

Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Affecting the Successful College Completion of
Dominican and Haitian ESL Students in the United States

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by

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ABSTRACT

College completion rates are one of the major issues facing immigrant and non-immigrant students in the United States, especially among Hispanic and African American student populations (Scott-Clayton, 2015). Socioeconomic inequalities in college completion have become a significant concern nationwide (Page et al., 2019). The passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 has promoted an increase in college enrollment rates; however, gaps in enrollment and college completion have persisted (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Nearly half of students enrolled in a 4-year college will complete a bachelor's degree in more than 6 years. No less than 62% of White, 39% of American Indian and Alaskan Native, 40% of Black, and 50% of Latino students enrolled in 4-year college complete a bachelor's degree in a 6-year timeframe (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). To promote college completion among Hispanics and African Americans, the researcher explored Dominican and Haitian English as a Second Language (ESL) students' college experiences in post-secondary institutions in the United States.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Marie D. Romain, Adrienne and Pierre Romain, Ghandi, Roneil and Darnelsen Romain, Ronald Romain, Rodeline Romain, Fausther Saint-Juste, and Edler Saint-Juste.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

College completion rates remain one of the major issues facing immigrant and non-immigrant students in the United States, especially among Hispanic and African American student populations (Scott-Clayton, 2015). Socioeconomic inequalities in college completion have become a concern nationwide (Page et al., 2019). The passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 has promoted an increase in college enrollment rates; however, gaps in enrollment and college completion have persisted (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Nearly half of students enrolled in 4-year college will complete a bachelor's degree in more than 6 years. No less than 62% of White, 39% of American Indian and Alaskan Native, 40% of Black, and 50% of Latino students enrolled in 4-year college complete a bachelor's degree in a 6-year time frame (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). To promote college completion among Hispanic and African American, the researcher explored Dominican and Haitian English as a Second Language (ESL) students' college experiences in the postsecondary institutions of the United States.

Non-English-speaking Hispanic and African American students are the most challenged student populations pursuing a college degree (Casner-Lotto, 2011). This situation is due not only to limited financial resources but also to insufficient financial aid and the inadequacy of the available academic assistance (Tinto, 2012). Several researchers, including Darling-Hammond (2015), have described the challenges encountered by Hispanic and African American student populations.

Darling-Hammond (2015) argued that Hispanic and African American students are the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the student population. It is essential to educate these populations, not just from an equity perspective but also a human resource perspective, because Hispanic and African American students will contribute to the nation's economy. Financial and academic assistance are of paramount importance for these populations to thrive in college (Darling-Hammond, 2015). The nation would financially and academically be more prepared while increasing the opportunity for the projected 19.5 million undergraduate students throughout the country to complete all academic requirements by the year 2026 (NCES, 2017). The increase of financial support and academic assistance is one of the most significant methods to improve the United States' socio-economically and build opportunities for the nation's future generations (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Researchers have asserted that higher education in the United States become continually more accessible to a more diverse population throughout the twentieth century (Banks, 2015). The expansion of community colleges throughout the country has increased the opportunities for a larger student population to attend college (Teranishi et al., 2011). However, the United States has not made sufficient improvement in its higher education system's ability to provide the same opportunities to each member of American society to complete postsecondary education (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011).

Current State of the American Higher Educational System

The American higher education system does not provide the same educational opportunities to each member of its population despite substantial efforts in recent decades to make college accessible to a more diverse population. Despite changes in the system, the Hispanic and the African American populations have been left behind in the United States'

educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2015). However, by 2050, the Hispanic population will account for 25% of the U.S. population. The country will face a significant increase in unemployment and poverty rates if major efforts to improve the quality of education of the Hispanic and the African American student populations are not undertaken (Ortman et al., 2014).

Acknowledged by Casner-Lotto (2011), the student population in the United States' postsecondary education has increased over the past two decades (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). By 2030, approximately one in five workers will be immigrants (Casner-Lotto, 2011). Providing the ESL student population with proper education will benefit the United States' society. Dominican and Haitian ESL students belong to the Afro-American student population, and students with foreign roots will constitute a large group in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Leaders in American higher education have much more to accomplish to facilitate the successful completion of its population's degree work (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In 2010, enrollment at the postsecondary level totaled 18.1 million students. This number is projected to grow to 20.6 million in 2021 (NCES, 2012). Among these students, a large number are Hispanic and African (Teranishi et al., 2011). The population of this study consists of Dominican and Haitian ESL students, and many Dominicans and Haitians have either Hispanic or African origin (Kasinitz, 1992).

Researchers have urged U.S. higher education policymakers to change the opportunities of the Hispanic, African American, and ESL student populations as well (Nora & Grisp, 2009; Ortman et al., 2014). To make matters worse, in the past decade, the recession of 2008 reinforced the barriers for low-income students to complete postsecondary education. The decrease in social investment and the wealth disparities among individuals impede the opportunity for minority groups to pursue their educational aims. For minority students,

including Dominican and Haitian ESL students, pursuing a postsecondary education or learning English as a second language, a community college could be one of the most convenient avenues to success settings (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2015).

Community colleges play an essential role in assisting immigrant students to successfully face their educational challenges (Perna & Jones, 2013). Some of the issues these students face include the urgency to improve their English language skills, resulting in their further integration into the American educational system. Meanwhile, as the immigrant student population increases, community colleges will be more in-demand educational settings because there will be an increased need to attend community colleges (Perna & Jones, 2013). Moreover, to effectively assist those students, it is crucial to know and thus better understand that population, not only from a current perspective but from a historical perspective as well. A greater understanding of the Dominican and Haitian ESL students' backgrounds will promote programs, methods, and strategies that provide the most significant benefit to these students.

Population Characteristics

Dominican and Haitian ESL students attending U.S. postsecondary institutions are from the Caribbean island, formerly called Hispaniola, whose student populations are marginalized in terms of race, ethnicity, and language. Although Dominicans and Haitians share the same geographic territory, they speak Spanish and French, respectively, due to a colonial inheritance from Spain and France. Moreover, while Dominican ESL students identify as White, Hispanic, or Indian descent, Haitian ESL students are identified as Black. In the United States, Dominican ESL students are identified as Black, as are all Afro-Caribbean individuals (Kasinitz, 1992). Before their migration to the United States, many Dominicans and Haitians had modest socioeconomic lives on the island of Hispaniola. The goal of these immigrants is to improve

their socioeconomic status and/or obtain an education in the United States. Some of the citizens from both countries move with plans to return to their native land (Chaney, 1994).

Problem Statement

The issue researched in this study was the extent to which Dominican and Haitian ESL students' cultural and socioeconomic life affect their successful college completion in the United States. It is vital to address this issue to promote a greater understanding of the American' higher education system and its effect on that specific student population. It is equally important to analyze programs and policies that address the impact of different tuition structures on college access and completion rates within the Hispanic and African American populations.

Increasingly during the past few decades, college completion has become one of the most challenging barriers for immigrant and non-immigrant students in the United States, especially for ESL students. Immigrants overall experience significant financial hardship. The population in this study typically lacks information about the U.S. postsecondary admission process and the financial aid system (Scott-Clayton, 2015). This study investigates, in part, the degree to which the cost and financial structures of different student aid programs affect the success of less fortunate students, especially those who register in developmental college courses (Kim & Díaz, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and determine Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the American' educational system. Issues such as financial awareness, economic, cultural, and social barriers that affect Dominican and Haitian ESL students' successful college completion were investigated. This study focused on issues related to students currently attending community college who were/are at risk of dropping out because of various

barriers. Further, while college and university leaders are aware of the lack of success in college completion within the U.S. student population, addressing the issues of the college completion rates between and among minorities will move American educational system policymakers toward the most beneficial approach, both educationally and economically (Perna & Jones, 2013).

A qualitative research design was the most appropriate for exploring the experiences of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the American college and university system. The researcher's goal was to investigate the underlying causes of low student completion rates in the United States' postsecondary institutions. By interviewing Dominican and Haitian ESL students, the researcher aimed to determine and understand the experiences that these students have encountered in college and how they make sense of the American educational system.

Research Questions

Social constructivist Creswell (2017) as a significant approach to qualitative research. The researcher used a social constructivism worldview to analyze the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Dominican and Haitian ESL students' social life in U.S. colleges shape their educational success?

RQ2: What cultural aspects of Dominican and Haitian ESL students' college life are associated with the methods that both groups use to mobilize financial and educational resources?

RQ3: How do Dominican and Haitian ESL students use financial resources in U.S. colleges to achieve educational success?

Researchers have explored the experiences of the Hispanic and African American populations in the United States' educational system (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). As such, using Dominican and Haitian ESL students to relate the experiences of minority ESL students in U.S. postsecondary education supports previous research conducted in the field of ESL education in the United States. For instance, Casner explained the challenge of ESL students to reach a sufficient English proficiency level and be academically prepared to take college-level courses (Casner, 2011). Spurling et al. (2008) found that 56% of English as a second language students at City College of San Francisco did not complete any level, and as few as 18% complete their college completion requirements.

