

Haitian American College Students' Motivations for Pursuing Postsecondary Education: The Role of Parents' Low-Wage Occupations

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Abstract

Approximately 25% of U.S. children are either immigrants or children of immigrants and are pursuing postsecondary education in large numbers. Haitian Americans are underrepresented within the literature. Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ looked at the subgroup of Haitian American students pursuing postsecondary education; they concluded that Haitian American students pursued postsecondary education because of cultural obligation. However, the term cultural obligation is wide-ranging. Instead of assuming cultural obligation, this research examines the specific aspect of low-wage parental occupation as an alternative explanation for Haitian American students' pursuit of postsecondary education. The principal question for this research was the following: Do immigrant parents' low-wage occupations serve as a motivator for Haitian American students to pursue postsecondary education? Data were collected through qualitative methods; participants were recruited through a convenient sampling strategy, and in-depth interviews were conducted with six Haitian American postsecondary students. Participants had to meet specific criteria: be Haitian American students, be currently attending a postsecondary institution, and have parents who held low wage immigrant occupations. The results showed that the majority of participants' reasons for pursuing postsecondary education included self-efficacy, negative perceptions of parents' low wage occupation, parental support, and family honor.

Keywords: Postsecondary Education, Haitian-Americans, Motivations, Low-Income

1. Introduction

Persons born in the United States with one or both parents born outside the country are known as the immigrant second generation². The "second-generation individuals have lived their entire lives in this country, were educated here in English-language schools, and are facile in English regardless of their parents' languages"², p. 679. Approximately 25% of U.S. children identify themselves as either being an immigrant or children of immigrant parentage³. Postsecondary educational institutions are experiencing the growth in attendance of these second-generation immigrants⁴.

Postsecondary institutions and researchers together have placed an emphasis on knowing the educational and economic achievement of these second-generation immigrants⁵ because they constituted about 23% of the 22.3 million undergraduates in the U.S.⁶. An extensive amount of educational research has examined why second-generation immigrants continue on to postsecondary education often researching the Hispanic American and Asian American population.

Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ concluded that recently, Haitian American students are pursuing postsecondary education at increasingly higher rates than other second-generation immigrant groups. In the New York City area, there are approximately 6,000 Haitian American students that are attending the 23 different campuses in

that area⁷. About 10% of the student body at Medgar Evers College is Haitian⁷. Miami Dade College has over 3,000 students who claim to be of Haitian descent⁷.

Researchers have concluded that Haitian American students' pursuit of postsecondary education is a result of cultural obligation. Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ defined cultural obligation as a, "desire to fulfill an obligation to one's parents through education is based on Haitian cultural conceptions and social practices related to family" (p. 237). However, cultural obligation can be viewed as a wide-ranging category for their pursuit.

This single conclusion represents the deficiency of alternatives in understanding why Haitian American students pursue postsecondary education. The literature concludes that occupational perceptions can direct the future orientation of children⁸. Parents' occupations influence an adolescent's perception of their [parents'] occupation⁸. This research examines whether or not an immigrant parent's low-wage occupation, primarily focusing on negative perceptions, is a motivator for why Haitian American students pursue postsecondary education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Low Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement

Previous research concerning the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement suggests a positive correlation¹⁰. Academic achievement is based on educational performance and outcomes. Students with high academic achievement have high grades and a high grade point average. Students with low academic achievement often have low grades and a low grade point average. The positive correlation suggests that if a student is in the lower percentile of socioeconomic status, the student will show low levels of achievement in primary school, secondary school, and postsecondary education; often times the below average scores of the students are a reflection of their low socioeconomic status¹⁰. Students in the higher percentiles of socioeconomic status, consistently excel in primary school, secondary school, and postsecondary education¹⁰.

Portes and Rumbaut⁵ found that second-generation immigrants generally belong to the lower percentile of socioeconomic status. Income determines largely how immigrant families guide their children towards education and future career aspirations⁵. Researchers have concluded that parents of low socioeconomic status do not have the financial means to support their children's education and lack resources to promote educational success⁵. Higher socioeconomic status households have the financial resources for their children's education and educational success⁵. Lower socioeconomic status households when compared to higher socioeconomic households, do not place the discussion of education as a high priority¹⁰. If education is not discussed in a low socioeconomic status household, the children often do not know the importance of education, including postsecondary education¹⁰.

