

**Université de Montréal**

**Parcours postsecondaires chez les immigrants d'origine haïtienne de deuxième  
génération : une étude de cas dans les cégeps montréalais**

**Postsecondary Pathways Among Second-Generation Immigrants of Haitian Origin:  
A Montreal CEGEP Case Study**

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Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des sciences de l'éducation en vue de l'obtention du grade  
de maître ès arts (M.A.) en administration et fondements de l'éducation  
option fondements de l'éducation

Juin, 2016

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## Abstract

While immigrant youth generally fare well in the postsecondary education market, certain subgroups of this population encounter significant challenges when it comes to completing postsecondary studies (Abada, Hou & Ram, 2009). Immigrants from the Caribbean, along with their peers from Sub-Saharan Africa as well as South and Central America, demonstrate the lowest postsecondary graduation rates when compared to the Canadian national average (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011). Haitian immigrants, who represent 90% of the Caribbean population of Quebec, encounter more obstacles than others pertaining to social integration and academic success (Mc Andrew et al., 2008). The aim of this qualitative study is to develop a better understanding of the educational pathways experienced by second-generation, Haitian immigrants by exploring which dimensions delineate them, spanning from primary school to postsecondary education. A framework combining the *educational and learning pathways* concept (Doray, 2011) and the *school and family relational configuration* (Tirtiaux, 2015), allowed for the examination of the non-traditional paths that can characterize Caribbean immigrants' educational experiences, as well as the dynamics between the students, their parents, and the dimensions involved in the construction of their educational pathways. Using the life-story method, 11 second-generation Haitian students, at the CEGEP level in Montreal were interviewed. The results of the analysis reveal an assortment of pathways whereby many are characterized by various sources of constraint, strong initial parental involvement which decreases as the youth progress to postsecondary studies, negative experiences with academic advisors during the transition to postsecondary studies, and challenging integration experiences within the postsecondary institution.

**Key words:** postsecondary pathways, postsecondary education, immigrant students, Haitian community, Black visible minorities, minority education

## Résumé

Les élèves issus de l'immigration réussissent généralement bien au postsecondaire. Toutefois, des recherches récentes font état de différences préoccupantes selon les groupes lorsqu'il s'agit de la diplomation postsecondaire (Abada, Hou et Ram, 2009). Les immigrants provenant des Antilles, de l'Afrique subsaharienne et de l'Amérique centrale et du sud démontrent des taux de diplomation inférieurs comparativement à la moyenne nationale (Kamanzi et Murdoch, 2011). Au Québec, les immigrants haïtiens, représentant 90% de la communauté Antillaise sont confrontés à plusieurs obstacles relatifs à l'intégration sociale et à la réussite scolaire (Mc Andrew *et al.*, 2008). Cette étude qualitative vise à développer une meilleure compréhension des parcours vécus par les jeunes immigrants d'origine haïtienne de deuxième génération, en explorant les dimensions caractérisant leurs parcours scolaires de l'école primaire jusqu'aux études postsecondaires. À l'aide d'un cadre combinant le concept de *parcours éducatifs et scolaires* (Doray, 2011) et la *configuration relationnelle éducative familiale* (Tirtiaux, 2015), les parcours atypiques pouvant caractériser les expériences éducatives des immigrants antillais, ainsi que la dynamique entre les élèves, leurs parents et les dimensions impliquées dans la construction de leurs parcours éducatifs ont été examinés. Quelque 11 cégépiens haïtiens à Montréal ont été interrogés à l'aide de la méthode des récits de vie. Les résultats de l'analyse qualitative révèlent une variété de parcours de sorte que plusieurs sont caractérisés par diverses formes de contraintes, un encadrement parental fort, qui diminue à mesure que les jeunes progressent aux études postsecondaires, des expériences négatives avec les conseillers d'orientation au cours de la transition vers les études postsecondaires, ainsi que des expériences d'intégration difficiles au sein de l'établissement postsecondaire.