College completion and tuition rates remain important issues for parents and students in the United States (Fuller, 2014). Every year, the rising cost of higher education makes college completion a significant concern (Kim and Díaz, 2013). The researcher will develop a synopsis on the Dominican and Haitian ESL students' cultural barriers before elaborating on the socioeconomic issues. As a result, the Dominican and Haitian ESL student population's financial constraints will be addressed in a more effective way (Perna & Jones, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of conducting this study was to explore Dominican and Haitian ESL students' college experiences in the U.S. educational system. As noted, the number of ESL students enrolled in colleges and universities in the U.S. is continually increasing. Researchers must address the circumstances of that group of minority students with a greater sense of urgency. Addressing cultural and socioeconomic issues facing Dominican and Haitian ESL students will benefit not only the Dominican and Haitian ESL student population but many other student populations whose cultural and socioeconomic lives, in many cases, are foreign to

American cultural and socioeconomic values. The findings will encourage leaders in the U.S. educational system to determine whether the promotion of increased financial aid and counseling assistance for Dominican and Haitian ESL students is a *sine qua non* condition to ensure the academic success of that student population.

Addressing financial aid and counseling assistance issues at the U.S. postsecondary education level will benefit the U.S. student population. Researchers and individuals from various backgrounds will be able to identify the Dominican and Haitian students' educational challenges as a valuable reference point to address the Hispanic and African American educational issues in the United States. The findings, insights, and suggestions applicable to Dominican and Haitian ESL students apply to other Hispanic and African American populations as well. This study will provide researchers and policymakers with helpful information about Hispanic and African American populations' educational experiences in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of cultural reproduction developed by Bourdieu (1977a) was explored in this study. The issues facing non-English speakers, including Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the U.S. higher educational system, reflect Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (1977a). This concept includes the types of knowledge, dispositions, and educational qualifications that are highly valued in a social environment (Bourdieu, 1977a). Other researchers, such as Jenkins (2002) and Webb (2002), have written about Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, the success of educational systems in industrialized societies' is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and a higher-class habitus. Many poorer pupils do not possess these traits; thus, the failure of many of these pupils is inevitable.

In other words, success and failure in educational attainment are not due solely to individual gifts or lack of them (Bourdieu, 1977a). Bourdieu's emphasis on the non-material resources possessed by upper-class households is a well-articulated argument. However, researchers also understand that the dramatic decrease in the material costs of education is due to educational reforms. Such a reality suggests that the educational advantage that higher class parents pass on to their children may not be entirely caused by economic factors and, therefore, the notion of cultural capital is worthy of serious attention (Sullivan, 2002).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study was conducted to understand Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the American' educational system. This study investigates the importance of financial aid and counseling assistance for Dominican and Haitian ESL students because college tuition remains one of the challenges that the population faces. The issues that ESL students experience are include of financial awareness and preparedness, language barriers, income level, and level of education before immigrating to the U.S. (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

Studies addressing the experiences of disadvantaged students in the U.S. higher educational system support both the significance and the importance of this study (Nora & Grisp, 2009). Nora and Grisp (2009) provided insight into the issues of ESL students' access to college and offered a path to success. Aspects of these students' college success will be investigated by exploring concepts of cultural capital and cultural habitus (Bourdieu, 1977a).

Bourdieu's Concepts of Cultural Capital and Cultural Habitus

Per Bourdieu (1977a), the possession of cultural capital is a requirement to succeed in the educational systems of industrialized societies. Specifically, the educational preparations that Dominican and Haitian ESL students obtained in their own culture could be assessed and utilized to facilitate a more successful integration in the American educational system. To support that approach, using "New Literacy Studies" theory, Parmegiani and Utakis (2014) at Bronx Community College argued that "a more productive starting point for promoting success among Spanish-speaking ESL students is a notion of academic literacy that sees reading and writing as a set of social practices that can vary significantly from culture to culture" (p. 22). The acquisition of academic literacy in a second language requires adequate literacy foundation in the mother

tongue, added the authors. Citing Ramirez in *Executive Summary*, the authors stated that “minority language students can be provided with “substantial amounts” of mother-tongue instruction “without impeding their acquisition of English language and reading skills” (p. 25).

However, what could constitute an obstacle for Dominican ESL students in the American educational system is the lack of academic preparation, insisted Parmegiani and Utakis (2014). According to the authors, the Dominican educational system is known for having many unsolved fundamental issues. For example, there is a lack of qualified teachers in the Dominican Republic. Some Dominican ESL students who attended public schools in their native country might not have solid literacy skills in their language. Many reports have revealed that even though there has been an increase in expenditures in public education for the last decade, the academic performance of Dominican students is the lowest in the Latin American region. That reality is due to overcrowding, insufficient teachers, and inadequate learning materials (Parmegiani & Utakis, 2014). The perpetuation of inadequate educational structures in the Dominican educational system might have a severe incidence on the academic performance of Dominican ESL students who are immigrating to the United States. Therefore, the challenging academic experiences of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in U.S. colleges are predictable.

Sociocultural aspects of that student population must be taken into consideration. Since the United States is the primary migration destination for most people from the Caribbean region, particularly Dominicans and Haitians, it is critical to assist immigrants from both countries effectively. When leaving their native country to immigrate to the United States, both Dominican and Haitian ESL students bring their sociocultural identities. As Luzincourt and Gulbrandson (2010) explained, the precarity of the Haitian educational system remains alarming:

A number of problems plague the education sector in Haiti. The sector is given very little financial support. Many schools use outdated curricula, while others implement the reformed curriculum of the 1997 National Plan of Education and Training (NPET) only partially. The high dropout rates and low enrollment rates in Haitian schools are due to economic hardship, high repetition rates (repeating a grade), and linguistic barriers. The quality of education also suffers because of a dearth of materials, expertise, proper management, and organization. All these deficiencies have been exacerbated by the recent earthquake. (Luzincourt & Gulbrandson, 2010, p. 2)

In *The Role of Financial Aid in Promoting College Access and Success: Research Evidence and Proposals for Reform*, Scott-Clayton (2015) stated, “Students with low-level resources in these forms of capital are likely to start their education with considerable disadvantages and exit from the educational system with smaller gains in cultural capital than their English-speaking middle-class counterparts” (p. 9). The findings reflect the experiences of ESL students in U.S. postsecondary education. Both the strength and the weakness of Bourdieu’s (1977a) approaches were analyzed to explain the experiences of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the U.S. educational system. The researcher emphasized the obstacles that students must overcome to complete college.

According to Kanno and Cromley (2013), there is limited information about developmental English language learners (ELLs), although they are the fastest-growing students’ population in the United States. There are an estimated 5.3 million ELLs in K-12 public schools around the country. That number represents 10.8% of the student population. An estimation of the United States Department of Education projects an increase of up to 25% of students by the year 2025. An increase in K-12 school enrollment will incidentally increase

the number of students in higher education (Yasuko et al., 2013). The higher the number of ELLs students enrolled in postsecondary education, the greater the challenges the American educational system faces in assisting that population.

Almon (2012) revealed that 45% of the students attending community colleges did not complete their academic programs due to language barriers. In the same vein, Watkins et al. (2012), with no discretion, reported the level to which language barriers prevent students with foreign language background to adjust to a new educational system. According to Grube and Gabriner (2013), as many as 60% of students attending community colleges need to register for remediation courses, including English as a second language. However, only 44% of the students who are taking remedial courses complete them.

Successful College Completion: A Challenge for ESL Students

To successfully complete college, a student must pass all the required courses within a specific area of study. Minority ESL students in general must overcome the issues of financial unpreparedness and a new educational system. This study explored the experiences of that population in a New Jersey public college to determine the impact that these challenges have on the minority Dominican and Haitian students navigating a foreign language environment and a new educational system. Moreover, the level of understanding of the U.S. financial aid system is unclear due to a lack of clarity in the information available online or through other means of communication. Yet, financial awareness and preparedness remain primordial conditions for the success of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the U.S. educational system (Holland, 2016).

The lack of financial awareness among parents and students has been a barrier to college access and successful college completion for ESL Hispanic and African American students. This situation is due in part to the complexity of the financial aid structures (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2015). Specifically, understanding the financial aid system is more challenging for parents and

students who have limited knowledge of the U.S. educational system. The Dominican and Haitian ESL student population at the New Jersey college was used as a sample of the multitude of Hispanic and African American students who are severely affected by the United States' student financial aid system (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2015).

Why are Hispanics and Low-Income Families Falling Behind?

Scott-Clayton (2015) revealed that immigration status, the language of immigrants to the United States, and low levels of education are some of the challenges that ESL students face in understanding the U.S. financial aid system. Parents with low educational levels are unable or unwilling to support their children academically. However, there are alternatives that college and university leaders may use to assist non-English-speaking students hoping to be successful in the U.S. educational system (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

The alternatives, insisted Scott-Clayton (2015), include programs that help students to understand the American educational system and succeed in college. Innovative strategies such as senior seminars and tutoring to improve academic performance, programs allowing students to enroll in college seminar classes while taking ESL courses, and advanced placement classes to provide students with a solid academic foundation. These programs help enable ESL students to complete postsecondary education successfully (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

Since the U.S. educational system is a new experience to many Hispanics, African Americans, and low-income families, argue Dynarski and Scott-Clayton (2013), the complexity of the U.S. financial aid system limits the ESL students' likelihood of attending and completing a postsecondary education level. Meanwhile, paying for college has become increasingly challenging. Even if many disadvantaged ESL student population attends college, successful

college completion might still be uncertain due to the likely low-income level of that group of students (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013).