Although there is evidence that this correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement is applicable in educational settings, Milne and Plourde¹⁰ argue that a positive correlation cannot conclusively predict the educational achievement of children based on their low socioeconomic status, because there are incidences of children surpassing what research has concluded. These children have faced low socioeconomic status, but maintained a high level of academic achievement throughout their education¹¹; these incidences represent a negative correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

Research has provided evidence of exceptions to the correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement, but the exception primarily focuses on Caucasians. Williams and Bryan¹² argue that African Americans are trending into the pattern of surpassing low socioeconomic status and maintaining high academic achievement, but are often overlooked and ignored throughout research.

2.2 Haitian American Students and Academic Achievement

Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ acknowledged that currently Haitian American students are pursuing postsecondary education at a higher rate than other second-generation immigrant groups. Many postsecondary institutions such as Hostos Community College, Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn College, New York City College of Technology, Kingsborough Community College, and others have experienced the growth of their attendance⁷. Although their attendance has increased and is continuing to increase, limited research has been done on Haitian American students and their educational attainment. There were only two published journal articles relating to their educational attainment.

One of those was by the researchers Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹; they focused on multiple pathways that Haitian American students take to achieve success. Those pathways were categorized as: late bloomers, persistent strivers, and constant motivated achievers. Late bloomers were students who were in the lower percentile of socioeconomics, but achieved academically in late adulthood. Persistent strivers were students of low income who worked hard, but had strong difficulty in their academic success. Constant motivated achievers were students who “maintain[ed] a strong focus on their academic goals and ma[d]e sacrifices to achieve them”¹, p. 239. According to the researchers, these pathways suggest that Haitian American students often try to excel no matter what pathway they take.

Aside from focusing on the pathways, it was concluded that the students’ pursuit were due to the concept of cultural obligation. Cultural obligation is often “associated with academic values and performance, positive behavior, and parent-adolescent closeness”¹³, p. 265. Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ identified that constant motivated achievers, although they place a strong focus on academics, “view academic excellence not only as reflective of personal accomplishment but as bringing honor and respect to their entire extended family” (p. 239). Their pursuit of postsecondary education and academic success is an act of honoring their parents for the sacrifices that they made in order to provide for them, which is why the parent-adolescent closeness is an important aspect in cultural obligation.

As Nicholas, Stepick, and Dutton-Stepick¹ state:

Haitian families traditionally operate in a collective fashion, pooling resources to allow one member to advance, for instance, to migrate or to attend school with the expectation that the benefits of that advance will accrue to the family as a whole (p. 241).

Although Haitian parents face economic adversity, they make sacrifices for their children because of future investment. The children observe this investment and work hard throughout their educational career to “fulfill the dreams of [their] parents”¹, p. 240. Despite these conclusions, cultural obligation alone cannot fully explain Haitian American students’ academic success; aside from culture, there are many different possibilities for their pursuit in postsecondary education.

2.3 Perceptions of Parents’ Occupations

Parental occupation has a prominent role in a child’s understanding of the workforce, which will impact the future orientation of the child⁸. Future orientation “is a cognitive-motivational phenomenon that reflects individuals’ anticipation of events, particularly regarding education and careers”⁸, p. 796. At around the age of five, children are able to comprehend their parents’ income, labor disputes, unemployment, and welfare⁹. From ages 10-17, the children accurately know the stress that their parents face, which impacts the development of their attitudes into adulthood about the workforce⁹.

The children also are able to comprehend the nature of their parents’ occupation through verbal expression; this is done through the parents “explicitly” saying how they feel about their occupation⁹. In a study about how children and adolescents look at their parents’ occupations, Piotrkowski and Stark¹⁴, p. 4, “found that some adults remembered forming opinions about their parents’ jobs in childhood, and they attributed decisions about their own occupational lives to these early impressions”. The perceptions that children have of their parents’ occupations affect how positive or negative their future orientation will be in regards to educational attainment and future occupations⁸.

Positive perceptions of a parent’s occupation can cause a student to become more optimistic, have better academic performance, develop a hard work ethic, and function emotionally⁸. Often parents who have high socioeconomic status are involved and satisfied with their occupations⁹. These students will typically go on to pursue postsecondary education⁸.

When students have a negative perception of their parents’ occupations, it has an impact on their future orientation as well⁸. These parents, who often have low socioeconomic status, have high stress, work extensive hours, and often are not satisfied with their occupation⁸. Low-wage occupation and job insecurity have been shown to influence a child’s belief about the workforce in a negative manner⁹.

