, she will feel responsible. Both female and male participants felt that when wives added the professional role, it caused them to put their marriages on the "back burner" (p. 187). In addition, the results indicated that the spouses of professional women experience more emotional distress in comparison to the husbands of unemployed wives. Simon's findings also revealed that for a subgroup of men that the employment of their wives evoked negative emotions and suggested that as a couple that they were

unsuccessful as providers. The analysis also denoted that the work-family conflicts and marital dissatisfaction that exists among couples stemmed from their individual perceptions of their roles as a spouse and parent (Simon, 1995).

As professional women move towards desiring egalitarianism, where roles are shared, they may perceive their traditional marital relationships as unjust and feel exploited relative to their responsibilities at home, and seek equality in household tasks (Amato & Booth, 1995). In Amato and Booth's longitudinal study of 2,033 married individuals (Whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics), the participants reported that due to "status quo benefits" (p. 58) some men refused to comply with these changes; this caused conflict and a lack of stability in the marital relationship. A woman's assertiveness toward sharing household responsibilities may be construed negatively by men that have traditional beliefs. Moreover, it is also believed that some husbands are threatened by their wives' professional successes. On the other hand, the Amato and Booth's findings also revealed that husbands that adopt egalitarian values and were willing to share household duties were praised and receive appreciation from their wives, which in turn promoted marital enjoyment.

**Motherhood** . Various theoretical approaches, such as object relations, accentuate the influential impact that the maternal role has on a child's growth. Research in attachment and object relations suggest that children's early life experiences with their mother is internalized and influences their development and behaviors in adulthood (Ainsworth, 1969; Strand & Wahler, 1996). More importantly, in Strand and Wahler's quantitative study that investigated the relationship between maternal object relations and maladaptive parenting techniques in 34 mother-child dyads, the results suggested that the

affection and discipline that a mother provides can either positively or negatively affect a child's developmental progress. Hence, when children are traumatized prior to becoming adults due to lack of affection and discipline received from their mother in childhood, the blame for children's difficulties tends to be placed on mothers (Strand & Wahler, 1996). In order to eradicate or minimize such trauma in children, theorists suggest that women establish a secure connection with their children (Vejar, Madison-Colmore, & Maat, 2006).

On the other hand, various theories attribute the maternal role to women's identity. In Milkie and Peltola's (1999) quantitative study examining the feelings of work-family balance among 209 women and 260 men, in which approximately 85% of the participants were White, they found that the societal expectations are that mothers "must be all-giving to their children" (p. 480). They argued that demands that limit a mother's interaction with her child will cause her to experience some level of anguish. In Tiedje et al. (1990) cross-sectional longitudinal study where the racial composition of the participants was not provided, they researched the approaches utilized by 200 women in balancing their views of role conflict and role enhancement. They argued that mothers who regard their parenting role as rewarding and experience low conflict will perceive motherhood to be more pleasurable. In addition, there is some research that suggests that the responsibility for managing the home and caring for children to women, a role that is deemed as "natural" (Barnett, 2004, p. 158). Since these roles are viewed as natural, it is expected that they can be executed without any conflict. Conversely, professional roles are thought of as "unnatural" and viewed by society to be potentially too challenging for women (Barnett, 2004, p. 158). Given that women tend to be the primary care-givers for

their children, they tend to encounter more disruptions in their lives with regards to common household problems compared to men (e.g., a sick child; Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Overall, Milkie and Peltola concluded that women encounter some difficulties when balancing multiple roles.

In another study, DeMeis, Hock, and McBride (1986) completed a 13½ longitudinal study of 62 women that excluded the racial identity. They researched how educated mothers of infants manage motherhood and their careers. The findings revealed that professional preference and job status are significant contributors in determining how mothers will feel about separating from their infants to return to work. Mothers in this study reported pondering over their professional needs and interests in comparison to the well-being of their children. Conversely, other participants viewed their infants as delicate and helpless, and recognized the importance of the maternal role in their child's lives. During the postpartum period (varying from 2 days to 13 ½ months) many of the women felt that their careers interfered with their role as a parent.

Bassoff's conceptual article (1987) examined the relationship between mothers and their adolescent children through a psychodynamic lens. She argued that research typically looks at the dynamics of the mother-infant relationship. Her findings revealed that parenting an adolescent child tends to be an extremely stressful period for a mother. Mothers experience a sense of loss as their children enter the world of adulthood, which typically requires mothers relinquishing the control they have over their children. This in turn causes a restructuring of the mother-child relationship. During this phase, women struggle with the idea of giving up the position of being the central person in their children's lives.

In Barrett's (2004) conceptual study, she speculates that the employment of married women with children contributes to numerous social issues such as student attrition, substance abuse, violence among juveniles, and divorce rates. There is a concern that the children of working women will develop problems varying from insecure attachments to improper behaviors (e.g., acting out). Nonetheless, research has not validated this conjecture to date.

**Women as Professionals.** Cinamon (2006) constructed a quantitative study involving 358 students from Israel, Europe, and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic that looked at gender, parental models of childcare and housework, and self-efficacy; and their involvement in anticipated work-family conflict (WFC). In the study, Cinamon made note that women in the west have been socialized to believe that becoming a wife and raising children should take precedence over desires of career advancement and financial independence. She asserted that women typically dedicate more time to their family rather than their careers when compared to their counterparts, men. Cinamon's results revealed that women had higher levels of anticipation of work interfering with their familial responsibilities as opposed to their family obligations interfering with work. This anticipated conflict caused women to display low levels of efficacy in handling these conflicts comparatively to men. In addition, she suggested that women have a greater responsibility in the home, and that their feelings towards preserving family roles cause them to experience work-family conflict more than men. On the other hand, women are being encouraged by feminists to enter the workforce and share their knowledge and skills in the corporate arena (Sellers, Thomas, Batts, & Ostman, 2005). However, once they enter the workforce, numerous women feel that the

social support for working mothers ends up being an empty promise without supplying the necessities to integrate family and employment such as quality child care, sick child care, maternal leave, flexible work schedules, and housekeeping relief (Sellers et al., 2005). Overall, society's attitude is that women have the opportunity to attain the same positions that are typically held by men, with the understanding that they must also perform the tasks that society views as a woman's job (Sellers et al., 2005).

In addition, Barnett's (2004) conceptual article suggests that male spouses are supportive of maternal employment and are becoming more involved in the handling of household tasks. However, she asserts that the media depicts employed married mothers as women that experience psychological difficulties. In addition, Barnett proposed that there are societal beliefs that a woman's employment will cause the emasculation of her husband and limit her ability to nurture her children. However, relative to a woman's own needs Barnett states that maternal employment contributes to a healthier cognitive and physical self. In addition, she implies that women who transition from full-time home maker to professional (part-time and full-time) may experience lower levels of depression.

Empirical research suggests that maternal employment assists in buffering the stresses from the other roles by providing social support and an increase in finances (Waldron, Weiss, & Hughes, 1998). However, Shelton (1992) asserts that some women will sacrifice advancements within their profession in order to spend quality time with their families. Although these decisions may alleviate some level of work-family conflict, women may experience resentment towards their family for the lost opportunity. In addition, Spain and Bianchi (1996) found that mothers attempt to find employment closer

to their home so that they will be readily available for their children. These women also use their time off or sick days to attend to family needs (Spain & Bianchi, 1996).

### **Theories**

Research suggests that multiple roles have a positive effect on a woman's overall level of life satisfaction (Schoon et al., 2005). More specifically, Thoit's (1983) role accumulation theory argued that additional roles enhanced a person's social stability, stature, and emotional stability. Additionally, this theory contends that the roles outside of the home provide a sense of professionalism, self-respect, and financial stability for women (Thoit, 1986; Waldron, Weiss, & Hughes, 1998). Thoit felt that researchers were solely focusing on the parent, spouse, and employee roles and modified the role accumulation theory by examining some additional roles (e.g., friend, religious group member, and organization member) with the already mentioned roles. The results show that additional roles contribute to reducing psychological distress (Thoit, 1986). A successive study showed that an increased number of roles assisted in minimizing anxiety and depression in women and men (Thoit, 1987).

In 1997, Jackson was able to further refine the accumulation theory to a broader population by researching the psychological effects that numerous roles have on African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans. Prior to this study, the research on marginalized groups was scarce. The results revealed that Blacks and Puerto Ricans do not find the accumulation of roles to be beneficial. The results also indicate that all of the participants view the spousal role as beneficial; whereas, the psychological effects of the professional and parent role are not consistent. There is evidence also suggesting that participation in organizations is helpful for non-Hispanic Whites; while, roles within the



family system are viewed as psychologically valuable in all of the participants, except the Puerto Ricans (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006; Jackson, 1997).

In addition, the Barnett and Hyde's (2001) expansionist theory offers empirical data showing the positive effects of multiple roles for women. According to this theory, "a strong commitment to one role does not preclude strong commitment to the other" (p.784). Barnett and Hyde feel that the joy that one receives from participating in multiple roles depends on the role quality and time requirements for each role. If the individual finds pleasure in engaging in the various roles and the roles are manageable then their quality of life will be enhanced.