Impact of Income Level on Students Access and Success in College

Students with modest economic resources are less likely to have access to college (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Many of these students cannot afford to attend their selected college. Most often, they are severely challenged along their academic journeys. Families with low incomes are usually unable to provide their children with proper elementary education (Lareau, 2011). Further, while a solid elementary academic foundation is a prerequisite to success in high school, successful high school preparation is fundamental to college success (Thomas & Karp, 2003).

While the U.S. financial aid system is a challenge to American students overall, the problem is even more significant for international students, revealed Castleman and Long (2013). Many international students encounter difficulties understanding the U.S. educational system. Most of these students continually cope with hardships that constitute part of their lives, while effective financial assistance would assist them to have a successful college experience (Castleman & Long, 2013).

As Georges-Jackson and Gast (2010) suggested, to effectively assist these ESL students, community colleges could have programs to help them gain a better understanding of the U.S. financial aid system. For instance, a college could podcast seminars for prospective students in their native languages. Workshops on the U.S. financial aid system, American lifestyles, and methods of teaching in the United States also could be useful. Admitted students could be offered enough tutoring and counseling services to improve their level of understanding of the financial aid system and facilitate their integration into American culture. College administrators could have staff advise both admitted and prospective students on the different sources of

financial aid available. More blogs and a question/answer rubric could be made available on college websites to address a variety of subjects related to college access and success (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2010).

Georges-Jackson and Gast (2010) continued by asserting that there are three primary sources of information that might lead to student financial awareness: (a) higher educational institutions' Internet sources; (b) parents; and (c) secondary school teachers and counselors. However, for ESL Dominican and Haitian students, the reality is different. Internet sources might not assist an international student in understanding the U.S. financial aid system due to its complexity. Sometimes, even students who are eligible to receive financial aid cannot complete a postsecondary education due to insufficient financial resources (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2010).

Many native and international students, noted Kanno and Varghese (2010), are not aware of the requirements to be eligible for the Federal Pell Grant Aid Program. In general, these students do not know when and how to apply for different types of financial aid available. Many of these international students are not aware of the requirements of any financial aid program (Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

According to Georges-Jackson and Gast (2010), as required by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, a student must meet the following criteria to be eligible for financial aid: (a) be a United States' citizen or national, or an eligible non-citizen; (b) have a high school diploma or its equivalent; (c) not be a Bachelor's degree holder; (d) be enrolled in a certificate program or higher; (e) provide proof of dependency status; (f) not be in default of a student loan; (g) not owe a refund on Federal Pell Grant; and (h) has registered for Selective Service if male (Georges-Jackson & Gast, 2010). To qualify for financial aid, an ESL student must also have

competency in his/her area of study but understanding the United States financial aid system is challenging for international students, as is affording tuition (Bettinger et al., 2012).

The rising tuition costs affect the U.S. student population in general. However, college tuition costs have a larger impact on low-income Hispanic and African American families. These populations are severely affected by a lack of economic opportunities (Nora & Grisp, 2009). Scott-Clayton (2015) revealed that net cost influences student enrollment. The net price is the price students pay after receiving all grants and non-repayable financial aid. There is an increase in community college enrollment when the net amount paid by students is low (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

Researchers have emphasized how the lack of financial aid awareness and counseling might delay the learning process and the social integration of any disadvantaged students' population. Such issues affect Dominican and Haitian ESL students academically and socially as well. As Kanno and Varghese (2010) stated,

Schools contribute to the reproduction of existing power relations in society by privileging the cultural background of students of the dominant class. Since the culture and values of the dominant class are accessible only to those who belong to the dominant class, working-class and minority students are inherently disadvantaged. (Kanno & Varghese, p. 313)

Addressing these problems can help to address achievement gaps in the United States' postsecondary educational system.

The Dilemma of Paying for Higher Education

Paying higher education tuition is a challenge and a dilemma for students. While tuition costs impact college access, the complexity of the U.S. financial aid structure makes postsecondary education more challenging for ESL students than for native students. With a

focus on Dominican and Haitian ESL students, the researcher used Judith Scott-Clayton's (2015) first three lessons expressed in *The Role of Financial Aid in Promoting College Access and Success: Research Evidence and Proposals for Reform* to explain how challenging it is for Caribbean ESL students to access and succeed in the American educational system.

Primarily, net price, which is the price paid by families and/or students after receiving all sources of financial aid, influences both student access and success in college. Earlier research has found that more students are enrolled in college when the net price decreases. Due to socioeconomic factors and lack of financial assistance, Black and Hispanic Caribbean ESL students fall into the category of students who are challenged by the U.S. higher educational system (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

Secondly, most financial aid programs are complex and undermine aid effectiveness, insisted (Scott-Clayton, 2015). Not all aid programs have the same level of effectiveness. The Pell Grant application, for example, is long and complicated. The complexity of that financial aid application challenges both students and families who have experienced attending school in the U.S. and who likely have difficulties overcoming the challenges associated with the structure of the process. When a new student or a new family coming from the Dominican Republic or Haiti has to integrate into the system, the process could be even more challenging to comprehend (Scott-Clayton, 2105).

Thirdly, the FAFSA application process is so complex many students require assistance to understand the process, not just the information. Many students need a financial aid counselor to help in the application process. Unfortunately, some native English-speaking and ESL students do not receive enough financial aid counseling to help them complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This situation is the result of insufficient staff in many

colleges. Due to lack of guidance, students, at times, do not matriculate in the fall. Some students from low-income families often do not apply to the college of their choice even they meet the academic requirements (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

The Issue of Race

In addition to the issue of counseling assistance, argued Solórzano et al. (2002), disadvantaged minority students have to face other problems. Of primary importance is the matter of race. Dominican and Haitian ESL students are representatives of the U.S. Hispanic and African American populations. Although an individual's skin color is often considered a simple social category, people often use race to create hierarchies of power and dominance. In the United States, race has been used to include and exclude certain groups from equal participation, resources, and human rights. Racism exists when one group believes itself to be superior and has the power to carry out racist behavior. Racism affects multiple racial/ethnic groups (Solórzano et al., 2002). In that respect, it is imperative to determine whether Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the U.S. educational system are affected by racial factors.

Moreover, although the power structure between racial groups has fluctuated over time, stated Kohli (2008), people of color have never consistently or significantly possessed power in this country. Thus, they are often targets of racism. Further, racism is not always based on racial categories. It is affiliated with language and culture as well (Kohli, 2008). Dominican and Haitian ESL students do not experience racial and cultural dominance only since immigrating to the United States. The island of Hispaniola is known for its social inequalities. Over centuries of human rights abuses, Hispaniola has perpetuated many longtime iniquitous practices that become norms in the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Torres-Saillant, 2010).

Hispaniola: An Iniquitous Society

Social inequalities began in Hispaniola as early as 1492, when the Europeans first explored the Americas (Bryan, 2010). Spain set the tone with Christopher Columbus by invading Hispaniola and establishing slavery on the indigenous Indians' lands, while France and England decided to follow Spain's footsteps. For several centuries, the Europeans invaders ruled the island. The European newcomers established a social inequality system that perpetuated for more than 500 years. With the destruction of the Indians in the 1520s due to inhumane treatment, the Europeans brought Africans from the black continent to maintain slavery on the island. In the period of French colonization from September 20, 1697 (the date of the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick between Charles II of Spain and Louis XIV of France, granting the western part of Hispaniola to France) to the last decade of the eighteenth century, social inequalities in the French part of the island, called Saint-Domingue, became increasingly evident (Bryan, 2010).

On a racial hierarchy, there was a class of the "grands blancs" (Bryan, 2010) and another group of French from the hinterland called "petits blancs" or "engagés" who did not enjoy the same privileges as the "grands blancs," in France or in Santo Domingo. In the middle of the racial hierarchy was the class of "mulattoes"; just below, there were the "blacks"—the slaves (Bryan, 2010). Some aspects of Dominican Haitian social life still reflect the colonial structure, according to Torres-Saillant (2010). For example, perpetuating Hispaniola's social inequalities, many Dominicans and Haitians have no access to education, while a small percentage of people from both societies enjoy significant social privileges (Torres-Saillant, 2010). From Santo-Domingo to Port-au-Prince, the aftermath of centuries of abuses and social inequalities persists. Also, the fragility of the socioeconomic realities is evident from one side of the island to the other.

Shahjahan (2011) explained, through evidence-based research, how colonialism impacts educational systems. He argued that neoliberalism dominates educational systems worldwide. The author stated, “evidence-based education not only colonizes education epistemologically, but also perpetuates materialist power relations and disciplines bodies of the colonized to serve the global economy” (Shahjahan, 2011, p. 197). According to Torres-Saillant (2010), since the invasion led by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the island of Hispaniola is the scene of inhuman forms of social inequality. Currently, an “iniquitous society inheritance” predominates Dominican and Haitian cultural and socioeconomic life, indicated the researcher. Until now, added Torres-Saillant, access to quality education or simple access to education remains a luxurious initiative in both societies.