Research has suggested “that when adolescent’s parents have unfavorable experiences with work, such as job loss, erratic employment, and low wages, parents, or other significant adults, [it can] make a difference in adolescents’ perceptions of their personal life chances”⁸, p. 796. These children who have a negative perception of their parents’ occupations often become pessimistic and do not have a belief that postsecondary education is beneficial and will not pursue it⁸. Gardner and Schnabel⁸ argue that it is rare for an individual to obtain a similar occupation as their parents, if they have a negative perception.

2.4 Occupations of Immigrants

The Standard Occupation Code (SOC) categorizes occupations into eight broad categories: management, professional, sales, clerical, craftsmen, operatives, services, and farm¹⁵. Zhou¹⁶ concluded that immigrants entering the American workforce often obtain lower income occupations that require extensive labor and pay insufficiently, often times because of the lack of education. These occupations are often associated with Hispanic and Caribbean immigrants. The occupations they obtain are compartmentalized as blue-collar occupations that require unskilled labor¹⁶. According to the SOC, the occupations that immigrants obtain are within the categories of farming and services; these occupations typically are janitorial, hospitality labor (housekeeping and custodian), residential construction, and manufacturing plants (farm labor)¹⁵.

3. Research Question

Second-generation immigrants can experience low socioeconomic status and achieve academically despite adversity¹¹. Some second-generation immigrants often have negative perceptions of their parents' low wage occupations and their future orientation is not negatively affected. Rather these students excel in primary education, secondary education, and go on to pursue postsecondary education.

This research was a representation of anomaly cases in which second-generation immigrants, specifically Haitian American students, who came from low socioeconomic status households and academically achieved by pursuing postsecondary education. The principal question (primary objective) for this study was the following: Do immigrant parents' low-wage occupations serve as a motivator for Haitian American students to pursue postsecondary education? The secondary objective was to closely examine the perceptions that Haitian American students had of their parents' low-wage occupation. The Institutional Review Board of the University of South Florida approved the research protocol.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sampling

Participants were recruited through a convenient sampling technique. Participants were notified via email for their potential participation in this study; participants were chosen based on the researcher's prior knowledge of participants meeting the research criteria. The final sample included six participants from Florida (n=6); five females and one male. The ages ranged from 21 to 31. The average grade point average (GPA) among the participants was 3.31 out of 4.0 (M=3.31). The type of postsecondary institution the participants attended were university, community college, and graduate school; academic majors ranged from the social sciences, to the natural sciences, to business. The participants belonged either to low or middle class.

4.2 Data Collection

All participants who replied to the recruitment email agreed to participate in this research. The researcher then emailed a copy of the informed consent to the participants. In the email, participants were asked to look over the informed consent and to notify the researcher if they had any questions or concerns. The informed consent contained the objectives of the research and details about the voluntary participation in the research. In addition to receiving the electronic copy of the informed consent, a packet was sent to the home address of the participants. The packet contained a physical copy of the informed consent and an additional envelope with a stamp on it, which allowed participants to mail the informed consent back to the researcher. Participants who had in-person interviews, in addition to the electronic copy, were presented the hard copy before the interview.

Data collection began in July 2014. Since the participants were located in different areas in Florida, most of the interviews were conducted through Internet video chat, Skype or Google Hangout; two of the interviews were conducted in-person. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher had physical copies of the signed informed

consents. The location of the interviews varied; if the interviews were done through Internet video chat, the location was in the home of the researcher with the recorder near the computer speaker. This ensured a clear recording of the interviews.

The first in-person interview was conducted in the home of the researcher. The second in-person interview was located in the outdoor sitting area at a local restaurant on University Parkway in Sarasota, Florida. During in-person interviews the recorder was positioned between the researcher and interviewee. Both locations provided a confidential and safe environment for participants to respond to the questions without any coercion.

To start the interviews, the researcher reiterated the nature of the research to the participants. The researcher then asked permission to record the interviews. The participants were then told how the interviews would be transcribed and emailed to them for review at a later time. Participants were given the semi-structured interview guide, located in Appendix A, with targeted questions that focused on whether or not the participants' pursuit of postsecondary education was based on their perceptions of their immigrant parents' low-wage occupations. The interview guide also contained additional questions of other alternatives for their pursuit. The duration of the interviews were between 15 and 20 minutes, but as a whole the process took less than an hour to discuss what the research was about, answer any additional questions, and conduct the interviews. The researcher ended the interviews by thanking the participants for their participation and offering to keep them updated regarding the results of the research.