**Mots clés:** parcours postsecondaires, études postsecondaires, élèves issus de l'immigration, communauté haïtienne, minorités visibles « Noirs », éducation et minorités

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## List of Symbols and Abbreviations

CEGEP	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (College of general and professional instruction)
CPER	Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche (Multi-faculty research ethics committee)
DEC	Diplôme d'étude collégiale (College studies diploma)
DEP	Diplôme d'étude professionnelle (Vocational studies diploma)
HS	High school
MELS	Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport)
MIDI	Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion (Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion)
PSE	Postsecondary education
SES	Socioeconomic status
VM	Visible minority
YITS	Youth in transition survey

*To my grandparents Eileen Collins, Greta Upshaw and Ilsley Upshaw, and my entire  
family who raised me as village*

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the result of the alignment of many divine circumstances, which flourished beyond anything I could have ever visualized. For this I would like to thank my creator, and acknowledge my ancestors. Among these circumstances lies my connection with a remarkable professor, and my now research director, Marie-Odile Magnan. You graciously accepted to take me under your wing and I feel like I have been soaring ever since. Among the many contributions you have made to my pathway, the biggest gift you have provided me is the opportunity to inspire others, as you have inspired me. I am forever grateful and extremely proud to be part of your team.

I would like to acknowledge Garth Service, who has always had unwavering confidence in my potential. Our many reasoning sessions have added color and vibrancy to my development as a researcher. As well, to my mentor John Kobel, your impact on my pathway is deeper than you know.

To my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and to my many extended family members, friends, and colleagues who have supported and encouraged me in various ways, whether long term or momentary, consistent or sporadic, concrete or abstract, I thank you for your role in this incredible journey. In particular I would like to acknowledge Catherine Lemieux, Tracy Clarkson, Sabrina Jafralie, and Julie Larochelle-Audet. I would also like to give special mention to my *sisters* Tagan, T'keya, Tihesha, Jessica, Tina, Cindy, and Cherion. To my auntie Cherri whom I can count on for *any* and *everything*, this entire journey could not have been possible without you, and my gratitude is infinite.

Lastly but certainly not least, I would like to thank my daughter Taeyanne Collins. Your patience, understanding and support throughout this process have been comparable to none. My love, pride, and joy of you are interwoven through the countless hours reflected in this work. It is my hope that you find the same inspiration in it, as I have found in you.

## Introduction

Postsecondary Education (PSE) is well documented as being considerably beneficial to individuals and to society as a whole. Individuals who pursue PSE have greater chances of success in the labor market and enjoy better economic security as well as better health (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007), while society advances in achieving its national equity, and global economic goals (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2011). As such, PSE participation is a preoccupation for government bodies internationally<sup>1</sup>. In Canada, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments have undertaken extensive initiatives to gain a better understanding of PSE access, attainment, and non-completion.

Although PSE access continues to widen in Canada (Kamanzi et al., 2009), not everyone who pursues PSE perseveres (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). Some individuals begin with high PSE aspirations but may encounter barriers that affect the completion of PSE during their educational journey. For example, while immigrant groups generally fare well in the PSE market (Fulgini & Witkow, 2004) certain subgroups of this population are vulnerable to failing to complete PSE, namely Black visible minorities (VMs) (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011).

Black VMs are among the few immigrant groups who are underrepresented in PSE completion (Thiessen, 2009) and who do not exceed the educational levels of their parents (Abada et al., 2009). In Quebec, immigrants of Haitian descent represent the largest immigrant subgroup as well as the largest group of Black VMs. The educational portrait of this group raises concerns as it encounters significant academic and social challenges beginning from primary school, which often persist or worsen over the course of their academic paths (Mc Andrew & Ledent, 2008). Similarly, those who access PSE have exhibited the highest non-completion rates, when compared to the national average (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011). Further, are the types of avenues these groups use to

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<sup>1</sup> In 2002, the European Union endorsed common education and training goals, to address the increasing demands of the knowledge based global economy (Ma & Frempong, 2008), while the U.S. government set the objective of regaining their status as having the highest proportion of PSE graduates in the world by 2020 (United States Government, n.d.).

access and persevere through PSE. The pattern of young people moving in a linear fashion toward PSE and adulthood may describe White middle-class families more than others (Cone, Burxton, Lee & Mahotière, 2014). As such, immigrants and VMs may encounter circumstances evoking interruptions and alterations to their academic journeys throughout their life course.