In research conducted by Busso et al. (2017) targeting Latin American and Caribbean countries, the expansion of higher education in the region raised concerns over the quality and relevance of the academic skills that the students would reach. Furthermore, in 2015, the Dominican Republic ranked the lowest among 72 participating countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), including 10 Latin American countries. To make matter worse, skills are not only low in the region but also unequally distributed between low- and high-income households. The steep socioeconomic gradients in skills development start during early childhood. The skills gaps that appear in the early years remain throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Busso et al., 2017, pp. 53-54). To successfully assist Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the American educational system, it is crucial to assess the consequences of the colonial inheritance, the socioeconomic realities, and the needs of both groups of students.

Hispaniola: An Iniquitous Colonial Inheritance

The Europeans, especially the long centuries of combined French and Spanish domination, have left a lifelong social inequality in Hispaniola Bryan (2010). In this study, the phrase “iniquitous colonial inheritance” expresses the extent to which the inequality system has been normalized throughout the island. By perpetuating slavery on the island, according to Bryan (2010), the French settlers took advantage of one group and favored another. The *petits blancs*, as described earlier, although they were French and white, did not enjoy the same privileges as the *grands blancs*. The role of the *petits blancs* in the colony of Saint-Domingue was quite different from that of the *grands blancs*. The *petits blancs* had more opportunities to practice poorly honored professions compared to *grands blancs* (Bryan, 2010, p. 7).

It was even worse for mulattoes and blacks, Bryan (2010) revealed. They were undoubtedly victims of racial discrimination by the white population. Mulattoes (offspring of one white and one black parent) were better treated in the colony than slaves, but they did not enjoy the same privileges as the *petits blancs* (pp. 7–9). The most privileged mulattoes had access to education; others had the status of slaves, at the same level as all blacks.

The distribution of social ranks favored the formation of a distinct and privileged social caste dominated by the whites (Bryan, 2010). The superiority of the whites, thus, extended not only to the entire population of black slaves, which was about 15 times larger than that of the whites, but also to the mulattoes who constituted an intermediate group of colonial society. As far as race relations in Saint-Domingue are concerned, a common saying, universally accepted and legally enforced, claims that “a white is never in the wrong vis-à-vis a black.” That saying was also applicable to the freedmen, who were mostly free mulattoes (pp. 17–18).

The colonial experiences of Saint-Domingue impacted both the Dominican Republic and Haiti over centuries, indicated Torres-Saillant (2010). Until the twenty-first century, the existence of social ranks in both societies does not facilitate access to education for every citizen in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Due to the perpetuation of colonial practices on both sides of the island, Dominican and Haitian societies remain iniquitous societies. Currently, in the Dominican Republic, the skin color and socioeconomic status of citizens determine the possibility of their having access to quality education (Torres-Saillant, 2010). In Haiti, according to the researcher, “pitit Dessalines” (Dessalines descents; Haitians whose skin color is black) and “pitit Petion” (Petion descents; Mulattoes) are two groups with access to few forms of social privilege. Generally, however, pitit Dessalines have no access to quality education, while pitit Petion do.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the American' educational system. Chapter 1 conveyed the state of higher education in the United States as it pertains to the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the literature related to the topic of this study, while Chapter 3 describes the methodology. Using a qualitative research design, the researcher interviewed two groups of ESL students: a group of Dominican ESL students and a group of Haitian ESL students.

The goal of this phenomenological study was to explore specific issues related to Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the U. S. educational system.

According to Guest et al. (2012),

Phenomenology, the study of conscious experience, is used in contemporary social science more broadly to denote the study of individuals' perceptions, feelings, and lived experiences...For instance, the notion of open-ended question and conversational inquiry, so typical in qualitative research, allow research participants to talk about a topic in their own words, free of the constraints imposed by fixed-response questions that are generally seen in quantitative studies. (pp. 10–11)

Among the various problems that Dominican and Haitian ESL students encounter, the researcher explored (a) financial awareness and (b) economic, cultural, and social barriers. The researcher used a qualitative study approach to conduct interviews with 12 ESL students from both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Each of the 12 students was selected from a pool of 24 prospective participants. According to Creswell (1998), between 5 and 25 participants should be

interviewed for a phenomenological study. Qualitative research seeks to answer a human or social inquiry through effective methodological practices (Creswell, 1998). For this study, the researcher used a phenomenological approach. Such an approach inquires into the social and human aspects of Dominican and Haitian ESL students' college experiences in the United States. A qualitative method was deemed to be the most suitable for understanding this human experience.

Research Participants

The participants were chosen from a New Jersey public college's ESL population. All participants were taking different level ESL courses. The researcher introduced himself and asked participants if they were taking ESL courses at the college and willing to participate in this study. From a pool of 24 Dominican and Haitian ESL students, 10 participants were recruited. The researcher explained to each ESL student participant the purpose, scope, and importance of this study. Before planning to schedule an interview with a participant, the researcher reviewed the information in the Informed Consent Form with the participant who voluntarily signed the form.

The participants had different levels of experience and academic achievement. All participants attended high school either in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti. Analyzing the data, the researcher focused on four major themes: (a) Language Barriers; (b) differences in educational systems pedagogy; (c) facing individual and college-related expenses; and (d) using the support service available on campus. Five ESL students from the Dominican Republic and five ESL students from Haiti were recruited from the selected college. The participants were required to be ESL Dominican or Haitian students. All participants were between 18 and 50

years old. Participants were given the option to be interviewed at a location on campus where they would feel more comfortable.

Three male and seven female ESL students participated. Using a mixed number of male and female ESL students facilitated the researcher recruiting a diverse group of participants, promoting a greater measure of objectivity. This strategy maintained objectivity both because the participants were recruited in equal numbers from both sides of the island and because they were from different gender, social, economic, and academic backgrounds.

The researcher, investigating for uniqueness in terms of social, economic, academic, and general background, aimed to interview participants from distinct backgrounds. This strategy increased the likelihood of collecting data from a more diverse group within the same population. Also, collecting data from a diverse group of participants increased the possibility of making the recruiting process more varied and effective since participants from each nation have distinct cultures. In addition, all guidance was comprehensible. To ensure that the participants expressed themselves objectively, the researcher advised them to use their mother tongue when communicating in English was challenging.

Research Method

The researcher used the interview method to collect data. Questions related to the participants' academic experience at the study site were asked during the interview. Lasting 30 to 45 minutes, the interviews were audio-recorded after the participants gave their consent. If a participant did not provide consent to audio-record an interview, that participant gave the researcher permission to take notes using a computer and/or a notebook. Each participant was informed of the audio recording before the interview. To encourage the interest of the participants, the researcher explained how this study might help educational leaders to make

appropriate changes to provide Dominican and Haitian ESL students with more academic and socioeconomic assistance.

The researcher had chosen a qualitative method because this study is exploratory. According to Creswell (1994), one of the most important reasons for conducting a qualitative study is exploration. Further, there is little research about Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the United States' higher educational system. Therefore, the researcher sought to collect information from the participants to develop a more informed picture of the experiences of the Dominican and Haitian ESL student population in the United States (Creswell, 1994).

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the United States in an undergraduate setting. The participants answered the open-ended questions of the interviewer.

Interview Questions

- Tell me what was the motivation to study in the United States?
- Are there major sociocultural differences between the U.S. and your country of origin?
- What was the most challenging in adjustment?
- Do you have any academic challenges?
- What career would you like to pursue?
- Is it challenging to face all your college-related expenses?
- Do you understand how the financial aid system works?
- Does your work schedule affect your academic achievement?
- Are you using any support services available at the college?

- Do you receive any kind of financial or emotional support from family members or friends?

Ethical Issues

Since the researcher was an instructor at the college where this research was conducted, to mitigate the possibility of coercion, participants in the current study were not enrolled in any course taught by the researcher at the time of the interview. Furthermore, the researcher reiterated to the students that participation in the study was voluntary. To avoid bias, the researcher informed the students that participation in this study would not provide personal, academic, or other benefits, and that nonparticipation would not be detrimental.

The researcher reiterated to the participants that the responses to any question would only be used for the study. Also, permission was sought to conduct the interviews following the procedure established by the college's IRB committee. An application was submitted to that IRB before the interviews were discussed with the participants. Any student whose status did not permit him or her to be interviewed was respectfully excused from this study.

Data Analysis

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated that interviewing is a significant way of facilitating an understanding of a phenomenon. The transcribed interviews were coded to identify patterns and themes in the data. According to Saldaña (2013), there are two major stages in coding: the first cycle and the second cycle. The first cycle consisted of (a) descriptive coding, (b) in vivo coding, and (c) process coding. The second cycle grouped the summaries from the first cycle into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs. Saldaña (2013) noted, "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative,

salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4).

According to Miles et al. (2014), the first cycle coding methods are codes primarily assigned to the data chunks. The second cycle coding methods utilized the information obtained from the first cycle codes. This study used in vivo coding for the first cycle coding, which gave the researcher the advantage of using the participant’s words (Miles et al., 2014). To differentiate the participants’ words from the researcher’s codes, all in vivo codes were in quotation marks.

The second cycle, following Miles et al. (2014), grouped the summaries from the first cycle into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs. They consisted of four types: (a) categories or themes, (b) causes/explanations, (c) relationships among people, (d) and theoretical constructs (Miles et al., 2014). Analyzing the data made it easier for the researcher to determine the interrelation between the two cycles and to understand whether the theory of cultural reproduction developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977a) provides a convincing explanation of how financial awareness and economic, cultural, and social barriers affected Dominican and Haitian ESL students’ academic success in the U.S. educational system.