After the interviews were conducted, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the audio recordings to accurately transcribe the interviews into Microsoft Word. Actual names of the participants were not included into the transcriptions; pseudonyms were used for each participant. Once the transcriptions were complete, the participants were emailed their transcriptions for review and to notify the researcher of any inaccuracies. Once the participants gave approval on their transcription, the file name was renamed to "final." The final transcriptions were then uploaded into the Atlas-ti software program for coding and data analysis. Since this was based on inductive research, open coding was conducted first; this consisted of coding all the information participants' mentioned in their interviews. For example coding information such as age, level of education, career aspirations, etc. The researcher then analyzed the open codes to finalize codes for data analysis. The researcher specifically selected codes that related to why the participants chose to pursue postsecondary education, primarily focusing on responses that corresponded with parental occupation as a motivation for their pursuit; other codes that did not relate to parental occupation were selected as well.

5. Results

Finally analysis of the data, four codes appeared repeatedly through the responses of the participants. The participants mentioned that their pursuit of postsecondary education was due to negative perceptions of their parents' low-wage occupations, self-efficacy, parental support, and family honor.

5.1 Negative Perceptions of Parents' Low-Wage Occupation

Overall, the participants did have negative perceptions of their parents' low-wage occupations. Many of the participants mentioned that they just could not believe that their parents continued to have these "odd" jobs. The majority of the participants mentioned their own personal views that they had of their parents' low-wage occupations, which often times resulted in a negative response/tone. The participants were asked, "So when you were growing up, how did you feel about parents' job?" Rachel Jones responded, "It was bad to see them work so hard for so little. Very little respect...for what they were doing."

Two of the participants mentioned that their parents' past low-wage occupations embarrassed them. Chelsea Smith said:

Um, lets see growing up my dad, I mean he was you know a typical taxi driver, security job. My mom around, I think was more embarrassing when maybe around high school. When people would ask what my mom did. So my mom was never a manager. She never wanted to be. But just to make it less embarrassing, I would tell people that she was a manager at Burger King.

Jeffery Henry answered the question with a similar response,

I was actually embarrassed about it like I remember just stories of like for example, when they talk about what do your parents do? Like I would have to say, that my parents are the general manager at Disney. So, I

would tell like white lies like, she's nowhere near that. Like she's in housekeeping but I would say, "Oh she's a supervisor in the housekeeping department." When really she's just a regular person so I was very embarrassed of it. Like the only time I was okay with it was with other Haitians because we know all of our parents worked those jobs.

These participants did not want their friends to know that their parents held low-wage occupations; they would often lie and mention their parents' occupation status higher than it actually was. Barbara Carter mentioned a response that was neutral, but then it turned to a negative response because she became aware of what her parents did when compared to others who were not Haitian. Carter responded to the question, "Well I really didn't feel. Everyone in my neighborhood did the same thing, so it was just kind of normal, I guess. Until we moved out of the neighborhood and I figured out that life doesn't work that way."

The participants were then asked whether or not their parents' occupations had a positive or negative impact on them. Many of the participants mentioned that their parents' occupations had a positive impact on them despite their negative perception of their parents' low-wage occupation; the impact motivated the participants to excel in higher education. When asked the question, "Did your parents' job have a negative or positive impact on you?" Rachel Jones responded, "Positive because it showed me what I didn't want to do." Jeffery Henry was the only participant who mentioned that his parents had both a positive and negative impact on him. His response was:

I would um, if anything I would [say] both. I would say negative because um restrictions of things we could get growing up like resources and um like sometimes coming home where food was literally rice and milk or have like bread or a regular sandwich with like no milk. That was like the negative as far as the upbringing of myself and the resources. But the positive was to know that they put me in a place and a position where I can do better than them and they want me to do better than them so the positive of that being their job, that they pushed me and motivated me to excel.

When participants were asked, "Would you be interested in having a similar job like your parents?" all six of the participants responded with the same response. Their responses were all "no" or "absolutely not." This supports the theory that if an adolescent/student has a negative perception of their parent's occupation, then it is rare that the adolescent will obtain a similar occupation as their parent⁸. The following table demonstrates the past low-wage occupations of the participants' parents, the impact that their parents' occupations had on their pursuit of postsecondary education, and if the participants were interested in obtaining a similar occupation as their parents.