The aim of this study is to develop a better understanding of the educational pathways experienced by young, second-generation, Haitian immigrants by exploring which aspects delineate them, spanning from primary to PSE. The present dissertation is organized in seven chapters, beginning with a presentation of the social significance of the study. Thus, this section broadly highlights the general PSE portrait in Canada and Quebec, with a specific focus on the populations that are at risk of not completing PSE. Further, the situation of these vulnerable groups is contextualized, followed by a discussion of the pertinence of the research as it relates to individuals and society. The second section consists of a review of the literature addressing the factors that affect PSE attainment, perseverance and attrition, and the parallel effects of life transitions and pathways in PSE, while simultaneously highlighting how these factors and transitions specifically affect Black VMs and Haitian youth. Chapter three presents the conceptual framework that guides the study, by pointedly adopting a hybrid framework consisting of Doray's (2011) *pathway* concept in order to account for the various dimensions that are connected to the construction of PSE pathways of Haitian youth, as well as Tirtiaux's (2015) *school and family configuration*, accounting for the dynamics between students and parents during their academic and professional pathway construction. This chapter ends with the specific objectives of the research. The fourth chapter explains the qualitative methodological approach undertaken in conjunction with the research objectives, which involves a tri-leveled analysis of the results. The results of the analysis are presented in the two succeeding chapters, highlighting the collective representations and the pathway profiles among the participants respectively. The seventh and final chapter discusses the interconnections among the findings and the literature review, the associated implications for individuals, the research field and policy, as well as the limitations of the study.

## Chapter 1

### Social Significance of the Study

Academic success is at the forefront of major concerns and priorities in the province of Quebec. Poor academic achievement among specific groups of students and high dropout rates have triggered a major campaign by the province's Education Ministry to improve success rates, specifically by setting the goal of raising high school (HS) graduation rates from 69% to 80% by the year 2020 (MELS, 2009a). This is of particular importance since positive academic and social experiences at the secondary level have proven to be directly linked to continued PSE participation (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). In fact, Canadian studies have shown that success in HS could positively affect PSE participation by up to 31% (Thiessen, 2009). Furthermore, the likelihood of students persevering through and completing PSE increases, as the level of performance in HS increases (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011).

Past studies on PSE participation and perseverance mainly concentrated on financial issues such as tuition fees, financial aid and family income (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2011) or academic aspects such as performance and achievement at school (Kamanzi et al., 2009), as mentioned above. However, "access to and persistence through PSE are the results of a complex set of processes typically starting early in a person's life" (Finnie, Sweetman & Usher, 2009, p.5). From this perspective, recent studies have targeted non-traditional factors such as socio-cultural and structural aspects regarding family composition and beliefs, university aspirations and expectations, and differences among ethnicities (Thiessen, 2009).

Furthermore, Kamanzi et al. (2009) assert that, in spite of widened access to PSE over the years for Canadians, educational inequalities continue to persist. The authors underscore that these inequalities are strongly influenced by social background, and become more pronounced at the PSE level. As such, identifying specific populations that are vulnerable to not attending PSE or dropping out once in attendance, is an important step

for policy-makers in understanding PSE participation and perseverance, and in developing targeted interventions to assist these groups in increasing their human capital (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007) in order to overcome barriers that they may not have the skills to conquer or perhaps, recognize.