Conversely, Goode's (1960) role strain theory proposes the harmful effects that multiple roles can have on people both cognitively and physically. It is reported that multiple roles are capable of causing people to feel overwhelmed and conflicted within their roles. This also intensifies stress level, creates high demands on time, and requires the exertion of energy; which contribute to psychological distress. Ahrens and Ryff (2006) argue that this theory is deficient in empirical support. Research indicates that the professional and spouse role tends to have either a positive or indeterminate effect on a woman's health (Waldron & Weiss, 1998).

Based on my experiences with the Haitian culture as a Haitian-American woman, I do not believe that any of the previous theories is completely applicable to Haitian-American women. It is my belief that these women experience some level of inner conflict when attempting to manage their multiple roles. They may encounter difficulties when attempting to navigate through both the Haitian and American culture.

As noted earlier, most Haitians hold collectivistic values, where attention is directed towards the welfare of the family (Zèphir, 1996). However, the America culture is more individualist and children are raised to focus on their individual needs. In addition, it is important to note that Thoit's (1983) role accumulation theory, Barnett and Hyde's (2001) expansionist theory, and Goode's (1960) role strain theory create a limitation for this population because these theories were based primary on White samples. Furthermore, Jackson's (1997) refinement of the accumulation theory raises the question whether the social psychological patterns that were established could be confirmed with other racial/ethnic groups (e.g. Haitian).

Although there is a good deal of research on how women balance multiple identities, the existing research is limited primarily White/European American women. Hence, this current qualitative study will focus on investigating the experiences of women of Color, specifically those who are of a Haitian decent. As more and more Haitians are populating the US, it is essential that clinicians gain knowledge about the Haitian culture.

## Chapter III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Although there was adequate research on how women balance the role of wife, mother, and professional, the existing research primarily utilized middle to upper social class White/European American women as their samples. To assist in examining if past research findings were applicable to other races and ethnic groups, this study focused on investigating the experiences of women of Color, specifically those who were of a Haitian lineage. I utilized a qualitative research method to gather, analyze, and interpret the data. As noted by numerous researchers, qualitative research affords researchers the opportunity to study a phenomenon in its natural state by allowing participants to share their own narratives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 1997; Kirk & Miller, 1986). In this chapter, I will **provide** an overview of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), information pertaining to procedures for ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings, and the justification for using it in this particular study.

#### **Overview of Consensual Qualitative Research**

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) was developed by Hill and colleagues in 1997 and updated in 2005. Prior to CQR, it was thought that qualitative research lacked accuracy in comparison to quantitative methods, prompting Hill and colleagues to create a qualitative method that could be replicated and accommodate the scientific standards for accurateness. They felt that in order to accurately conduct a CQR study that the following components were needed: (a) through the use of a semi-structured interview

protocol, all participants had to be asked a standard series of open-ended questions and probes that were previously scripted; (b) the data had to be analyzed throughout the study by several judges in order to cultivate multiple perspectives; (c) the judges need to reach a consensus as it pertains to meaning of the data; (d) as a minimum one auditor had to review the work completed by the judges to ensure the minimization of group think in the primary team and; (e) the auditor also had to look at the domains, core ideas, and cross-analyses in the data analysis (Hill et al., 2005). In addition to the above mentioned components, there are three main steps involved in performing a CQR study. They included developing and coding domains, constructing core ideas, and establishing categories that best describe the consistencies across the cases. These steps will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

### **Participants**

**Participant inclusion criteria and recruitment.** CQR advises that participants are selected purposefully from a homogeneous population, since the study requires that certain criteria be met by each participant (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). Literature reveals that there is limited knowledge about how women of color balance multiple roles, where roles are characterized by the expectations for individuals in a particular position. Second-generation refers to the child of immigrants born in the United States (Zèphir, 2001). Hence, this study examined the experiences of second-generation Haitian women. Additionally, one of the main recommendations for CQR is that individuals contributing to the study be well-informed about the phenomenon being investigated (Zèphir, 2001). Since men of Haitian descent would be more familiar with the customs and norms of Haiti, the first requirement was that the participants be married for at least 1 year to a

Haitian man. In addition, the participants had to have at least one child between the ages of 6 months to 25 years. Furthermore, these women must have been employed for a minimum of 6 months.

**Data on participants.** The participants interviewed for this study included 8 married Haitian-American women living in New Jersey. They ranged in age from 28 to 45 years. Three (38%) of the participants disclosed having three children, 3 (38%) identified having two children, and 2 (25%) divulged that they had one child. The educational background for the participants varied: two had some college experience, one had Bachelors degrees, three had Masters degrees, and two had doctoral degrees. Finally, the participants reported a range of professions in areas such as education, medical, law, business, and government.

**Interviewer and judges.** I am a 5<sup>th</sup>-year doctoral student in a counseling psychology program. I am 33-year-old, married, Haitian-American woman, without children. In addition to conducting the audiotape phone interviews, I was one of the three judges in this study. The second judge was a 29-year-old, single, Jamaican-American Black male in his 3<sup>rd</sup>-year as a doctoral student in a counseling psychology program. Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> judge and I received the necessary training needed to conduct this research, which included involvement in rigorous coursework on research design and methodology in addition to actively conducting relevant psychological research. The third judge was 38-year-old, married, Jewish, Caucasian male who works as a tenured professor. He is also the advisor for both of the interviewer and other judge. In addition, the third judge has also performed numerous CQR studies. A Haitian-American female associate professor who has conducted several research studies served as the auditor.

Before conducting the interviews, the team members discussed their personal thoughts and/or biases relative to immigration, acculturation, and enculturation. For example, as the primary researcher in this study I was attuned to my biases relative to Haitians. As the child of Haitian immigrants, I was raised to believe that the primary role of a woman is to be a good wife and mother, and attend to the needs of their family. Furthermore, I was encouraged to adopt and maintain Haitian values rather than acculturate to American customs. It was my belief that Haitian-American women experience some level of conflict when attempting to manage multiple identities and maintain their cultural values. During the analysis process, the researchers engaged in similar discussions to ensure that biases were recognized and maintained.

### **Measures**

**Demographic questionnaire.** On the demographic questionnaire, participants were asked to provide the following basic information: age, education level, number of years employed, type of employment, number of years married, and number of children.

**Interview protocol.** Interviews followed a semi-structured format see Appendix A, where the participants were asked questions designed to collect data pertaining to balancing multiple roles as second-generation Haitian immigrants. The following research question was explored in the proposed study: How do women of Haitian descent experience and manage their multiple identities?

Each participant was asked the same set of main questions. However, due to responses provided by various participants, the interviewer probed further into the responses, which lead into new areas.

A follow up interview was conducted approximately two weeks after the initial interview to give the participants the opportunity to make any additional comments and provide the interviewer the chance to ask any additional questions that emerged after the initial interview.

### **Procedure**

**Recruitment of participants.** As a member of Haitian culture, it was my belief that I would have had easier access to this population through family and friends by posting notifications of this study predominantly at Haitian churches in New Jersey. Individuals interested in participating in the study were asked to contact me directly via email or by telephone. After the participants contacted me, I briefly discussed the purpose of the study and asked the participants preliminary questions to determine whether they satisfied the criteria needed to participate in the study (i.e., married for at least 1 year to a Haitian man; have at least one child between the ages of 6 months to 25 years; and have been employed for a minimum of 6 months). Qualifying participants were asked to complete and return the consent form and demographic questionnaire which were mailed to the participant's home. Participants were asked to provide their names and telephone numbers to enable the interviewer in arranging and conducting the interviews.

**Protection of participants.** As the participants disclosed personal and private information about themselves, they may have felt vulnerable and exposed. According to Hill and colleagues (1997, 2005), it is imperative that researchers are attuned to the participant's emotional responses, while remaining respectful. Participants were informed of the option to withdraw from the study at any point, without being penalized, if they experienced too much distress from sharing their personal stories. The participants were

also encouraged to share their concerns relative to the study with the researcher. In addition, a referral list of mental health professional services with their contact information was made available in the informed consent to all participants, if they should be in need of support after their involvement in this study. Although anonymity could not be completely guaranteed in this study, the researcher took great measures to ensure that the participant's confidentiality was protected. The completed demographic questionnaires, the informed consent forms, and interview tapes were securely locked in a file cabinet within the researcher's office. In addition, to further maintain confidentiality, the researcher utilized code numbers, rather than the participants' names, on the demographic forms and interview tapes. All identifying information connecting to the participants were removed from the transcript, and the interview tapes were destroyed following the completion of the analysis.

**Interviewing.** I conducted all of the interviews via telephone. Prior to starting the study a pilot interview was performed to ensure the effectiveness of the protocol and to assist me in gaining additional training since my research experience was limited to quantitative studies. After conducting the pilot interview it was decided that all of the questions were essential to the study, but the terminology used in various questions was rephrased to assist in making the questions more straightforward. Furthermore, an additional question was added to look at the salience of the roles in the participants' lives.

The interviews were recorded by audiotape with each participant's permission and I also took notes pertaining to the amount of time it took to complete the interview and their ability to establish rapport. Since participants tend to provide less socially expected



responses in telephone interviews in comparison to face-to-face interview, I utilized telephone interviews (Hill et al., 2005).