Major cultural and socioeconomic factors affecting the successful college completion of that student population in the United States were investigated. Interviewing the students and utilizing relevant data, the researcher presented corresponding results through detailed analysis. The findings revealed that Dominican and Haitian ESL students experience four significant issues in the American educational system:

- language barriers;
- differences in educational systems pedagogy;
- facing individual and college-related expenses; and

- using support services available on campus.

Combined, those issues constituted a Himalaya size obstacle that Dominican and Haitian ESL students should overcome to complete a college degree in the United States. While a successful college completion for Spanish and African American ESL students remains an important topic in the American educational system, little research in this area is available. This study contributes to the expansion of available research into ESL students' college completion rates in the United States since that population continues to expand over the years.

The researcher offered a unique approach that will contribute to the improvement of ESL student education in the United States. The uniqueness of this study lay in the facts that (a) both groups of students that constituted the population of this study, Dominican and Haitian ESL students, were respectively Hispanic and Francophone, (b) each group of ESL students attended elementary and secondary education in their native country, and (c) both groups had common and different cultural and socioeconomic factors that affected the successful college completion of that student population in the United States, indicated the researcher. While Dominican and Haitian ESL students respectively speak Spanish and French/Creole, both groups of students have cultural and socioeconomic identities associated with colonial inheritance (Torres-Saillant, 2010). With insufficient knowledge of that student population's cultural and socioeconomic realities, an effective approach to promote both groups' educational success might be an uncertain initiative. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is crucial to understand Dominican and Haitian ESL students from both historical and current perspectives rather than approaching the realities of that student population based only on current facts.

While Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory constituted the theoretical framework, historical, current realities, and both groups' cultural and socioeconomic experiences were

analyzed to support the researcher's approach. Factors affecting the successful college completion of Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the United States were also analyzed based on the cultural reproduction theory of Pierre Bourdieu. However, the researcher's understanding of the realities of Dominican and Haitian societies was revealed to promote a better approach to the issues that affect Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the American educational system.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study sought to explore and determine Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the American educational system. Themes and subthemes were analyzed to determine major cultural and socioeconomic factors affecting the successful college completion of that student population. Factors such as language barriers, balancing school and work, differences in educational system pedagogy, navigating the U.S. financial aid system, and using student support service constituted the principal data that were analyzed in the interviews with the participants.

Themes and Subthemes Explored with Participants in the Interviews

1. Language Barriers: Adjusting to the American Culture, Integrating the U.S. Labor Force
2. Differences in Educational systems Pedagogy: Memorizing versus Thinking
3. Facing Individual and College-related Expenses: Family Responsibilities, Financial Awareness
4. Using Support Services Available on Campus: Counseling Services, Tutoring, Academic and Emotional Assistance

Table 1

Similarities and Differences between Participants

Participants' Name	Language Barriers	Differences in Educational Systems Pedagogy	Facing Individual and College-related Expenses	Using Support Service on Campus
Bernadette	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational system differences that impact the student's academic performance.	The participant receives Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does not use any support service available on campus.
Alberta	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives financial support from her husband and the federal government.	The student does use support services available on campus.
Helene	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student does not receive the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does not use any support service available on campus.
Miriame	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does use support services available on campus.

Elza	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does not use any support service available on campus.
Joel	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does not use any support service available on campus.
Tony	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does use support services available on campus.
Jackson	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does use support service available on campus.
Sabine	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does not use any support service available on campus.

Annabelle	The student faces linguistic challenge.	There are issues pertaining to educational systems differences that have impacts on the student's academic performance.	The student receives the Student Federal Aid from the federal government.	The student does use support service available on campus.
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Participants Profile

Participant 1: Joel. The participant is a Dominican industrial engineer. He lived in the United States with his wife and his daughter. His decision to immigrate to the U.S. was highly motivated by his desire to provide for his family since he had a challenging economic life in the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately, at the time of the interview, the participant's wife had a stroke. So, Joel had to work harder to make ends meet and support his beloved wife and his daughter.

The participant and his daughter were both students at the community college where this interview took place. Since Joel's wife had a health issue, the participant had to make the necessary effort to play the roles of husband and father. A good source of encouragement for the participant was his daughter. Joel's daughter assisted him with his school assignments.

Participant 2: Bernadette. The participant had been living in the United States for a few years at the time of the interview. She had made the necessary effort to provide for her family. While taking ESL courses in the United States, the participant was pursuing the study of nursing to improve her economic future through education. Adjusting to the American culture was not an easy process for Bernadette.

Also, the participant was challenged by the United States educational system. It was difficult for Bernadette to express her ideas in class adequately. It was a challenge for the

participant to do her school assignments as well because of her level of English proficiency. Moreover, it was challenging for the participant to integrate into the U.S. workforce successfully.

Participant 3: Annabelle. The participant was 18 years old at the time of the interview. She immigrated to the United States to have access to a better quality higher education and more financial support. She attended a religious high school in Haiti. Annabelle had been living in the United States for about a year at the time of the interview. The participant thought that the most challenging in adjustment in the American educational system was the language. Away from her parents, who stayed in Haiti, Annabelle lived with her brother in the United States and was pursuing education to become a medical doctor. Before reaching her goal, the participant was making the necessary efforts to be a Registered Nurse. Although away from her parents, the participant was determined to be successful in school and every aspect of life.

The participant studied basic English in school in Haiti. Annabelle acknowledged that it was challenging for her to improve her English writing skill. The process of adjustment to the American educational system was the most challenging for Annabelle.

Participant 4: Alberta. The participant immigrated to the United States a few years after graduating from a religious high school in the Dominican Republic. Immigrating to the United States was Alberta's alternative because her motivation was to pursue the American dream, which is being financially independent and having access to quality education. At the time of the interview, she lived in New Jersey with her husband and her daughter.

Alberta was optimistic about her professional career. She planned to pursue a career in nursing to improve her financial life and assist people experiencing health issues. The participant experienced challenges in college. The process of adjustment to the American educational system was challenging for the participant.

Participant 5: Jackson. The participant had the drive to study in the United States to enrich his knowledge and earn money. To reach his objective, Jackson wanted a career change. In his native country Haiti, the participant studied economy while he wanted to study civil engineering in the United States. The participant observed major sociocultural differences between the United States and Haiti. For example, Jackson stated that the transportation system in Haiti is quite different than the transportation system in the United States. In Haiti, people mostly use a tap-tap (a small open-air bus, often a converted pickup truck) to commute, while in the U.S. there is no tap-tap. At the time of the interview, the participant was proud of himself for being able to use the transportation system in the United States by himself since it was initially difficult for him to use the transportation system in the U.S. by himself.

Participant 6: Helene. The participant is a Dominican ESL student in the United States. At the time of the interview, Helene was taking her first semester in school in the United States. The participant was pursuing a degree in nursing to earn money and help others. Helene's significant challenges in the American educational system were the English language and college tuition.

Helene lived in a Spanish neighborhood where she only communicated in Spanish. At school, she not only had to communicate in English, but she had to do her assignments in English as well. She had trouble writing in English. It was also challenging for the participant to pay her college tuition cost. Helene did understand how the financial aid system works; however, she did not receive financial assistance from any state or federal entity to assist her with her tuition cost. Although Helene did not receive financial aid, she could not take a full-time job because of her course schedule. The participant said that she wanted a full-time job as soon as

she has a chance to start one. Helene did not use any support service available at the college. She did receive financial and emotional support from her grandfather.

Participant 7: Miriame. The participant was motivated to immigrate to the United States to improve the quality of her life. For Miriame, the most challenging in adjustment was the language. The participant acknowledged that between 2 and 3 years ago, she would not be able to communicate with the researcher the way she was in the interview. Because of her lack of English proficiency, sometimes she cannot understand what the professor is saying. Optimistic, Miriame wanted to pursue a career as a dentist. Although she received federal financial aid, she still had financial issues. Her biggest problem was paying for her commute, and she did not understand much about the financial aid system.

At the time of the interview, the participant did not have a job. She lived with her mother and her father. Miriame did not use any support service available at the community college she attended. For any inquiries, she went to enrollment services for assistance. She did not know where on campus to go for emotional support, but her family supported her emotionally.

Participant 8: Elza. The participant said that her parents took the initiative to let her immigrate to the United States. One of the major socio-cultural differences between the Dominican Republic and the United States is the language, stated Elza. The participant's most challenging issue in adjustment was to communicate with people. At the time of the interview, Elza was undecided about her major. The participant received federal financial aid to undergraduate students, and her parents assisted her with other expenses. Elza did not understand how the financial aid system worked. She used the financial aid office and received financial and emotional support from her parents.

Participant 9: Tony. When Tony immigrated to the United States, his dream came true. In Tony's view, the U.S. is a great country, a country of opportunities. The participant acknowledged that there are socio-cultural differences between the United States and Haiti. For Tony, adaptation to the American educational system was not the easiest. Although some courses might be challenging Tony, he made the necessary effort to ensure he passed his classes at the end of the semester. Tony gladly faced the academic challenges since he was motivated to pursue a career in Business Administration. When it comes to college-related expenses, the participant had no concerns since he received the student financial aid from the U.S. federal government. Tony's work schedule did not affect his academic achievements. He attended school in the morning and went to work in the evening. Tony used support service available on campus. He received financial and emotional supports from his parents at home.