### **1.1 Immigrant Postsecondary Participation and Vulnerable Subgroups**

Some groups who have proven to be markedly vulnerable to non-participation or dropping out of PSE include, among others, those from low-income families, from families with no history of attending PSE, those of Aboriginal ancestry, as well as certain first, and second-generation immigrants (Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2011). Immigrant groups are an important at-risk population given that Canada places the permanent settlement of immigrants at the heart of its demographic, economical and social development, as delineated in the significant increase and diversification of immigrant influx over the past 30 years (Chamberland & Mc Andrew, 2010; Mc Andrew, Garnett, Ledent, Ungerleider, 2008). In fact, in 2010, immigration accounted for 71% of the total population growth, while only 29% was accounted for through the natural birth rate (Statistics Canada, 2010). Furthermore, Canada is widely dependent on immigration in order to globally compete economically and respond to the increasing needs in the labor force (Finnie & Mueller, 2009; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007).

Moreover, Shaienks & Gluszynski (2007), highlight that the most significant determiner of success in the labor market, is an individual's level of schooling, especially participation in PSE. Yet, it is well documented that immigrants, chiefly those belonging to certain VM groups, face significant social integration challenges in terms of equal access to jobs, equitable salaries, dealing with racism and discrimination as well as problems at school (Lafortune, 2012; Potvin, 2008). As a key component of future competitiveness and development, successful integration of immigrant groups, especially their educational success, is of critical concern at both provincial and national levels of government.

In spite of certain economic or social challenges, the PSE outlook for most immigrants is not bleak. Studies have demonstrated that immigrant students not only perform better than their Canadian-born counterparts but also have significantly higher aspirations towards PSE overall (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011; Krahn & Taylor, 2005). The authors add that these aspirations tend to become fulfilled in most cases. However, the success rates are not consistent among immigrants when ethnicities are considered. For example, those from East and South-East Asia have dropout rates considerably below the national average, while those from the Caribbean have dropout rates well above the average (Abada, et al., 2009; Thiessen, 2009). As such, Black VMs of Haitian backgrounds, would thus qualify as a vulnerable population to PSE non-completion.

### **1.1.1 Black Visible Minorities and Haitian Communities**

Statistics Canada (2009) defines VMs as people who are non-Caucasian in race or non-White in color and who are not Aboriginal. Sub groups of VMs include Chinese, Latin-Americans, Blacks and Arabs to name a few. In Quebec, VMs represent approximately 11% of the total population among which Blacks comprise the largest subgroup. In fact, the Haitian immigrant population was reported at approximately 119 185 in Quebec in 2011, representing 2.7% of the total population in Quebec (MIDI, 2014a).

In comparison to the total national and provincial population, Haitian immigrants are part of a group that tends to be overall younger in age and their aspirations towards PSE tend to be higher than their Canadian-born counterparts (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011). In spite of these relative demographic advantages, Haitian immigrants have proven to encounter more obstacles pertaining to integration than other groups. For example, in Quebec, their unemployment rate is two times higher than other immigrants, and their salaries are 27% inferior to the general population, which fall among not only the lowest in the province, but also in the country (Labelle, Field & Icart, 2007). In addition, Haitians tend to experience more social challenges related to access to housing, relationships with police, and academic success (Potvin, 2008). Furthermore, the positive effects of their



perseverance and determination, specifically related to education, do not seem to manifest as they do among other groups, as they have the lowest PSE completion rates as Black VMs (Abada, et al., 2009; Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011).

## **1.2 Post-Secondary Completion among Black Visible Minorities**

As mentioned above, the high aspirations of Black VMs, especially those from the Caribbean, do not always lead to successful completion of postsecondary studies. This tendency is well illustrated through a study conducted by Kamanzi & Murdoch (2011) on PSE participation of young Canadians across ethnicities. These data were obtained from the Youth in Transitions Survey (YITS) jointly conducted by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The researchers investigated the high aspirations toward university studies of immigrants, and to what extent these aspirations would lead to academic success, by comparing responses from participants, including Whites who were Canadian-born, White European immigrants, and VMs from South-East Asia as well as Black VMs from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean<sup>2</sup>. Results confirmed the high aspirations of Black VMs, where 55% attended university, a figure that is comparable to that of European immigrants, and which is higher than that of Canadian-born students.