Two weeks after the initial interviews were conducted I attempted to schedule follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews did not adhere to any specific protocol; rather, they were meant to provide me with the opportunity to ask any additional questions relative to the initial interview. In addition, the follow-up interviews granted the participants the chance to contribute any additional information or modify any of the comments made in the first interview. Unfortunately, after making several attempts via phone and internet, none of the participants returned my phone calls or responded to my emails.

**Transcripts.** The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, excluding minimal encouragers. All identifying information pertaining to the participants were removed and to maintain confidentiality the participants were assigned a code.

**Draft for final results.** None of the participants requested a copy of the draft of the final results of the study as it pertained to their comments.

### **Analysis of the Data**

The data was investigated intensely to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Through the use of a consensual process and inductive reasoning the materialization of findings was derived. The consensual process entailed team members sharing their thoughts with one another about the data that was collected (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). Consensus was reached through open discussion.

The data was then analyzed by judges as suggested by CQR (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). The judges put the responses from each interview into domains. The following

step involved the judges constructing core ideas for the data within each of the domains for the individual cases. A cross analysis was then performed to identify categories to describe the consistencies in the core ideas with the domains across the cases.

Throughout the analysis process, the judges were able to reach a consensus relative to establishing domains, core ideas, and cross analysis.

Auditor review was utilized at each step of the way. When the judges finished their analysis of the data, the results were reviewed by an auditor. The auditor went through all the data gathered to ensure that the cross-analysis that was completed by the primary research team accurately portrays the data. The auditor provided valuable feedback with respect to the study (Hill et al., 2005). For example, after reviewing the core ideas that were derived from the data, the auditor provided additions to assist in further elaborating the ideas in this area. She also made suggestions in the cross analysis process; such as, minimizing repetition by combining certain categories that shared analogous ideas.

The final step of the analysis process required that categories be classified based on their frequency of occurrence. The classifications were general, typical, or variant (Hill et al., 2005). Hill suggested that a *General* result be applied to cases where all or all but one of the cases were represented. Whereas, categories where at least half of the cases were represented were labeled as *Typical*. A *Variable* designation applied if a minimum of two of the cases were represented. Given that 8 participants were interviewed for this study, *General* comprised of 7-8 cases, while *Typical* consisted 4-6 cases, and *Variant* included of 1-3 cases.

## **Chapter IV**

### **RESULTS**

The data gathered from this study exposed the different techniques employed by second-generation Haitian women in managing their multiple roles of wife, mother, and professional. The data analysis produced 10 domains: personal conceptualization of Haitian identity; perceptions of multiple roles- parent, spouse, professional, and other; management of multiple roles; challenges in balancing multiple roles; role of social support; advice for mental health professional working with Haitians; and reason for participating. See Appendix C for a listing of the domains/categories, subcategories, and frequencies for each domain. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used to identify the participants involved this study.

#### **Personal Conceptualization of Haitian Identity**

Three subcategories emerged from the participants disclosing their personal views about their identities as Haitian women. Typically, participants felt a need to adhere to Haitian values. For instance, Cathy, a 45-year-old business owner provided the following response, “Being Haitian means ...being connected together, and the family values the way we were brought up in, you know and raised in, I can see it’s different from others.” Another example came from Andrea, a 42-year-old registered nurse, who shared that:

For me being Haitian means adhering to the Haitian culture, and being different, I guess. In the sense what we celebrate, what’s important to us. Even though we... it might be same as other cultures in some sense, there’s always something that singles us out.

The participants also typically spoke of feelings of pride as it relates to being Haitian. For instance, Dorothy, a 38-year-old teacher, divulged that:

Being Haitian means a lot to me because I think Haiti has a rich culture. Like Haitian...Haiti was the first black independent in the Caribbean. And I have...the Haitian value is very important to me because it is different. Haitian parents, when they come to the United States with their children, they have sets of rules that the children must follow, and some of the rules are to go to school and achieve something and I sense that is part of the culture and there is this sense of pride even though Haitians came from the poorest country and let's say the western hemisphere, they still have this sense of pride and instill it in their kids regardless of the situation. The heritage that Haitians have, they have faith. They have a sense of responsibility.

Similarly, Gabriella, 37-year-old teacher, said "I came from a country where it is known as the pearl of the islands. The first black nation to claim their independence. So I am proud of being Haitian."

Additionally, a variant category emerged stemming from the challenges these women encountered because of their Haitian identities. A prime example was Helen, a 42-year-old attorney, who indicated:

Being Haitian means having a great responsibility. As Haitian women we had to endure a lot in regards to managing family and children and also being entrepreneurs I know in my culture that the women are entrepreneurs, their own businesses and practices of some sort. So it's a great honor honestly just to be a Haitian woman, especially in this time where we are in America, where we are

facing many challenges, first as a black person, second as a woman, and third as Haitian woman. We have all these stigmas, oh you from Haiti. So we have a great responsibility to portray ourselves in the best light given our history and the stigma we've acquired over the years and given the challenges we face today.

### **Perception of Parental Role**

There were four subcategories in this particular domain. They focused on participants' viewing their parental role as a top priority, the challenges that emerged, the need to accomplish various tasks and provide emotional support, and the positive feelings associated with this role. As noted above, many of the participants typically viewed their parental role as a top priority. For example, Cathy stated:

That's one of my best roles because I always love being a mother. Take care of my kids, and be there for them, love them, and its special, always a special thing in my heart being a mother. I love my job and I love being a wife, but most of all being a mother was my top priority. Being a mother is a special role. I don't know how to describe it, but it is just something special. You know, I come home to my daughter, you know, my boys, being with them, caring for them, and all those good stuff.

In addition, Dorothy divulged, "It's the most important role I could say that I have in life. Being a mother and helping my children, my offspring grow." Similar sentiments were also shared by Helen, "The ultimate role is being mother."

Additionally, the participants typically encountered an array of challenges when attempting to manage their role as a parent. For instance, Andrea divulged:

It's hard sometimes...I'm a mom of two, mom of three, I lost one. My kids have always been chauffeured around, most of the time by me. In school, in church... What else can I say? I'm their caregiver, in the home setting from homework, to feeding, to washing, to being there for them.

Then again, Helen shared "as a mother you never know what to expect and what their needs are and how the person will react to you."

The participants also typically reported that this role involves managing multiple tasks and providing emotional support to their children. As noted by Dorothy:

I take care of my children, make sure that they getting a very good education make sure that I'm there for them and instill in them the values that they need to survive in society. Go to their games when they have games. Go to their school activities and participate in everything that they have. Sometimes being a soccer mom it seems to be.... Take them to swimming lessons like all the other moms do these stuff.

Likewise, Gabriella shared that "as a mother let me see I play the role of nurturer, a nurse to my kids, a doctor, a shoulder to cry on, a role model and a provider." In addition, when discussing the challenging aspects of motherhood, Fabienne, a 28-year-old state negotiator disclosed:

It's not easy. You know, you have to find a way. You make a plan. The kid has to go to school in the morning...I schedule my life around them. They go to school in the morning, I go to work. By the time I go pick them up I try to put 30 minutes of exercise and come home. Cooking. Cooking for them. Get them ready. Make my son do his homework. Do a little bit of reading for them. Make sure he took a

shower. Give them supper. Make sure they do a little bit of this, a little bit of that. I read to them, and then put them to bed.

Participants variantly reported having positive feelings towards their parental role.

For instance, Barbara, 36-year-old nursing assistant said:

As a mother it's beautiful. It's tough and beautiful because you see your kids getting smaller, no... getting bigger. Doing the different things with kids, fun stuff, very enthusiastic... in the kids. Makes you feel like you want to live.

Additionally, Helen divulged that "the most rewarding to me is being a mom and being a type of mentor that your child will want to go up to be like, including learning from you."

### **Perception of Spousal Role**

This domain focused on the participants' perceptions about their parental role.

Three subcategories emerged, which included the pleasures found in their partnerships, responsibilities associated with caring for their spouses, and challenges endured from this role. Typically, the participants viewed their marriages as an enjoyable partnership. For example, Cathy said:

Being a wife is also exciting, I've been married for 23 years and you know my husband and I, we like, he is my best friend, he is also my partner. You know, being together for 23 years and also work together.

Dorothy shared a similar sentiment. She stated, "Oh, I feel great about being a wife. I think it's a good idea. As far as I'm concerned I think every woman should be a wife." In addition, Helen disclosed that:

Currently I have the privilege of becoming a wife and mother so I would say being a wife requires you to have a lot of like they say comprises but the type of

comprises you are willing to make that doesn't feel like a compromise but nonetheless you didn't get your way but you're happy that you got your partner's way so that's a great role.

In addition, the participants typically felt this sense of responsibility towards caring for their spouses. This was evident when Dorothy said, "As a wife I have to take care of my spouse, my husband. And I guess being there for him when he needs me, to support my husband in whatever situation that's needed." Fabienne shared a similar sentiment:

I'm everything in terms of helping, in pretty much all aspects of our marriage. I help with work and help with – it's so much. I don't even know where to start. My husband is involved in a couple of careers. I help out with that. We cook together, we travel together, and we pretty much do a lot together.

Also, Gabriella divulged, "As a wife, I have to make sure that my husband's physical, social, psychological, sexual needs are being met."