Participant 10: Sabine. The participant is a Haitian ESL student. Although challenged by the American educational system, Sabine was motivated to pursue her education because of her interest in U.S. technology. The participant observed differences between the American and the Haitian educational systems. Her explanation will be presented in the analysis section.

For Sabine, the most challenging adjustment was to the language. One of Sabine's most significant academic challenges was to improve her English proficiency. Despite the problems she encountered, she kept pursuing her dream to be a nurse to help others. It was not challenging for the participant to face her college-related expenses. Sabine did her best to balance school and work. She had a part-time job that did not affect her academic achievement. She attended class in the morning and went to work in the evening.

Findings

Theme 1: Language Barriers

Language barriers are one of the most critical challenges facing Dominican and Haitian ESL students in the American educational system. All 10 participants in this study reported the English language challenged them. Some thought that language barriers were the most significant issue that slowed them from adapting to the American educational system. For example, for Joel, an industrial engineer and photographer, English is a huge barrier to overcome. He thought that he would have benefited from the American educational system, with English proficiency.

Joel insisted that he has the necessary academic and literacy skills to have a great beginning in the American educational system. However, due to language barriers, it was a challenge for the participant to be successful in his educational endeavor. Joel said that because of a lack of English proficiency, it was challenging for him to grasp the information available on the college website. His daughter helped him with schoolwork by translating English.

The issue of language barriers also affected Annabelle. Annabelle thought that the issue of language barriers is a real obstacle to being successful in the United States. She acknowledged that she learned English in school in Haiti; however, she said that it is not enough to speak well and successfully write academic English. She expressed her concerns as follows:

The most challenging was the language because you know in my country, we only speak Haitian Creole and French. I studied English in school but not like to speak it the way they do it here. That was the most challenging. . . . I do have academic challenges, but not really. I have a problem in writing. I don't know many vocabulary words.

All participants, whether Haitian Creole/French or Spanish speakers, faced challenges writing English. Nero (2006) revealed one of the problems preventing ESL students from being academically successful in the American educational system. The pedagogical rejection of ESL students' vernaculars is a disadvantage in the learning process.

To support that approach, Parmegiani (2014) explained how he successfully integrated Spanish in an English writing class to teach a group of Dominican ESL students at Bronx community college. The use of the Spanish language into the academic discourse facilitated the intronization of the Dominican students' identity in the classroom writing experience (Parmegiani, 2014). The author used the mother tongue as a bridge to facilitate the learning of standard English. Similarly, the utilization of Haitian Creole/French and Spanish could be used to teach the population of ESL Dominican and Haitian students standard English.

Language barriers are a huge issue, even to those who like the American education system. Helene is a participant who felt comfortable with the U.S. teaching style. However, despite her liking American education, she still thinks that English is overwhelming: "I can say I am more comfortable with the United States system. . . . I do like it. I feel comfortable, but when it comes to write, that's my struggle."

There were varying ways that language barriers manifested between participants. For example, Elza's language barrier is most evident in her pronouncing of English words. Elza, one of the younger ESL student participants in this study, was mostly affected by the issue of language barriers when it came to pronouncing the English words. Elza said, "the most challenging issue is to communicate with people. . . . English words are difficult for me to pronounce." For Sabine, what constituted the most complicated issue was to communicate with her teachers.

Language issues come up not just in school, but beyond school. One participant, Bernadette, mentioned that it is challenging for her to integrate the labor market. For example, like the rest of the participants, Bernadette faced the issue of language barriers. A job interview is another challenge that many participants, including Bernadette, must overcome to integrate into the American labor market successfully.

Challenged by the English language, Bernadette's experiences were not any easier than those of the rest of the participants. The issue of language barriers caused all the participants difficulty integrating the U.S. labor market and performing academic work successfully.

Bernadette explained:

Hmm, the most and least challenging is part of the job. Hmm, the question, answer interview about part of the job . . . I think the challenges sometimes is difficult. But when I come to school, I am listen and I am understand. I think before is difficult, but now I think is easy.

Theme 2: Differences in Educational Systems Pedagogy

Differences in the educational systems and pedagogies of the countries emerged in the interviews. Jackson noted a major difference between the American educational system and the Haitian educational system. In Haiti, students must memorize, but in the United States, students do not have to do so: "In Haiti, if you don't memorize, you don't pass the test." Memorization is fundamental to both the Dominican and Haitian educational systems.

From the east to the west side of the island of Hispaniola, the practice of memorization is part of both Dominican and Haitian educational systems. Elza, a participant who experienced both the Dominican and the American educational system, concluded the same as Jackson, saying, "Students in the Dominican Republic memorize more than students in the United States."

Besides the aspect of memorization, Alberta elaborated on the differences between Dominican American pedagogy by stating,

The U.S. educational system is very different than the Dominican Republic (DR) system. Here is more strict like they want more every detail. Every little thing, they want you to do. . . . In DR, is more about practice. Here, is more like knowledge about books, reading books. In DR, is more about what you practice, what you learn and all of that. . . . In DR, you memorize, but you practice also Here, you memorize a lot, and then you practice.

Her opinion was different from that of the other participants. Alberta said that she does not memorize in ESL, but she knows that she will have to memorize a lot when she starts taking courses in the nursing program.

Sabine did the same experience in Haiti. She had to memorize in school in Haiti, like Jackson. Sabine observed at least one significant difference between the American and Haitian educational systems. For Sabine, while students in Haiti must memorize, in the U.S., they are more likely to express their ideas. When Tony was a student in Haiti, his experience was similar. He had to memorize as well. He acknowledged differences between the American educational system and the Haitian educational system, indicated in his remark: “In Haiti, students must study everything. In the U.S., you don’t have to.”

Helene and Miriame were born and attended elementary and high school in the Dominican Republic. Helene asserted, “The way teachers teach in the U.S. is different.” Miriame said, “Teachers teach differently in the U.S. than in the Dominican Republic. . . . In the U.S., students practice a lot. In the Dominican Republic, students memorize a lot.”

Sharing her educational experience, Annabelle, who attended elementary and high school in Haiti, said, “In Haiti, we have to memorize more, and here we have to do more practice.” Not too many participants said that it was challenging not to memorize, but all of them said that it is challenging for them to express their ideas in English.

As discussed in the literature review, Parmegiani (2014) explained some aspects differentiating the American educational system from the Dominican educational system. A different pedagogical system presents itself as a challenge due to language barriers. For example, both educational systems differ in literacy practices. In the Dominican Republic, students do not usually write essays like students in the United States regularly do. While students in the United States are expected to write a thesis statement and express personal opinions in a writing assignment, students in the Dominican Republic are expected to repeat information that they have already learned. Parmegiani wrote, “The rhetorical expectations students were expected to meet while engaging with Academic Discourse in Dominican secondary schools often clash with what U.S. college professors expect” (Parmegiani, 2014, p. 41).

Theme 3: Facing Individual and College-related Expenses

Seven of the 10 participants said that they were having difficulties covering individual and college-related expenses while taking ESL courses. All seven participants faced difficulty affording their personal expenses and had to get a job to support themselves and respond to unmet college-related expenses. For example, one participant had to get a job to afford the costs of transportation to commute to college. One participant was financially supported by her husband; two participants were financially supported by their parents. The rest of the participants were able to make ends meet with the assistance of relatives or family members. Nine of the ten participants got their tuition costs paid with the financial assistance provided by the federal

government. Two pressing issues facing the participants are (a) lack of skills to integrate the U.S. socioeconomic system and (b) lack of awareness of the U.S. financial aid system. However, most of the participants were able to complete and submit to the department of education the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with the assistance of the community college financial aid office where those interviews took place. A couple of the participants received help completing the FAFSA from sources outside the college.

Sabine, who was attending college in the United States for the first semester, had to take classes in the morning and go to work in the evening to meet individual and some college-related expenses. She still had a difficult life although she had a job, and the government helped her with her tuition costs, the cost of her textbooks, and notebooks, pens, and pencils. Although Sabine was a recipient of the federal student aid program, Pell Grant, she did not understand how the application process works. The process was challenging for Sabine not only because it was her first semester in an American educational setting, but also the participant did not know how to navigate the administrative affairs of a college in the United States. Fortunately, Sabine was assisted by the college financial aid office staff members throughout the whole process.

Also, while Sabine was making necessary efforts to meet personal and college-related expenses, she was financially supported by a close relative who, at the time of the interview, attended the same community college where Sabine was taking ESL courses. Although Sabine's relative sometimes supported her, the participant said it was difficult for her to solve some individual financial issues and meet some college-related expenses. Sometimes, it was even more challenging for Sabine because her close family member who supported her was also a student making efforts to meet personal expenses and hoping to receive assistance with his unmet college-related costs.

To face individual and unmet college-related expenses, Tony, who is Sabine's relative, did not have many concerns because he had few financial hardships. Tony was financially supported by his parents, had a job, and was a recipient of financial aid. While Tony was supporting himself with an evening job, he was aware that he had to pass his courses to maintain the federal financial assistance that paid his tuition. Concerned about maintaining his financial aid, Tony devoted himself to his education.

While Tony was a recipient of the U.S. federal student aid program, like some other participants, he did not understand how the application process works, "I don't understand the U.S. financial aid system. I only had an idea." The participant only had an idea about the financial aid system, although he had been a student at that community college for about 2 years. Fortunately, the college financial aid office staff members guided Tony through the process step by step.