All the participants aspired to obtain careers that surpass the income and educational level that their parents' occupations required. The following table displays the future career aspirations of the participants.

One of the factors that self motivated three of the participants was not wanting to end up like their parents and be in the lower percentile of socioeconomic status. The following quotes demonstrate the responses of those three participants:

Chelsea Smith:

"Well really because I knew at some point what I wanted to do. I didn't really want to always have to worry about, you know money and I didn't want to have food stamps, you know and different things like that."

Barbara Carter: "Uh, I didn't [want] to end up like my parents. Just to be financially stable."

Amy Jenkins:

"So that is one of the reasons why I wanted to pursue higher education because honestly and I don't mean to downplay my mother but I do not want to live a life where I have to struggle. I don't want to live a life where I live check to check."

The following sections will illustrate other key themes that emerged from the data.

5.2 Self-Efficacy

For this research, self-efficacy is defined as having the belief that one can accomplish a goal/task; participants accomplished the goal of pursuing postsecondary education by obtaining a postsecondary degree through their own personal drive. The majority of the participants mentioned that their pursuit of postsecondary education was due to

their own personal motivations, which would be of benefit in the future. When asked whether or not her parents' low-wage occupations were a motivator for her to pursue postsecondary education, Barbara Carter's mentions response was, "It didn't really motivate me; it was just like me motivating myself."

The following responses illustrate the concept of self-efficacy:

Jessica Martin, "Um, I just because I wanted more opportunities in life."

Amy Jenkins, "But it was more so my own personal drive."

Jeffery Henry, "And also, to just want to be I guess you can say successful; I would say, I guess I would categorize it as to be content and happy. Like I want to be stable."

Chelsea Smith, "So and on top of that, for what I wanted to do, I felt like I was being called to do, I knew that education was necessary."

There was an instance where a participant mentioned that her pursuit of postsecondary education was to benefit her family, aside from herself. Rachel Jones mentions, "So I can be able to afford and do for my children what wasn't done for me or what they [my parents] weren't able to do for me." Jones' motivation behind pursuing higher education, in addition to not wanting to be poor, was to be able to do for her children; without an education, it would not be possible for her to support her children.

5.3 Parental Support

Many of the participants agreed that they had the support of their parents and that their parents had a role in their academic success. Rachel Jones mentions, "They were encouraging [me] to stick with it and see it all the way through." In addition, Amy Jenkins mentioned family support but it was through her mother; in two responses Jenkins mentions what her mother tells her: "Hey Amy, you need to go to school, you need to become something" and "Hey Amy, you don't want to turn out like how I turned out."

Jeffery Henry also mentioned that he gets support from his father and his siblings. When asked if he believed that his parents were the ones who pressured him to pursue education first, his response was:

I would say they pressured me, but I mean more so not necessarily pressured because sometimes pressured sounds like a negative connotation. So I would say, they encouraged me. Like of course they made an impression of if you don't go to school, its going to be a problem. Like that wasn't a question but they also encouraged me because their mindset of I want you to be better than me. They supported that.

Henry also mentions that his father had a role in his academic success:

He does, he has a great role in my academic success. I can say he holds me accountable like literally he will still til this day ask me for my final grades at the end of the semester. And I'm like, you can't whoop me or anything like it's not like you're giving me money. So in a sense, he pays for my schooling and books and um I do understand, why he you know, checks to see how well I am doing. Like just this past semester, he literally said, "Um I have not seen and I don't want to hear from your mouth, fax me your transcripts." And I was like, uh about that. And when I talked to him, he was like, "Three B's and two C's, you mean to tell me you got no A?" I was like, "It's not serious."

5.4 Family Honor

Many participants acknowledged that their pursuit of postsecondary education, aside from negative perceptions, self-efficacy, and parental support involved family honor. Family honor can be defined in different ways and through the interviews, participants had their own ideas of family honor.

When Jessica Martin was asked, "Why did you want to pursue higher education?" Her response was, "Um, I just because I wanted more opportunities in life and also kind of you know show my parents all the hard work that they've done like didn't go to waste."