Participants variably reported encountering challenges in their marriages. For example, Elizabeth, a 45-year-old Vice President at a bank noted:

As a wife, it's challenging because a lot of my time is taken with my other roles. So, it's a balancing act where I have to actually be very conscious on a weekly basis, making sure that my husband gets the attention. We attend certain functions, to make sure I do certain things. Basically, while we are at work we make sure we get connected because being so busy a lot of time at home we don't have a chance to be connected.

Barbara also disclosed:



Well, yeah, there are a lot of difficulties. You just have to find ways to work things out. As a wife, for example, sometimes you have an ideal mate. But sometimes you feel like this... the husband don't like different things in the relationship. It's very difficult, but sometimes you find a way to work out between each other.

### **Perception of Professional Role**

When the participants were asked to discuss their perceptions about their professional role, two subcategories materialized. First, most of the participants generally discussed encountering difficulties with balancing roles, job themes, and feelings towards work. For instance, Elizabeth noted:

It has consumed most of my time. I work for a bank, and I am a vice president, and with the economy the way it is there has been a lot of various downsizing. So, I do more than 12 hours a day and I work in the city. So it's a lot of balancing, because I still, you know have to take care of my children, my husband, my home. So it's very difficult right now.

Helen also disclosed:

It's like from school to graduate school to law school, that's how it is being a professional you know you go to work, you work in corporate America and then you have you know that whole responsibility of managing different things. It is as I stated in the beginning very difficult for black Haitian women to make it in corporate America so you tend to focus your energy on your career realizing that you have to sacrifice the other parts so when your given the opportunity to handle

everything at one time you have to thank god for his grace and mercy believing that you handle this whole life he's just giving you.

While, Gabriella stated, "as an employee I'm working to pay my bills I guess."

Second, the participants also provided variant responses about their willingness to invest substantial amounts of energy towards their work. For instance, Barbara divulged, "I try to work hard with my patients. I've run the clinic for the past 14 years. I love my job, I love my people, I love working with people." A similar sentiment was shared by Cathy:

My role as a business owner is...[my husband and I] work every day together, and um...the kind of business that I do, it requires long hours but at the same time I guess [my husband and I] both love it and [my husband and I] get to be together all the time.

Additionally, Elizabeth said, "With the economy the way it is there has been a lot of various downsizing. So, I do more than 12 hours a day."

### **Perceptions of Other Roles**

Variant responses emerged from this domain. The participants spoke mainly about their roles as students and church members. Two of participants spoke briefly about their roles as students. Andrea noted, "I was a student until recently. Hopefully I will be a student soon." While, Gabriella stated clearly that she was "also a student."

In addition, participants talked about their involvements at their churches. For instance, Andrea disclosed, "I am also a church-goer, I am active at my church." Also, Elizabeth shared:

I do have additional roles. I am also a church volunteer and that has taken quite a bit of time because I am the president of the women's group and I am also on the church board.

### **Management of Multiple Roles**

The participants shared numerous thoughts and approaches to managing their various roles. These included being organized, striving for a balance, the need for patience, getting assistance and support from family, positive impact of Haitian upbringing, and finding strength in roles. The participants typically reported being organized and adhering to a strict schedule. For example, Barbara stated, "You make a plan..... I find a way, like I said to manage. But you know as you come, you will have a schedule. Give everyone their own space and quality time. It's not easy, but you manage." Andrea also disclosed, "Being able to prioritize and then get everything done." Finally, Helen noted, "That's my greatest challenge, managing everything at the same time. So you just pick a day and say today is mother's day, today is husband day, today is work day, and you just go with that and whatever comes in between you try to address it as quickly as possible."

The participants also typically spoke about their need to strive for balance when attempting to manage their multiple roles. For example, Andrea said:

I'm able to go from one to the other and do 10 different things at the same time and not stopping. I don't know, that's what I've seen my mom, my grandmother do. That's the way they've handled things. I mean they could do 5 things at once and not be so, or feeling overwhelmed by the whole thing. Just do what you have to do.

Furthermore, Cathy shared that “[husband and I] manage...the kids, it’s fun, it’s easy, we manage fine. There’re times, for example, tonight he’s working and I have to be home and care for them, be home for the kids.” While, Elizabeth thought, “I would say I’m proud I am able to accomplish this, but at times it is very stressful because sometimes I feel I’m not giving my best to each of them.”

In addition, the participants also provided variant responses regarding the need for patience in order to achieve a balance in their roles. For example, Andrea disclosed:

[Roles] make me stronger. They make me... I would say more patient. And, they make me more resilient. I’ve seen, ah, I guess I’ve seen myself grow and change over the years to the point if there’s a change at work or change in personal life, it’s not a crisis. You know, I learn to adopt and move along. If it’s positive you move along. If it’s something that could mess up your whole being, somehow you learn to put what you have to put in perspective. I have yet to see something at this point that would break me down. I’ve learn to adopt and move and keep going.

Fabienne shared a similar sentiment. She stated, “Well God has been gracious to give me a lot of patience (laughs) to manage them.”

There were also variant responses from the participants about getting assistance and support from their family members. For example, Cathy divulged:

My husband and I, we’ve always been a partner. He’s always been, we basically, do it together, when the kids were younger, we all take turns and even now we take turns.

Moreover, Gabriella shared:

Well, I would say my husband is great. I'm not going to say the relationship, in terms of work load is 50/50, but he has stepped up to the plate.... Right now, he is at soccer practice with my middle son. So, and me before the interview my babysitter dropped off my daughter at practice. And then I picked her up at 7:30, so I don't have to worry about the other one. So, basically we tend to – it's more complementary I would say, whenever there are two things to be done one will take one. The other one will do it in terms of helping.

Additionally, the participants spoke variantly about the positive effect that growing up in a Haitian culture has on their own development. For example, Andrea shared:

I just juggle, I always think part of it is because I'm a Haitian woman.... I'm able to go from one to the other and do 10 different things at the same time and not stopping. Going from priority...Being able to prioritize and then get everything done. I don't know, that's what I've seen my mom, my grandmother do. That's the way they've handled things. I mean they could do 5 things at once and not be so, or feeling overwhelmed by the whole thing. Just do what you have to do.

Barbara also mentioned, "I never want to see [my family] complaining. I never heard that in my family. The only thing they did, they did the best they can. I'm doing it the way I see my family doing it." Furthermore, Helen felt that "it is hard sometimes but you do what you have to do. Well I was raised that way.

Variantly the participants also expressed finding strength in their multiple roles. For example, Andrea disclosed that the "[roles] make me stronger.... And, they make me more resilient." While, Barbara stated that "You have to be strong. Things go on

everyday. People give you support. You thank God, you'll be fine." Dorothy further shared, "I think all three of those roles are very important to me and they are very good roles to have in this society, when you are a wife and a mother you're well received in society, well respected, there is a sense of responsibility, and the profession that I am in... it's like, it's like a role model for those kids."

### **Challenges in Balancing Multiple Roles**

In this domain, the participants' spoke of the different challenges they encountered in trying to find a balance in their roles. First, they typically discussed the difficulties in reaching a balance. For example, Cathy shared:

Some of the trouble that I had when the kids were born was like working, because I've always worked, and with the little one, you work and by being a small business owner, I was always married to the kids, and also you gotta, married to your job in order to keep it, it was hard working and caring for the kids at the same time.

Elizabeth also noted:

It's very difficult to do what you want to do, especially in my culture and what I see. I would say I am a Christian woman. A lot of people that I deal with they are use to more of the traditional role and I don't meet that (laughs). And I feel sometimes lacking because I don't cook the Haitian way, for certain things. And sometimes comments will be made "well you don't do that for your husband." Well my husband doesn't need it. But, doesn't mean that doesn't hurt. I think the problem is not having enough time to devote I would say, to I guess my family. So, because of that I carry certain guilt. So I would call it difficult. Things I know

I need to do or what to do, I am unable to so. At times it is very stressful. Because sometimes I feel I'm not giving my best to each of them.

Additionally, Andrea said:

I'm a caregiver, so, it seems that the minute you walk in you're giving. You give kids, husband, you're to tend to other people's needs. It's always something. If it's not work, it's the family, if it's not the church, it's something else. I mean, I work on weekends, besides my regular job. The boys, I'm still trying to, even though they're almost on their way now, still trying to keep some kinds of bond of family. Make sure we're home together. Always make sure...Right now, my husband's work is more demanding than before so he does help when he can. But lately it's been mostly me. You always try to have a hot meal for everybody. Then church, I'm involved in church I just walked in I have to make a few phone calls related to church. That's a challenge to me.

Participants typically also felt that they did not have sufficient time to engage in their roles at an optimal level. For instance, Dorothy disclosed, "The negative part of it, it's the time. Oh, time. I think I should have more time than anybody because I'm always running out of time. That's my challenge. Ok, do I have time to finish this, do I have time to finish that. Right now I'm talking to you, I don't have time to finish cooking (laughs)."

Moreover, Elizabeth divulged:

In the workforce. Basically, I believe –I think the problem is not having enough time to devote I would say, to I guess my family. So, because of that I carry certain guilt. So I would call it difficult. Things I know I need to do or what to do,

I am unable to so. While Andrea shared, “Sometimes, I think it would be nice to just sit around. Yes, alone time. I don’t think I have that. You know.”