Like Tony, Elza had to meet personal and college-related expenses. At the time of the interview, she depended on her parents for her financial needs. Elza said that she wanted to get a job, but she could not do so because she had to take care of her infant. Although Elza was a recipient of federal financial aid, she still had to get more financial help from her parents to meet her expenses.

When asking Elza whether she understood how the U.S. financial aid system works, she said, "No, [I do not understand it] *somebody explained it to me, but the way they explained it...*" The participant did not navigate the financial aid system on her own. It could be challenging for Elza to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form if she did not meet with staff members of the college financial aid office to assist her. The participant had minimal experience of the American educational system, as she was new to it.

Like most of the participants, Miriame was also challenged with personal and college-related expenses. The participant did not have a job. Like Elza, Miriame lived with her parents. Differently than the other participants, Miriame had a unique financial challenge. She said her most significant issue was meeting expenses to commute to college. Like the other participants, Miriame was assisted by the college financial aid office staff members to fill out and submit the FAFSA to the Department of Education. The participant that said she did not understand how the financial aid system worked and only knew that the government paid for the courses and books.

To meet personal expenses, Alberta was supported by her husband. She was one of the participants who did not feel an urgency to provide for herself because of the financial assistance that she received from her husband and the U.S. government. Alberta did understand how the financial system works because the college financial aid office helped her. To elucidate, she said,

Right now, it's not that challenging because the government is paying for my college, but I know it's going to come a time that I have to pay and I know college in the U.S. is very expensive ...I had to apply; I had to submit some papers, I had to come to the college—I had to, like, apply, and had certain things pull everything online.

Some participants had a greater urgency for aid with individual or college-related expenses than others. Various situations explain such a level of urgency. For example, some participants were severely affected by the January 12, 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti and other participants faced unmet individual and/or college-related expenses.

For example, Jackson came from Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. To meet his expenses, he had to take an evening job and attend school in the morning. Sometimes, it was challenging for Jackson to keep up with financial needs and educational success. The participant said: "... *Sometimes, I come out in my job a little late. Sometimes, I am late for school.*" Like the other

participants, Jackson did not understand how the financial aid system works. However, he was able to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to the department of education with the assistance of the financial aid office.

For Helene, there was a different situation. Helene needed to have a full-time job to meet her expenses. Because of her school schedule, she had to keep her part-time job and hoped that she would get a full-time job as soon as she had the opportunity to do so. Also, it was challenging for Helene to face her college-related expenses. Fortunately, assisted by the financial aid office, the participant filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and submitted it to the department of education. Unfortunately, her application was rejected with elaboration on the reasons for that disapproval. While different types of student aid programs are available from various sources, Helene was struggling. The participant said, “Financial aid does not cover me, so I have to pay from my pocket, and I work part-time. It’s a challenge.... I have to work full time as soon as I have a chance.”

Per Kanno and Varghese (2010), many students do not receive financial aid because of a lack of awareness of its availability and the requirements to receive that aid. Although many participants in this study received federal financial aid, they had financial hardships (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). The situation was not different for Annabelle. Like the other Haitian participants who immigrated to the United States after the 2010 earthquake, Annabelle had individual and college-related expenses. She came to the United States to get more financial support to pursue her education. Determined to be successful, the participant did everything in her capacity to overcome her economic issues.

To meet her personal expenses, Annabelle had a part-time job and was supported by one of her brothers as well. Assisted by the financial aid office of the community college she

attended, Annabelle did fill out and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Successfully submitted, Annabelle's FAFSA was approved by the Department of Education. She said that what made the federal financial aid program challenging for her was reporting information on her parents. She was only 18 years old at that time. Her parents lived in Haiti and had never paid taxes in the United States.

Like Annabelle and other participants, Bernadette survived Haiti's January 12, 2010 earthquake responsible for more than 300,000 lives. She came to the United States to start a new life and further her education. As a student in the American educational system, Bernadette's college-related expenses were a huge burden. To meet her personal expenses, Bernadette had to take an overnight job while the federal student aid program covered most of her college-related expenditures.

To obtain the student financial assistance, Bernadette, like the rest of the participants, was assisted by the financial aid office of the community college she attended. In her case, A friend also supported Bernadette throughout the process. She filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and successfully submitted it online. When asking Bernadette whether she understands how the financial aid system works, she said:

The financial aid helps the students and their family pay for college by covering higher education. . . . Hm, I just go to the office. My friend applied for me on the computer for the financial aid. After, the financial aid makes me some process . . . and then I put the high school diploma and then the tax return. Hm, the ID number, and the social security and the green card, whatever. Then, after I just fill all the paperwork and then the financial aid texted me. He said he received all the paper. Hm, he said if I am qualify for

the financial aid, he pay for me. But if I am not qualify for the financial aid, I am pay by myself.

When the researcher asked Joel if it was challenging for him to face his college-related expenses, he said,

Yes. Hmmm . . . for me, in this case right now, it is not too expensive because the college helps me. But if I don't get the financial aid, it's very expensive. You know, my daughter study here with me, yes, she is 18 years old. She helps me stay here. She goes to the website and say, "Pa, look at this, you can apply for this," and she helps me. . . . Hm. . . .

The situation I am telling, I need to support my family.

Although Joel received federal student aid, he could not concentrate on his academic journey because he had a constant need to support his family. The financial aid office assisted Joel with collecting the required information and filling out the FAFSA. He that he understood a little about how the financial aid system works.

A little bit, yes [I understand how the financial aid system works]. In this part, they help me for the classes. I understand this, of course. But maybe they got other helping. Maybe I don't think they help me for another situation.

Despite a plentitude of sources of information about the U.S. financial aid system, many students and parents are unaware of college costs and the availability of different types of financial resources available to students, acknowledged the researcher. Although most of the participants in this study received federal student aid, if they were more savvy about the financial aid system, they would have fewer financial hardships.

Theme 4: Using Support Service Available on Campus

While support service is essential for students to navigate various aspects of the American educational system successfully, most students participating in this study did not effectively use the support service available on campus. For example, Jackson, a participant who received academic assistance from his institution, had requested assistance off campus from fellow Haitians because he did not know how to navigate the American academic system.

Although Jackson did request the help of the financial aid office to fill out and submit the FAFSA, he was not aware of various available resources on campus. Jackson was not aware of the availability of the tutoring services at the community college. Instead, he had to request the help of his friends to help him with homework. The participant did not know how to approach an advisor to whom he could address his academic challenges. Such situations do not promote academic success, especially for ESL students who have little or no foundation in the American educational system. Also, Jackson said he worked at night. Sometimes, he is late for classes. He did not discuss the situation with his instructors. Possibly, if Jackson spoke to his instructor about the situation, they might have devised a solution or alternative.

As O’Gara et al. (2009) noted, various support services have been offered to college students to promote academic completion rates. These services include tutoring, counseling, and academic guidance for populations like Black and Latino disadvantaged students to improve their levels of cultural capital. Unfortunately, in many cases, the students who would need such help the most do not benefit from it, sometimes, because they are unaware of the availability of the services.

A convincing example is Elza, who only received support services from the financial aid office of the community college when she seriously needed more help. For example, Elza was a

young mother who wanted to get a job to provide for herself and her child. She could not get a job because she had to take care of her child, Elza said, “I want to have a job, but I don’t have the time because I have a child.” She was not aware of the childcare service provided on campus.

Unlike other participants, Annabelle took advantage of the services available on campus. She said, “Yes, I do because when I need like support, I go to the registration office or I go to financial aid or I go to my advisor to give me some advises.” If Annabelle had not used the support services at the community college, she would probably have faced more significant challenges pursuing her education in the United States. In other statements, she explained how she received assistance from the financial aid office to get her FAFSA filled out and submitted.

Unfortunately, most of the Dominican and Haitian ESL students participating in this study did not have a good understanding of the administrative functioning at the community college they attended. Although Joel had previous college experience in the Dominican Republic, he did not effectively use the support services available to him in the United States, mostly due to the multiple responsibilities he had. In his words, “I need time to take care of my family.” Other than the help he received from the office of financial aid, he did not use any other support service available on campus.

Some of the participants, including Joel, did not even know where on campus the different offices were found. He was not aware of the availability of a counseling service that could help him to cope with situations like stress. As he experienced the illness of his wife, he was also confronted with the emotional effects of acculturation and academic challenges, but he did not request the assistance available to him as a student. The participant did not use most of the services available to him because he did not know how to navigate the community college system.

Sabine did not have experience in the U.S. postsecondary education system either. She only used the financial aid office as a support service to apply for the federal student aid program because she did not understand the process. Like other participants, it was Sabine's first semester in the American educational system. She did not exert additional effort to meet with people who were responsible for her academic success to help her understand the administrative affairs of the community college. She did not meet with an advisor to help her cope with the challenges she faced. Likewise, she did not speak with her instructors or with a counselor for academic advice about her language barriers. Since she did not feel confident with her level of English communication, Sabine was more comfortable requesting assistance from people who culturally related to her like Tony, her relative who was a student at the same community college. Tony himself did use the community college's support services. However, he requested a meeting with his math professor for help. He said, "Oh yeah, yeah, because, for example, yesterday I have a problem with Math, and then I just went to the counselor. He helped me in a good way. I use it."