In contrast, while the results reinforce the high aspirations of Black VMs, where they represent the highest percentage (46%) among all groups to be in university attendance without having graduated, differences between ethnic groups, which support the notion that Black VMs encounter more educational impediments than others, were also revealed. For example, they have the lowest graduation rate of 37% compared to the 48% average, as well as the highest dropout rate of 16% compared to the 13% average, despite their postsecondary ambition.

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<sup>2</sup> South and Central Americans were also included in the Black VM group due to data limitations.

In addition, the results of a Canadian national study conducted by Abada et al. (2009), reveal that Black VMs demonstrate the lowest university completion rates and tend to enroll in vocational and occupational programs. Furthermore, these authors highlight that when accounting for parental education as a strong predictor of university completion, Black VMs are among one of the few groups that do not exceed the education levels of their parents. These factors, coupled with the above results from Kamanzi & Murdoch's (2011) study, along with the fact that authors such as Mc Andrew et al. (2008), hypothesize that ethnicity is a factor that partially influences academic success (at the HS level, and consequently PSE), would make it worthy to explore the educational pathways among Haitian youth, given that they comprise nearly half of the Black VM population in Quebec (MIDI, 2014b).

### **1.3 Scientific and Social Relevance of the Research**

This study seeks to develop a better understanding of the construction of educational pathways of Haitian immigrants in Montreal. Thus far, very few qualitative studies have focused on the educational attainment and PSE profiles of specific minority groups (Thiessen, 2009). Similarly, little qualitative research exists about the transitions through PSE among immigrant and VM youth, and the atypical PSE pathways they may undertake. Therefore, this exploratory study will contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge regarding the construction of PSE pathways among a specific VM group: Haitian youth attending CEGEP<sup>3</sup> in Montreal. In the sub-sections that follow, the relevance of this study is fortified by highlighting the social relevance of PSE completion, and the significance of PSE non-completion on individuals as well as on society as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> An acronym for *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*, the equivalent of a technical and pre-university college, unique to the province of Quebec.

### **1.3.1 Social Relevance of Postsecondary Education Completion**

As previously mentioned, the collective benefits of PSE completion are well documented at many different levels (Ma & Frempong, 2008; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). For example, predictions made by Emploi-Quebec (2011), regarding future employment outlooks, anticipate that 40% of all available jobs within the next five years will require a university degree. It is also forecasted that this trend will continue to increase overtime. As such, successful completion of PSE could provide greater access to jobs and higher salaries for immigrants and VM groups (in spite of experiences of racism and discrimination, that sometimes lead to deskilling), thus allowing them to positively contribute to Quebec's thrift in the global economy. This concept also falls in alignment with current immigration policies in Quebec and Canada, which tend to favor those applicants with higher levels of education (Finnie & Mueller, 2009).

### **1.3.2 Significance of Postsecondary Education Non-Completion on Individuals**

Adversely, there are a number of negative socio-economic effects that could stem from the failure of Black VMs in completing PSE. Firstly, PSE non-completion inevitably represents a wasted investment in terms of personal resources, time and money (Larsen, Sommersel & Larsen, 2013) for individuals and their families. Furthermore, considering the high expectations that immigrants hold for their children (Thiessen, 2009), family conflict could arise, given that immigrant youth have demonstrated an acute awareness of the sacrifices made for them by their parents, especially pertaining to their own future well-being (Taylor & Krahn, 2013). Furthermore, the institutional penalties such as receiving failing grades for incomplete courses not only come at a financial cost, but also make the possibility of reversing the dropout in the future, harder to accomplish.

Moreover, dropping out of PSE has been associated to negative self-image and emotions of personal inadequacy and exclusion (Larsen et al., 2013), as well as limits in career options, and lower earning potential (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). This could lead to

Black VMs acquiring, at best, jobs in the most disadvantaged work sectors such as factories, lower ranking medical services, retail sales, transport, and restaurant industries, all of which currently include high concentrations of Black VMs, especially those of Haitian origin (Lafortune, 2012).