Finally, there were also variant responses relating to feelings of stress. For example, Cathy stated, “it was hard working and caring for the kids at the same time.... different because they are grown up now. My oldest is in college, I have two kids in college, my daughter is 17 and she is home and now she can drive and things and you worry, you know. You worry with them not being physically there with you.”

Furthermore, Elizabeth disclosed:

It’s very difficult to do what you want to do, especially, in my culture and what I see. I would say I am a Christian woman. A lot of people that I deal with they are used to more of the traditional role and I don’t meet that (laughs). And I feel sometimes lacking, because I don’t cook the Haitian way, for certain things. And sometimes comments will be made “well you don’t do that for your husband.” Well my husband doesn’t need it. But, doesn’t mean that doesn’t hurt..... I think the problem is not having enough time to devote I would say, to, I guess my family. So, because of that I carry certain guilt. So I would call it difficult. Things I know I need to do or what to do, I am unable to so.

Whereas, Fabienne was concerned about:

Not being able to communicate often times. Like, for example, with my husband if there is an appointment that’s off or a bill that needs to be paid that hasn’t been paid. Communication is the challenge, often times it really is, especially between my husband and I.



### **Role of Social Support**

All of the participants discussed the relevance of having a support system in helping them with their roles. Three subcategories emerged that targeted the need for support and assistance from family members, friends, and community. First, they spoke generally of the importance of receiving assistance and support from immediate and extended family. An example would be Barbara when she shared:

I've got some family, some friends. Everybody does the best they can to help me. For example, if I need a baby sitter, I'll call my dad, I'll call my step-mom. So they're willing to help me. They try their best they can.

Gabriella also noted:

I guess I could say my husband has been my source of social support. He's been, he's the one that encouraged me to go back school and get my masters so he's there to support me in everything I do....I live downstairs and mother in law lives upstairs so everytime if the kids are sick from school and I can't take off or my husband can't take off, I would drop them upstairs, that way my in laws are my support too....because they babysit them for me.

Helen shared:

Well I have the support of family and friends who are constantly calling to see how everything is going. So it's very important to have a member of close family and friend to assist through your day to day activities so that they can say been there done that, yes I already know what you're going through, and just to lash out. So there is no such thing as you're on your own no matter how old you are, you know your mother your aunts, they are your mentors who raised you from

when you were little, they are still involved in your life, sometimes too involved. They know when I haven't eaten because I'm busy doing certain things or I haven't picked up the phone to say how are you or if I didn't visit one of my sisters and things like that. Even when you don't talk they have a sense because if somebody picks up the phone and says something like "how are you today" they can pick it up in your voice, no matter how you respond, even when if you say "I'm fine," oh you don't sound fine. So the family plays a great role, I call them the best mafia group we've ever had (laughs) is the Haitian family because whenever things go haywire, they jump take over and chastise whoever they have to in the process to protect your interest.

In addition, there were two variant subcategories that focused on support from friends, church, and community. Relative to friendships, Gabriella shared, "I have support from colleagues, bar association, which are constantly keeping me in the loop of the legal things happening in the community." As previously mentioned, there were also variant responses about the support that participants received from their church and community. For instance, Dorothy stated, "church has meetings and programs, you know geared towards family and stuff. And that can be support, is considered a support for me." Fabienne shared a similar sentiment, "I go to church. We have a church family." While, Helen said, "the Haitian community everybody knows what you are going through." Furthermore, Elizabeth divulged:

Yeah. I mentioned before that I do have a full time babysitter. Now, it's really not a babysitter, it's kind of a housekeeper. Who comes in who's been very helpful. She's still here when I leave for work, early in the morning to take my daughter to

work, and pick her up. So, because of that she doesn't have anything else to do during the day. She cooks for us.

### **Advice for Mental Health Professionals Working with Haitians**

In this category the participants provided two suggestions in assisting mental health professionals when working with Haitian-American clients. First, participants typically advised that clinicians become acquainted with the Haitian culture. For example, Andrea stated:

Learn the Haitian culture. Uh, I'm probably looking at it from a different point of view because I'm in the medical field. Often times patients come, they tend to treat them as American patient. But they're not. They have um, their likes and dislikes. And just like other cultures, they have food they would like to eat, in terms of comfort. ....If you look at other cultures, they tend to be more sensitive towards other cultures. For example the Asian culture, whenever they talk about diversity, they're say Jewish or Asian, whereas Caribbean people are different than Americans.

Dorothy shared a similar sentiment. She said:

Just try to get used to and acquainted with the people and the culture. In my opinion, every people, every country has a different culture. The United States of America, they have their culture and the Haitians, they have their own culture. So it's different, it's a different people, a different culture, a different everything. So, the culture is not going to be the same thing. That is why I'm bicultural. I have the Haitian culture and I'm living in the Unities States with the American culture.

These thoughts were further supported by Barbara, who advised that “first you need to know the culture. And then when you know the culture, it’s easier for you to work with them. You have to know the culture first.”

Second, there were also typical responses suggesting the importance of understanding Haitian women and their behaviors. For instance, Cathy said, “see if the Haitian women can be more open. The reason you know in my experience over the years, you have some Haitian women for example, will have, I know it’s happened to, you know to anyone, but I’ve seen it happen to some Haitian women where they have some trouble at home, are you with me? And they tend to just keep it and don’t share it with the medical professionals that can help them.” Gabriella also shared:

I would tell them to get to know them, get to know the Haitian women their working with. Get to know their culture, how were they raised and what they would tolerate and what they would not tolerate? How to approach them? Well some people don’t like to be approached a certain way. You might want to be careful when you approach a Haitian lady. That’s for example, well I don’t want to go there, like when somebody is talking, actually when guy is talking to Haitian female there is a certain way to go about. You can’t just go up to her and be in her face any kind of way.

Finally, Helen divulged:

The type of advice I would give would depend on the type of Haitian women advice is being given too. The reason why I use the word type is because there are Haitian women who were brought up exclusively inside the island of Haiti, where they had it different, they had a nurturing that’s really strict. There are Haitian

women who were brought up in the American society where they try to become more Americanized and try to let go of their Haitian roots. Both spectrums are good and bad. Growing up in a Haitian culture exclusively is very good because they have great discipline and they have great resilience to obtain and maintain anything, no matter what is thrown at them, whether they have money or not, they will survive because that is within them. That's what they know. That's what they see in their own culture. At the same time they are limited to looking beyond the box so that is why when you are mentoring someone in that capacity you have to assist that particular individual to see beyond the scope, beyond the box, to stretch their imagination because there is more out there. Those that are already out there in the American culture that try to become more Americanized need to remember where they came from because there is great value in the Haitian culture. The discipline is lacking in a lot of American-Haitians who grew up in America and who let things go. Oh it's no big deal, let it go. Whereas in the Haitian culture oh that's not good enough, and they strive themselves in being the best, so in mentoring an American-Haitian woman we have to instill again within the importance of where they come from.

### **Reasons for Participating**

In this domain there were two subcategories on why the participants choose to engage in this study. First, they typically shared that their rational for participating was to educate and provide a better understanding of Haitian women. For example, Andrea said:

I think it would be beneficial. Maybe because if they had more studies on Haitian women, the way I feel now – then maybe I wouldn't have felt like that. Maybe

people would read more about our culture and our needs, our wants. So, maybe people would be, professionals would be more sensitive. So, to me it's very important. It's extremely important. So, when I'm doing a presentation, or something, when I want to talk about my culture I'll do research and have something to refer to. So, to me it's beneficial, it's needed, it's necessary, it's important.

Gabriella shared, "Well I think by me being able to participate we help others to understand Haitian women better." Moreover, Helen disclosed:

Because all you had to say is Haitian women and that is like my heart. So you will find that I am very active in the Haitian community through my non-profit organizations and I will do anything that it takes to help advance Haitian women in America as well as in Haiti because I truly believe in who we are and what we can do. First I'm satisfied of even hearing you and your accomplishments. It's a great honor, you feel a sense a pride knowing that now this is somebody from our culture and that's why I participated. You know it was friend that said that I know somebody doing a study, I was more than happy. I said come on in and let's do this.

There were also variant responses about lack of research on Haitians. For example, Andrea noted:

I think it would be beneficial. Maybe because if they had more studies on Haitian women, the way I feel now then maybe I wouldn't have felt like that. Maybe people would read more about our culture and our needs, our wants. So, maybe people would be, professionals would be more sensitive. So, to me it's very

important. It's extremely important. So, when I'm doing a presentation, or something, when I want to talk about my culture I'll do research and have something to refer to. So, to me it's beneficial, it's needed, it's necessary, it's important.

Furthermore, Dorothy stated:

When I go to Barnes and Nobles and I'm looking at books, I rarely see something, actually never, I don't recall seeing stuff like that about Haitians. Ok, so when, I usually see stuff about Spanish this, Spanish that, actually not, I, so when I heard that you're doing something like that, I was like oh, count me in, I would love to participate. I didn't know those questions were going to be that hard.