When asked whether they received any support services on campus, Bernadette and Helene replied that they did not know where on campus to request assistance. Other than the assistance with the FAFSA they received at the financial aid office, neither of these participants received any other form of on-campus support. Bernadette and Helene never requested assistance for their academic challenges and emotional needs, but family members and friends emotionally supported them.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study explored Dominican and Haitian ESL students' experiences in the American educational system. This chapter summarizes the four themes presented in Chapter 4. Corresponding recommendations are given to encourage policymakers to do more to meet that student population's expectations. Also, an urgent call is made to solicit the interest of researchers in the American educational system to do more research in that field. Such future research will not only increase ESL students' college completion rates but will also elevate the United States' education level to benefit the nation's present and future generations.

It is essential to reiterate the urgency with which policymakers in the American educational system must address the situation of the Dominican and Haitian ESL students. As García reported in *Caribbean Migration to the Mainland: A Review of Adaptive Experiences* (1986), large flows of Dominican and Haitian immigrants have been coming to the United States since the 1970s. To support the National Education Pact Project initiated by the Dominican Republic, the World Bank provided \$50 million in assistance to the country's leaders to promote education.

In Haiti, before the 2010 earthquake, the country's educational sector was already in crisis (Luzincourt & Gulbrandson, 2010). After the earthquake, nearly all sectors of Haitian society have been devastated. Also, as noted in Chapter 2, Haiti's colonial inheritance has had a significant impact on its educational system. French culture has always influenced the Haitian educational system (Trouillot, 1990). Although Henry Christophe and Jean Pierre Boyer, former king and president of Haiti, respectively, promoted education in Haiti, the Haitian elite has

maintained the influence of French culture. Built on a colonial structure, the Haitian socioeconomic elite relegate the Haitian culture to a level inferior to French culture. As such, the French Catholic Church has been predominant since the Concordat of 1860. The perpetuation of the former European masters' educational objectives characterizes the ideological approach of the current Haitian educational system' leaders. The presence of several European religious schools in Haiti evidence that centuries of foreign domination has formed social reality there, creating a system of educational inequality transcending many generations.

Inequality is still one of the characteristics of the Dominican and Haitian educational systems. Lareau (1999) emphasized "one of Bourdieu's major insights on educational inequality: students with more valuable social and cultural capital fare better in school than do their otherwise-comparable peers with less valuable social and cultural capital" (Lareau, 1999). In Bourdieu's (1973) words,

the transmission from generation to generation of accumulated information, classical theories tend to dissociate the function of cultural reproduction proper to all educational systems from their function of social reproduction. Transposing, as they do so, the reproduction of culture and cultural transmission, commonly accepted by the ethnologists, to the case of societies divided into classes, these theories are based upon the implicit assumption that the different pedagogic actions which are carried out by families from the different social classes as well as that which is practiced by the school, work together in a harmonious way to transmit a cultural heritage which is considered as being the undivided property of the whole society. (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 174)

Given the cultural aspects of Dominican and Haitian ESL students' educational lives, it is urgent that American educational leaders more effectively assist Dominican and Haitian ESL students

by (a) valuing those students' cultural capital to facilitate their successful adaptation to American educational standards and (b) considering the most appropriate approaches to promote their acquisition of valuable cultural capital in the American educational system.

Developing such instructional strategies will not just benefit current Dominican and Haitian ESL students. It might also inspire other ESL student communities to adopt the same approaches to facilitating successful educational and sociocultural experiences. An effective accompaniment is required to assist ESL students like the participants in this study through the acculturation process as they face new challenges and adapt to the American educational and sociocultural environments.

The language barrier problem is the most common iceberg that causes Dominican and Haitian ESL students difficulty navigating the American educational system successfully. Further, as Safdar and Struthers (2003) explained, interactions with people from different cultures, daily social exchanges with new people, and the substitution of new relationships for old ones are complicated steps in an immigrant's acculturation process. At that level of the individual's experience, the immigrant's self-identity, social structures, and communication patterns might even be stress-inducing (Safdar & Struthers, 2003).

Such revelations are in harmony with Almon's (2015) research revealing the struggles of ESL students at a community college in the United States. The exclusion of their mother tongue in the classroom was a primary issue since they lacked English proficiency. Although the issue of language barriers was one of the most difficult challenges that participants in that study encountered, some ESL students persisted until they earned their Associate's degrees. For greater success, some other ESL students transferred to 4-year colleges (Almon, 2015). Other researchers joined the list of mother tongue advocates who are ESL academic instructions.

Advocating the use of the mother tongues of ESL students, Cummins (2009) made a call for researchers to position themselves on the issue of the prevalence of monolingual as opposed to bilingual ESL student's classroom instruction. The author insisted on asking the leaders of the international association of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to reject the monolingual approach. Perpetuating the monolingual approach is a form of injustice to learners and instructors whose native language is not the target language. It promotes the unsupported assumption that those whose native language is not the target language are inferior (Cummins, 2009).

Parmegiani and Utakis (2014) successfully experienced the use of the Spanish language as the mother tongue in classroom instruction at Bronx community college while English remained the target language. That learning strategy was effective since the students were challenged not only by the English language but by academic literacy as well (Parmegiani & Utakis, 2014). Pujol-Ferran et al. (2016) used a plurilingual pedagogies approach to assist non-English speakers navigating the American educational system. The challenges that ESL students face are not limited to the English learning process but also the content of various courses they are required to take. Plurilingual pedagogies address students' linguistic and cultural identities. The authors explained, "Embracing students' bilingual and plurilingual skills raises students' motivation to stay in college and promotes academic learning. Similarly, as bilingual faculty, we also find our educational goals supported and validated through interdisciplinary collaboration" (Pujol-Ferran et al., 2016, p. 531).

To meet Dominican and Haitian ESL students' academic needs, instructors, policymakers, and researchers should develop a curriculum promoting that student population's cultural identities. Using the ESL students' mother tongue as a bridge to teach American literacy

narratives has been successful for many scholars in the American educational system. As the participants mentioned, the American educational system is different from the Dominican and Haitian systems. However, the differences are not limited to language or the learning styles of thinking versus memorization. The difference in the educational systems also exists in their distinct literacy practices. Parmegiani (2014) found that there is a difference between Dominican and American literacy narratives and suggested that storytelling could be used to teach Spanish students in “English and Spanish academic development courses” (p. 24).

Promoting student success at New Jersey City University (NJCU), Accurso-Salguero et al. (2018) explained how programs implemented through a 2013–2018 plan increased student academic success. At NJCU, Dominicans and Haitians were not the only groups of students who benefited from that plan. Among the successful were many students in need of developmental English courses, financially disadvantaged, and culturally diverse groups. To reach its objective, NJCU institutes numerous outreach programs and campaigns and takes a holistic approach to undergraduate retention, which includes all members of the campus. Furthermore, NJCU promotes retention and student success through offering financial literacy workshops, pairing students with one financial aid counselor, using peer to peer mentorship, increasing faculty participation, promoting academic advisor targeted outreach, creating socially engaging activities, bridging the curricular and extra-curricular, and offering supplemental instruction and tutoring. NJCU’s focus on meeting students where they are has allowed for an inclusive campus climate bolstered by peer mentoring, an institution of student support through financial assistance and awareness, university advisement, and the Summer Bridge Program. (p. 97)

Such strategies contribute to a more advanced student demographic and strengthen the American educational system. Furthermore, the socioeconomic outcomes might exponentially benefit American society.

Limitations and Recommendations Future Research

This study was limited in two respects. First, due to language barriers and educational system differences, it was challenging for a couple of participants to express certain thoughts fully. Second, while the theory of cultural capital and cultural reproduction developed by Pierre Bourdieu was the appropriate theoretical framework, the stratification in Dominican and Haitian societies did not fully facilitate the identification of the social classes responsible for the transfer of values. Furthermore, although most of the participants could articulate their answers in English, a couple of them were unable to find some of the English equivalences required to express their ideas fully. To avoid misinterpreting unclear statements made by the participants facing language issues, the researcher prevented himself from assuming the meaning of unclear words and statements that respective participants could not explain, even with the assistance of the researcher.

It would advance knowledge if more studies on topics related to limited English proficiency among Dominican and Haitian students pursuing postsecondary education in the United States were conducted. This qualitative study targeted Dominican and Haitian ESL students attending community college, but further qualitative and quantitative studies would facilitate a better understanding of the experiences of that student population in the American educational system more broadly. Researching the experiences of Dominican and Haitian students pursuing a 4-year or graduate degree would be a suitable furtherance of this study.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Affecting the Successful College Completion of Dominican and Haitian English as a Second Language (ESL) Students in the United States

Participants over the age of 18

I agree to participate in a study entitled “Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Affecting the Successful College Completion of Dominican and Haitian English as a Second Language (ESL) Students in the United States,” which is being conducted by Professor Rony Romain of the Humanities Department, Essex County College.

The purpose of this study was to explore different issues such as: Financial awareness, economic, cultural, and social barriers that affect ESL Dominican and Haitian students’ academic success in the United States’ educational system. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from previous studies and will be used in a doctoral dissertation project.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Essex County College, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study, I may contact Professor Rony Romain at (908) 574– 9527

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)

(Date)