### **1.3.3 Significance of Postsecondary Education Non-Completion on Society**

The negative consequences of PSE non-completion come not only at the expense of the individual, but also for society as a whole. As the labor market becomes more and more inclined to PSE qualifications, the supply of university graduates inevitably affects society's ability to compete economically on a global level. Therefore, in addition to contributing to a national loss of return on a major investment, PSE dropouts would also play a role in weakening national productivity, economic growth and civil engagement (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). Furthermore, considering the projected increase in demand for university graduates (Emploi-Quebec, 2011), PSE dropouts could become more susceptible to unemployment and social assistance, both which come at a colossal financial cost to society.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

This opening chapter sets the stage for the inquiry by underscoring the joint benefits of PSE and immigration to the global economy. Further, a favorable portrait was presented for immigrants overall, in terms of PSE aspirations, access, performance and completion. However, inequalities became apparent when ethnicity and/or country of origin were considered. As such, immigrants from the Caribbean have been identified as an important subgroup, vulnerable to PSE non-completion. Given the critical provincial and national HS dropout rates; their relationship to PSE participation; and the impact of PSE abandonment on individuals and society, the next section introduces a survey of the main determiners of PSE completion and abandonment, in juxtaposition with the portraits of

Black VMs and Haitian immigrants in PSE, stemming from provincial, national and international studies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The present chapter consists of a comprehensive review of the literature from studies carried out in Europe, the U.S., and Canada, of the factors affecting immigrant PSE attainment, with special attention to how Black VMs and Haitian immigrants are represented in consideration of these factors. As such, the following themes are elaborated in the sections that ensue: key predictors of PSE attainment, perseverance and attrition, and immigrant life transitions and pathways.

#### **2.1 Significant Predictors of Postsecondary Attainment Among Immigrant Youth**

In Canada, PSE includes programs at universities, colleges, technical schools (Ma & Frempong, 2008), and CEGEPs - the general or vocational, college equivalent in Quebec. PSE attainment refers to the number of years of schooling an individual completes and often encompasses categories such as *completed some level of schooling, completed college, completed a graduate degree*, etc. (Nicolas, DeSilva & Rabenstein, 2009). North American studies have shown that the route to PSE attainment is highly contrasted across ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status (SES) (Abada et al., 2009). Furthermore, in addition to individual and contextual aspects such as student aspirations (Krahn & Taylor, 2005), and parental expectations<sup>4</sup> (Thiessen, 2009), PSE attainment for immigrants is largely affected by parental human, cultural and social capital (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Killbride 2000; McAndrew et al., 2008). Given their weight in empirical research pertaining to PSE attainment, the capital concepts are elaborated in the following section.

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<sup>4</sup> As well as traditionally examined factors such as academic achievement and financial barriers (Finnie, et al., 2011), referred to in Chapter 1.

### 2.1.1 Human, Cultural and Social Capital

The constituents of human, cultural and social capital vary between authors and involve much overlap. In a very broad sense, human capital refers to the skills and knowledge individuals possess that contribute to their economic productivity and can encompass dimensions such as skills, schooling, and access to resources (Becker, 1964). The cultural capital concept stems from social and cultural reproduction theories, which postulate that educational institutions legitimize social inequalities by giving an illusion of meritocracy (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, cultural capital is a collection of cultural traits that enable educational success, that are transmitted through family and class socialization known as *habitus*. Therefore, having inherited the cultural traits valued and adapted by educational institutions, children from privileged class families possess an advantage over those from a disadvantaged class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Social capital appears to complement the two aforementioned types of capital. It refers to the social relationships, networks, and the support systems available to students, which often facilitate information and opportunity access (Coleman, 1990).