Finally, Elizabeth shared:

About 15 years ago I became part of a black women's health study. And it's a study of the occurrence of illnesses in black women, stroke and so forth, different things. Every year I get updates, and I have to update them about my health, and so forth. And I have seen, I think the study started in 1990, and I've seen some of the research results that have come out of this. Because, there certainly is certain disease that are more prominent in black women than others. I've seen some of the results, and I felt like this is something else, that first of all, will help out. I don't want to say the cliché of a "sister". And also we need more Haitian mental health professionals.

## **Chapter V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences and the techniques utilized by Haitian-American women in managing multiple identities; specifically their role as a wife, mother, and professional. Research has shown that Haitian women encounter challenges associated with acculturation (Zéphir 1996, 2001). As decedents of Haitian immigrants, women are taught that their role as a wife and mother are primary in comparison to any other role (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002). However, this cultural value conflicts with American culture; which has a more individualistic perspective. In this chapter, I will discuss in detail the specific findings gathered from the study. Then, I will provide a section on the general limitations. A summary of the results and recommendations for treatment will follow. I will conclude the chapter with implications for research and practice.

#### **Description of Findings**

In general, the findings showed that the participants used a social support system to assist them in navigating their multiple roles and that they encountered difficulties when attempting to find a balance between their work and other roles. This particular strategy will be explored further later on in this chapter. The participants held great pride about being of Haitian decent because of Haiti's struggle to gain its independence. Due to these struggles and continued difficulties endured by the people of Haiti (Laguette, 1983; Zèphir, 1996), the participants felt that Haitians have learned to become more resilient. They shared that the awareness of the challenges that their ancestors and families had to bear helped them to appreciate the strength that lies within them. Furthermore, the



participants spoke highly about their adherence to Haitian values, which included respect and a sense of responsibility for family, community, and customs. These findings supported Zéphir's (1996) assertion that Haitians have a strong connection to their culture; they also speak to the role of acculturation for these second generation women who were reared by immigrant Haitians. They felt that their identities as women were steered by the Haitian values instilled in them by their parents. The participants commented about witnessing their mothers and grandmothers gracefully navigating through various roles, and the participants tried to model these behaviors in their lives. Their overall view of their identity as a Haitian woman was to be a provider of both emotional and physical support for their family.

Conversely, a few of the participants discussed the obstacles they encountered because of being Haitian; which they felt stemmed from the stigma's associated with the country being the poorest in the western hemisphere. In addition, the participants also talked about the challenges they endured because of their race and gender. Comparable to other racial groups, Haitians encounter racial discrimination because they are "non-White" (Zéphir, 2001, p. 50). Zéphir reported that Haitians are discriminated against because they differ in external appearance and culture from the Anglo norms. In addition, as women, they are discriminated against in the area of wages. Research reveals that men continue to earn higher salaries than women (Monthly Labor Review, 2003).

The participants also discussed each of their various life roles. The parental role was viewed as a priority by most of the participants, which is congruent with Haitian expectations on parenting (Charles, 1995; Zéphir, 1996, 2001.) Haitian women are typically raised to focus on familial needs (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941).

Furthermore, a few of the participants mentioned finding fulfillment and pleasure in this role because they felt that engaging in this role came naturally. Motherhood was viewed as role that required skills that were innately engrained (Barnett, 2004). They also explored the challenges associated with motherhood. The main concern that emerged had to deal with the responsibility of caring for their children. Some of the participants expressed uncertainty about whether or not they were truly meeting the primal and emotional needs of their children. In addition, they felt this overwhelming responsibility to be involved in various aspects of their children's lives such as, being their caregiver, assisting them with their homework, and supporting them in different extracurricular activities. These doubts appear to be in accord with some of the concerns and frustrations that are reported in research about parenting (Charles, 2005; Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002).

Alternatively, many of the participants spoke positively about their marital relationships to Haitian men. They referenced the need to compromise and viewed it as an effective mechanism in balancing their relationships. However, in the Haitian culture women are typically more subservient and are brought up with the perception that men are the primary decision makers within the household (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002; Gilligan & Brown, 1992; Zéphir, 2001). This cultural value was supported by a few of the participants. They made comments about feeling accountable for attending to the needs of their spouses. A few of the participants discussed the difficulties that exist in their marriages. For example, it was noted that a few of the participants experienced marital discourse; such as lack of physical support from their husbands relative to household tasks. While others felt that their other roles were imposing on the time they could

be devoting to their spouses. As noted earlier, Haitian-American women are brought with the belief that wives are to attend to the needs of their husbands (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002), and when roles outside of the family interfered with those responsibilities it causes some of the participants to experience feelings of guilt. These findings are congruous with prior research that has reported that the emergence of multiple identities has the potential to trigger challenges in marital relationships (Hayes, 2000; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). In addition, the role of acculturation seems important given a potential “culture clash” for Haitian women living in the United States but potentially dealing with patriarchal Haitian values.

Another challenge that was reported by all but one of the participants had to deal with their roles professionally. Many of them expressed difficulties with role balance, job themes, and their emotions as it relates to their professions. It was noted that they enjoyed their work but felt frustrated when their work interfered with the time that they have allocated for their other roles. Moreover, a few of the participants mentioned feelings of guilt when the time they devoted to work caused difficulties in managing their familial roles. These findings are congruent with past research that has shown that demanding professions have the tendency to require an additional investment of time and effort (Cinamon 2006; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1992)). In addition, based on Haitian cultural norms, it is understandable that these participants felt conflicted about diverting time away from their family. As noted earlier, women are indoctrinated with the belief that their role as a mother takes precedence over all others, which has the potential to create this inner struggle with them being caregivers and seeking advancement in their careers (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941). Furthermore, Portes and Zhou’s (1993) research

showed that children of immigrants struggle with being bi-cultural. Their study showed that Haitian-Americans encounter difficulties when attempting to comply with Haitian values while also going through the acculturation process in the United States. It is challenging to experience this internal conflict of wanting the freedoms offered by the United States, such as a career, while adhering to Haitian values. Conversely, a few of the participants revealed that their rationale for working was purely for financial purposes. There were also variant responses pertaining to the participants' willingness to invest a lot of their energy towards their work. It is reasonable to assume that due to the limited access to work opportunities in Haiti that immigrants who migrate to the United States would be thankful for the chance to find employment and care for their families (Cheong-Lum & Jermyn (1995). These values are then taught to Haitian child, which makes it understandable that the participants would comment on being attentive in maintaining their jobs.

When attempting to manage these multiple roles the participants employed various techniques. Primarily, they felt that being organized and maintaining a rigid schedule assisted in their attempts to find a balance among the roles. However, they also recognized that achieving such a task presents difficulties because the roles demand individual attention and there are moments when the division of time cannot be equally distributed. Furthermore, there were reports that prioritizing tasks amid the roles contributes highly to the minimization of chaos. Moreover, the findings seem to provide support that categorizing their experiences in the individual roles aide the participants at some level in reducing psychological stress (Barnett & Marshall, 1991). Furthermore, a few of the participants referenced that being raised in the Haitian culture contributed to

strengthening their skills in prioritizing and managing tasks; which is congruent with research that has shown the involvement of Haitian women in various roles such as, matriarchs, entrepreneurs, and caregivers (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941). Moreover, the participants also disclosed that partaking in these multiple roles have enhanced their patience and resiliency. Many of the participants found these roles to be fulfilling and felt that gaining control over their roles prepared them for future challenges. Such findings are supported by past research that has shown that women that perceive their roles as rewarding are more successful in managing their multiple identities (Barnett & Marshall, 1991; McBride, 1990; Reitzes & Mutran, 1994). Finally, the participants encouraged the involvement of family because they believed it aided in maintaining a level of order in their lives.

Although the participants shared various approaches to managing multiple roles; they also made note of the challenges they encountered. They disclosed that although striving for a balance helped in balancing the roles, it was also incredibly difficult to achieve. They felt it was unfeasible too evenly distribute their time amongst the roles. In addition, they expressed thoughts of being neglectful of some of their responsibilities, especially those around family and quality time for themselves. Furthermore, these challenges evoked stress within the participants when they attempted to navigate through their roles. This particular finding seems consistent with research that has shown the tendency for Haitian women to focus primarily on their parental and spousal roles (Charles, 1995; Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002; Zèphir, 2001).

As noted earlier, all of the participants sought the assistance of immediate and extended family to assist them managing their roles. Since Haiti is more collectivist in

nature and promotes strong family values, it makes sense that the participants would seek guidance and support from other family members (Zéphir, 1996, 2001). A few of the participants also shared that they received physical and emotional support from close friends and church members. This piece of data supports the research done in the past that contends that Haitians were invested in caring for not just members within the immediate family but also those in the community. It seems that culturally there was a lot of emphasis put on the nurturance and maintenance of strong support systems, especially when it revolved around caring for family members (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941).