Martin mentioned her own personal motivation to pursue postsecondary education, but in her response also added wanting to bring honor to her parents by showing them the hard work they endured was worthwhile. Amy Jenkins responded, “So at the end of the day, I am doing something that will number one make myself happy and her happy at the end of the day.” Both Martin and Jenkins responded that family honor in their case was showing their parents that all the sacrifices they made for them did not go to waste. Their family honor taken into context would be obtaining a degree and making their parents proud with their accomplishments.

Jeffery Henry was asked the question, “So do you think your parents’ job had a role into why you are pursuing education?” In his response, Henry mentions family honor as an aspect.

Like one of my biggest dreams which I can[‘t] do it for my mom since she already passed away. But um for my father, it’s like to be able to be the reason for him to retire. Like I don’t want him to wait to retire like I want to be able to okay like house is paid and car is paid for. I’ll do the best I can to pay the bills, but I don’t want you to go to work anymore.

In Henry’s case, him bringing honor was in a different context. Throughout Henry’s interview, he mentions the extensive labor that his parents endured and what labor his father continues to endure. Henry wants to be able to let his father get a break and retire, and since Henry will soon enter the workforce, he wants to provide for his father financially.

6. Discussion

Generally, researchers have concluded that Haitian American college students pursued postsecondary education due to the concept of cultural obligation. This research did reveal some similarity with the theme of cultural obligation, which supports what previous research has concluded. However, it also illustrated alternatives that previous research has not yet described. The contributions of this research allows for researchers to examine other options into why Haitian-American college students are pursuing postsecondary education.

7. Limitations

The three broad limitations were the sample size, interview content, and mode of data collection.

7.1 Sample Size and Interviewer Familiarity

The sample size for this qualitative project was small; there were only a total of six participants. Participants were selected through a convenient sampling technique because of limited time; random sampling would have not been applicable for this research. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to the larger population for why Haitian American college students pursue postsecondary education. The sample was also rather homogenous in that out of the six participants there was only one male. Although gender was not a particular focus of this research, the gender composition of the sample did not allow for group comparisons.

The researcher was already familiar with the participants; the researcher knew that the selected participants met the criteria for this research. This may have skewed the data because of familiarity. The participants were asked to discuss personal information, including socioeconomic status, parental low-wage occupations, and reasons for their pursuit of postsecondary education. The participants could have possibly withheld information because of interviewer familiarity.

7.2 Interview Content

Due to the fact this study was based on inductive reasoning, the researcher had to develop an interview guide that targeted responses that would relate to immigrant parents’ low wage occupations as a motivator for the participants pursuing postsecondary education. Although the interview guide was semi-structured, the questions only focused on

parental low wage occupations rather than other options for their pursuit; this limitation was identified after the data was analyzed.

Another limitation with the interview guide was that many of the responses from the participants were more closed-ended rather than open-ended. Once the participants were asked certain questions, their responses were usually: "Yeah" "No" "I agree" and "Definitely". Even when the researcher asked the participants to go into further details, the participants still did not go into more detail.

7.3 Mode of Data Collection and Technology

The last limitation for this study was with the video chat interviews. Many of the participants were in different locations in Florida, so four of the interviews were conducted through Internet video chat. During those interviews, sometimes Skype or Google Hangout would lose connection or the interviewee's screen would freeze up. When those issues came up, it became difficult to transcribe the data. Once the data was transcribed and sent back to the participants to make corrections, the participants could not remember what their original response was because the data was transcribed weeks after interviews were conducted.

8. Future Research

Future research might utilize a mixed methodological approach. For example, a survey can be conducted for both participants and their parents to understand whether or not low-income/low-wage occupation had have a role in why they chose to pursue postsecondary education. More extensive qualitative procedures could be used to investigate alternatives for Haitian American college students' pursuits of postsecondary education.

Aside from researching Haitian Americans, it is important to research other second-generation immigrant population groups whose parents who held or currently have low-wage immigrant occupations. In the literature, the populations that are normally researched are Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans; other second-generation populations should be studied because their attendance is expected to increase in postsecondary institutions.

9. Conclusion

Researchers interested in understanding why second-generation immigrants, including Haitian Americans, can use this research as a guide for other studies. Postsecondary institutions as well can examine this research, since they have increasingly become interested in the educational attainment of the immigrant populations that are attending their institution⁵. Although this research did not specifically focus on educational attainment, besides knowing the participants' GPA and educational aspirations, it can be used as a way to help postsecondary institutions understand why second-generation immigrants, including Haitian Americans, attendance is increasing.

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