When the participants were asked to provide feedback on ways to assist mental health professionals (MHPs) with working with Haitian clients, two suggestions were commonly mentioned. First, they recommended that the therapist learn and familiarize themselves with the Haitian culture and its collectivist values. This finding is imperative because for those participants that identify highly with their Haitian identity, it is important that MHP's recognize that therapy is not the typical avenue employed by Haitians in helping them to resolve problems. Most Haitians believe that issues must be addressed and settled within their social network (Zéphir, 1996). Furthermore, some Haitians have trouble trusting Americans because of the treatment of Haitian families as "invisible families" due to perceptions of Haitian immigrants as unskilled professionals. Secondly, there were statements made by the participants about recognizing the differences that exist in Haitian women in comparison to women who were raised in a more egalitarian society. For example, historically Haitian women were taught to be subservient and covert in expressing their thoughts and feelings (Zéphir, 1996). It is also

important to note that therapy requires a level of vulnerability, which is something that Haitian women are not accustomed to experiencing with individuals outside of their close circle (Laguerre, 1983; Zéphir, 1996). It is necessary for MHPs to be patient and empathic their therapeutic relationship with Haitian clients.

In addition, the participants divulged their rationale for participating in the study. Many of them stated that they wanted to educate and provide a better understanding of Haitian women, which makes excellent sense because in order to better understand Haitian women it is important to acknowledge the impact that their culture has had on their behavior. Furthermore, they recognized that there is a limited amount of research on Haitians in general. When I started collecting data for this study, I realized that research on Haitians in general was limited, and that it was practically non-existent when it came to Haitian women. The participants disclosed that they felt that additional research on Haitians is necessary to provide others with a better understanding and appreciation for the multicultural differences that exist among Haitians and other cultural groups. Clearly increased awareness among mental health professionals, as noted by many multicultural scholars, is a top priority per the participants.

### **Limitations**

This study was performed by utilizing a qualitative methodology, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). Similar to other qualitative research, CQR has its limitations. First, CQR employs a small number of participants, between 8-12 participants due to its comprehensive investigation of an understudied phenomenon (Hill et al., 2005). However, only eight participants were involved in this study, which places limitations on generalizability to the larger population of Haitian-American women.

Nonetheless, CQR was an ideal psychological method due to the limited research on this particular cultural group. Plus, extensive efforts were made to obtain a sample of Haitian women. After nearly 6 months of trying to increase the sample size, the primary team decided to begin the analysis with the eight subjects who had participated.

Additionally, in qualitative studies, it is important to recognize researcher bias as part of the methodology and its ability to adversely affect a study if not properly addressed. As noted by Hill et al. (1997), discussing biases is essential in diminishing the impact they have on the data-coding process. The team members involved in this study took the necessary steps to ensure that these biases were addressed and minimized by openly discussing their thoughts and expectations of this study. This process was beneficial in decreasing the impact of our biases on the study. Despite this discussion; however, it is important to note that studies are always impacted by a researcher's experiences and characteristics.

### **Summary of the Results**

In general, the findings from this study revealed that all of the participants were dependent on their social support system (i.e., immediate and extended family, friends, and community) to assist them in steering through their various roles. In addition, disclosures were made about their identities as mothers and wives as being salient parts of their lives, which is congruent with Haitian values. As noted earlier, women are raised to focus primarily on familial needs (Laguerre, 1983; Zèphir, 1996). Furthermore, the participants were quite expressive about their loyalty and the pride they felt towards their country. As the first independent country in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti faced a lot of challenges, yet the experience seems to have left Haitians more committed to the country



and more resilient as a people. Moreover, given that Haitians tend to be more collectivistic in their views and honor family and community this data seems to be concurrent with past research done on this culture.

In addition, the findings also showed that the participants encountered challenges when balancing their roles. Such obstacles included insufficient time to attend to all of the tasks in their various roles. However, they shared that having a consistent schedule and prioritizing their tasks helped maintain a balance in their lives. Some of the participants also noted that their Haitian upbringing as a source of strength in helping manage their roles. Moreover, there were disclosures from the participant stating that their involvements in these various roles strengthened and enhanced their patience. These experiences seemed to assist in the preparation for future obstacles.

On the other hand, all of the participants shared concerns about the difficulties they encountered when attempting to balance their professional role with their other roles. There were statements made by a few of the participants about to the consumption of time required by their professional roles; and its infringement on their personal lives. Although many of them enjoyed their work, they felt guilty about the lack of attention they were directing towards their marriages and children. This finding is similar to past research that has shown employment demands potentially having an adverse affect a participants' engagement in other roles (Cinamon, 2006). Whereas others viewed their work primarily as an opportunity to contribute financially to their households, which supports research that has shown Haitian women to be breadwinners (Bibb & Casimir, 1996; Leyburn 1941)

Finally, the participants recommended that individuals in the mental health field become more knowledgeable and attuned to the traditions and challenges that Haitians face. Overall, the study provided a template for future studies on Haitians. More importantly, the findings reinforce the need for continued research on multicultural issues, such as the differences that exist among women of color and the techniques employed to manage their identities.

### **Recommendations for Treatment**

Research has shown that Haitian women are more likely to present with depressive symptoms in comparison to their male counterparts due to differences in responsibilities and roles (Nicolas, Desilva, & Subrebst, 2007). When attempting to manage their multiple identities, Haitian-American women are confronted with the Haitian belief that their focus should be on their roles as a wife and mother (Desrosiers & Fleurose, 2002). Since Haitian-American women are reared with collectivistic values, it is important to note the direct effect that family members have on their mental health. Moreover, we must also acknowledge that those are the same individuals that Haitian-American women seek to guide them when dealing with challenges (Nicolas Grey, & Gonzalez-Eastep, 2006). Such collectivistic beliefs have the potential to cause Haitian-American women to suffer from family stress, which can present with depressive symptoms. Such symptoms include feelings of weakness, sleep deprivation, and tearful outbursts (Nicolas et al., 2007). However, these symptoms are not adequate enough to classify clients with a major depressive disorder. Furthermore, research shows that this culturally normative distress should not be pathologized (Nicolas et al., 2006). MHPs should refrain from trying to reduce empathic distress because it is indicative of the deep

routed connection that they have with their family (Nicolas et al., 2007). Rather MHPs should guide clients in identifying stressors and coping mechanisms, while also being supportive to family members without internalizing their stress (Nicolas et al., 2007).

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

Since there is such limited research on Haitian women, it is my hope that this study will act as a foundation for future research in this area. Moreover, the results from this research can function as a baseline for MHPs in understanding the different layers that make up a Haitian woman that identifies as second-generation. Past research on people of Haitian descent have focused primarily on understanding them from an immigrant's prospective. However, it is important to note that there has been an influx of Haitians migrating to the United States, where the value system is more individualistic and contrasting to the more collectivistic Haitian culture (Zéphir, 2001). These parents are raising their children to adhere to the cultural traditions of their native home, Haiti, where focus is put primarily on caring and attending to the needs of the immediate family, which include your spouse and children (Zéphir, 1996). One of the themes that emerged from the study was their desire to ensure that their children's needs were being met. Many of them expressed that their role as a mother took precedence over all other roles. Such findings provide evidence about this sense of loyalty that is embedded in the hearts of Haitians. As noted by Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001), Haitians employ transnationalism, which refers to their refusal to lose their connection to Haiti.

Furthermore, the participants also shared that their views and concerns about their parental role fluctuating as the years progress. Perhaps, future research could further examine the impact of motherhood on Haitian women across various stages of their

lifespan, while also extracting data about the strengths and challenges that encompass this role. Such research can provide MHPs with a different lens and a more objective understanding of the values and challenges endured by Haitian-American women.

Additionally, the participants spoke highly about the importance of having a strong support system, which has been noted in past research on Haitians. Since the results from past research and this current study provide overwhelming data about the significance of a social support network, these findings could guide MHPs in their understanding of the implications that these values have on Haitians both behaviorally and psychologically. Furthermore, it would be helpful if supplementary research could be done to examine the influence and overall impact that family, friends, and community has on a Haitian woman's ability to function normally based on their expectations.

Another theme that emerged pertained to employment. There were significant differences in the comments shared about the management of roles as it relates to their professions. Many of the participants expressed positive thoughts about work; whereas others noted that they were working primarily for financial reasons. I noted that those who held positions that required higher education (e.g., vice president, lawyer, nurses) spoke more favorably of their work and expressed feelings of conflict about the joy they found in their positions and the time it precluded them from being with their families. It would be interesting if additional research in the area of role management could be done to target the perceptions participants have of their professional identities and challenges that are evoked when balancing them against other relevant roles.

Additional, the participants in this study spoke about their adherence to Haitian values, while also trying to maintain their independence as professionals. They noted that

they felt guilty at times about devoting some much time to their work because it imposed on the time that they had allocated for their family. Research has show that as the children of immigrants, Haitian-American women struggle with issues around immigration and acculturation (Zéphir, 2001). They tend to be conflicted about how to appropriately integrate both the Haitian and American culture within their lives (Zéphir, 2001). Similar to other collectivist groups, they are raised with the belief that attending to familial needs take precedence over all other responsibilities (Desrosiers & St. Fleurose, 2002). However, the American culture is more individualistic. These conflicting values have the potential to cause inner conflict in Haitian-American women. Hence, it would be interesting if research was done to focus primarily on the influence of acculturation on the management of multiple identities in terms of Haiti as patriarchal society and United States as more egalitarian.

Finally, although this study created a platform for looking at how Haitian-American women manage multiple roles; it is necessary that additional research be done to further enhance generalizability. Moreover, it would be helpful if future research in this area incorporated other ethnic groups. Moreover, supplementary research would be helpful to further investigates if other cultural groups that are more collectivistic in their thinking share similar thoughts and feelings as those that were expressed in this research study.

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### Recruitment Letter

Greetings,

My name is Regina Pierre Milfleur. I am a counseling psychology doctoral student in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University. As a second generation Haitian immigrant and a researcher, my desire is to capture the richness and often untold stories of our lives. Your thoughts are an important and often ignored piece of understanding the lives of Haitian women, especially when considering all that is asked of you (e.g., being a wife, mother, and working professional).

I am asking you to participate in a study that investigates how second generation Haitian women manage multiple roles – specifically being a wife and a mother while also working outside of the home. I hope that this research will benefit the Haitian American community, and assist mental health professionals who work with our community.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you will be contacted via telephone or e-mail for an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour, and will consist of open-ended questions about how you manage being a wife, mother, and working professional. The interview will be audio-taped and then transcribed. I will schedule a follow-up interview for 2 weeks after our initial interview – this follow-up will allow you to comment on anything you said during the first interview and share any new ideas that may have occurred since the first interview. Once the data is collected and analyzed, a copy of the results will be sent to you via regular mail for review to ensure that your thoughts and experiences were described accurately.

Due to the need of phone contact I will be aware of your identity; however, confidentiality will be assured by assigning code numbers to tapes, transcripts, and demographic sheets. In addition, your tape will be destroyed when the study is completed. All data will be stored in a secured cabinet maintained at Seton Hall University. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at [milflere@shu.edu](mailto:milflere@shu.edu) or (781) 801-3116 and provide me with your telephone number or e-mail where you can be reached. I will then send you a package of study materials, which includes the interview questions, a demographic sheet, and the letter of informed consent.

I thank you in advance for your interest in this study. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Regina Pierre Milfleur, M.A.  
Dept. of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy  
Seton Hall University  
[milflere@shu.edu](mailto:milflere@shu.edu)

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent to Participate in Research

#### *1. Researchers' Affiliation*

The researcher is a doctoral student in the Professional Psychology and Family Therapy: Counseling Psychology program at Seton Hall University.

#### *2. Purpose and Duration of Study*

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how second-generation Haitian women manage multiple roles so that others who encounter difficulties in this area may use the ideas generated by this research. Additionally, this study can also assist mental health professionals in providing the best service possible to second-generation Haitian women. It will take approximately 75 minutes across 2 interviews to participate in the study. This includes completing the enclosed *Demographic Sheet*, signing the *Informed Consent*, and completing an *Audiotape Interview*.

#### *3. Procedures*

If you choose to participate in this study, please sign both copies of the informed consent and keep one for your records. The other *Informed Consent* and completed *Demographic Sheet* should be returned in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Once the researcher receives these forms and confirms your eligibility, you will be contacted via telephone to schedule an interview. The interviews will be audiotaped with your written permission; the first interview will take approximately one hour to conduct, and the follow-up interview will take approximately 15 minutes. The interviews consist of you answering open-ended questions pertaining to your thoughts, feelings, and experiences as a Haitian woman who has many roles. Once all the data is collected and analyzed, you will receive a copy of the results by mail for review to ensure that your thoughts and experiences were described accurately.

#### *4. Questionnaires or Survey Instruments*

The *Demographic Sheet* is the only questionnaire in this study. On it you are asked to provide demographic information, including your age, the number of years that you have been married, the number and age(s) of your children, your level of education, and your current occupation.

#### *5. Voluntary Nature of Participation*

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time you would like to withdraw from this study, you are free to do so without any penalty. Should you decide to withdraw from this study, all material related to your participation in the study will be destroyed.

#### *6. Anonymity*

Due to the need of phone contact, the researcher will be aware of your identity. However, this information will be kept confidential as discussed below.



### *7. Confidentiality of Data*

Confidentiality will be maintained by assigning code numbers to the tapes, transcripts, and demographic sheets. All tapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. Transcripts will use code numbers, so your identity will not be connected with your responses after the tapes have been transcribed. Summaries of your interviews that may be cited in publications related to this research project will use a pseudonym. All data will be secured in a locked cabinet maintained at Seton Hall University by Dr. Lewis Schlosser, my graduate advisor.

### *8. Access to Research Records*

No one other than the primary investigator, Regina Pierre Milfleur, her faculty advisor, Dr. Lewis Schlosser, and the other two members of the research team will have access to the data received from the participants. All data identifying participants by name or location will be destroyed when this study concludes.

### *9. Anticipated Risks*

It is not expected that participation in this study will involve significant risk or discomfort. However, if you experience any discomfort from the questions asked, you may want to consult a mental health professional. Referrals are listed below in the section entitled, *Procedures to Follow in Case of Distress*.

### *10. Anticipated Benefits*

By participating in this study you will have the opportunity to share your personal experiences in a safe environment. This study will also provide you with indirect benefits by increasing the knowledge about Haitian women and how they manage their lives. In addition, participation in this study will have a direct impact on the mental health profession by providing professionals with insights into the best possible ways to help Haitian-American women.

### *11. Compensation*

Participants will not receive any type of compensation for their involvement in this study.

### *12. Procedures to Follow in Case of Distress*

You should not experience any risk or discomfort when completing this study. However, if you experience significant distress, you are encouraged to discuss these feelings with a counselor or another health professional. Listed below are referrals in the area:

- Deirdre A. Kramer, Ph.D,  
320 Raritan Avenue, Suite 303B  
Highland Park, NJ 08904  
908-229-2549
  
- Gianine Rosenblum, Ph.D  
Center for Family Resources

323 Main Street  
Metuchen, NJ 08840  
732-548-8143

- William Ward, Ed.S/MA, III  
23 Third Street, Apt 2243  
South Orange, NJ 07079  
973-325-7622
- Maria Masciandaro, PsyD  
890 Wyoming Ave  
Elizabeth, NJ 07208  
908-351-2892
- Montclair Counseling Center  
183 Inwood Avenue  
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043  
973-783-6977
- Bloomfield Counseling Center  
399 Hoover Avenue  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003-9085  
973-680-9085

*13. Alternative Procedures*

This study does not involve any clinical treatment; therefore there are no relevant alternative procedures.

*14. Whom to Contact for Additional Information*

If you have additional questions regarding this research study, you may contact the following individuals:

Regina P. Milfleur, M.A.  
Doctoral Student  
PPFT Department  
Seton Hall University  
400 South Orange Avenue  
South Orange, NJ 07079

## Appendix C

## Demographic Information

1. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years married: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of children: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Ages of child/children: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Your education level (please specify degrees earned):  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Your Occupation(s) (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

1. What does being Haitian mean to you?
2. Describe your various life roles?
  - a. Probe: Mother, wife, and employee.
3. Talk about which role(s) are salient at various times in your life.
4. How do you manage your various life roles?
5. What affect, if any, has acquiring these roles had on you?
6. Please discuss any social supports you have in managing your roles?
7. What challenges, if any, do you face as you manage your multiple roles?
8. What role does your family play, if any, on your ability to manage your multiple roles?
9. What advice would you give mental health professionals who are working with Haitian American women?
10. Any other thoughts about how you manage your multiple roles?
11. Why did you choose to participate in this study?

## Appendix E

Table 1.

<u>Domain/Category</u>	<u>Frequency/ # of Cases</u>
1. Personal Conceptualization of Haitian Identity	
a. Adhering to cultural values	Typical/ 4
b. Pride	Typical/ 6
c. Challenges encountered around being Haitian	Variant/ 3
2. Perceptions of Multiple Roles	
a. Parenting Role	
i. View being a parent as a top priority	Typical/ 5
ii. Encounter challenges	Typical/ 5
iii. Role involves various tasks and providing emotional support	Typical/ 6
iv. Expressed positive feelings about parenting	Variant/ 3
b. Spousal Role	
i. Marriage is an enjoyable partnership	Typical/ 6
ii. Feel responsible for caring for their spouse	Typical/ 4
iii. Encounter challenges	Variant/ 2
c. Professional Role	
i. Difficulties associated with balancing roles, job themes, and feelings about work	General/ 7
ii. Investment of time towards their work	Variant/ 5
d. Additional Roles	
i. Student	Variant/ 2
ii. Church member	Variant/ 2
3. Management of Multiple Roles	
a. Finding strength in roles	Variant/ 3
b. Striving for balance	Typical/ 6
c. Getting help and support from family	Variant/ 3
d. Needing patience to balance roles	Variant/ 2
e. Positive impact of Haitian upbringing	Variant/ 3
f. Being organized and scheduled	Typical/ 6
4. Challenges in Balancing Multiple Roles	
a. Achieving a balance	Typical/ 4
b. Experience of stress	Variant/ 3
c. Not enough time	Typical/ 5
5. Role of Social Support	
a. Support and assistance from immediate and extended family	General/ 8
b. Support from friends	Variant/ 3
c. Receive support from church and community	Variant/ 3
6. Advice for Mental Health Professionals Working with Haitians	
a. Learn about Haitian culture	Typical/ 5
b. Understand Haitian women and their behaviors	Typical/ 6

7. **Reasons for Participating**
  - a. **Providing education and understanding of Haitian women** Typical/ 6
  - b. **Lack of research on Haitians** Variant/ 3