Abada & Tenkoreng (2009) highlight parental SES, occupation, and language proficiency as important units of human capital, in their study of the role of human and social capital in the family, pertaining to the pursuit of PSE among immigrant youth. Similarly, ethnicity is cultural capital that can affect academic performance and success (McAndrew et al., 2008). Further, parental PSE acts as another component since highly educated parents tend to provide their children with the cultural capital that is socially valued by academic institutions (Childs, Finnie & Mueller, 2012). These authors found a significant positive correlation between higher cultural capital endowments and PSE access in their study among Canadian youth. Furthermore, a rich cultural and social capital has proven to counteract some disadvantages that may be faced by many immigrant families of low SES (Killbride, 2000). In fact, immigrants with a high cultural and social capital background coupled with low SES background consistently demonstrate higher performance and PSE attainment than do non-immigrants (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; McAndrew et al, 2008). Nevertheless, SES remains an important component of human

capital in relationship to PSE attainment, especially when in interaction with other variables (Robson, Brown & Anisef, 2015), and among Black visible minorities (Cone et al., 2014). As such, the following sections elaborate parental education and SES as two major components of cultural and human capital respectively, which serve as key predictors of PSE attainment among immigrant youth (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009).

### **2.1.1.1 Parental Education**

As mentioned above, parental education is deemed one of the strongest predictors of academic outcomes (Sweet, Anisef, Brown, Walters & Phythian, 2010), aspirations (Fulgini & Witkow, 2004) and PSE attainment (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007). In these authors' longitudinal study among Canadian youth between the ages of 18-20, who participated in the national YITS, results revealed that the proportion of immigrant youth who participated in PSE increased as the level of parental education increased. In fact, the PSE participation rate of students whose parents did not graduate HS was almost three times lower than those with parents who were PSE graduates (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007).

Furthermore, Baum & Flores (2011), suggest that parental education levels can be linked to PSE non-completion. In their quantitative study among American youth, they found that those with parents without PSE tended to be more successful at accessing college than they were at persevering at it. In addition, youth whose parents have lower levels of education are more likely to work while attending PSE; which is negatively related to PSE attainment outcomes such as enrolling in a four year program, persisting toward any degree, engaging in full-time studies, and being close to completion, as indicated in the researchers' study of PSE experiences among youth from immigrant families in the U.S. (Fulgini & Witkow, 2004).

However, immigrant youth tend to exceed the levels of education of their parents (Abada, et al., 2009). Results based on the Statistics Canada Ethnic Diversity Survey on group



differences in university degree attainment, revealed that most immigrant groups attain either a higher or equal percentage of university education than their parents. However, this trend was not true for two out of 15 ethnic groups, Black VMs being one of them. As such, this demonstrated downward mobility is disquieting for the Black VM population, given that they are an underrepresented group in PSE completion (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011) and that they are the only group to not have better educational pathways than their second generation immigrant counterparts (Thiessen, 2009), which inevitably has an impact on SES.

### **2.1.1.2 Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

SES is noted as a reliable factor in explaining the educational outcomes of young people in general (Finnie, Lascelles, & Sweetman, 2005; Rothon, Heath & Lessard-Phillips, 2009). Inferior academic achievement and motivation (Thiessen, 2009), dropping out of HS, and failure to pursue or complete PSE (Marks, 2005) have all been linked to low familial SES.

In terms of PSE attainment, youth from low SES backgrounds are less likely to attend university and more likely to enroll in college and vocational programs (Sweet et al., 2010). As such, Canadian studies show that slightly more than half of youth from families in the top quartile of the income distribution attend university by age 19, in contrast to 31% of those from families within the bottom quartile (Frenette, 2007). Furthermore, immigrants in the U.S. who represent the bottom 40% of the income distribution, are more likely to attend PSE on a part-time basis, be older in age, and support dependents (Baum & Flores, 2011).

However, immigrants generally tend to demonstrate resilience to such challenges mentioned above, which can in part be attributed to a strong family social capital as outlined by Abada & Tenkorang (2009). The authors' study among 10 908 Canadian respondents of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds revealed that close

intergenerational relations within the family and community are conducive to the pursuit of PSE among the children of immigrants. Further, those who benefit from strong relationships, social networks, and group memberships are twice as likely to attain PSE than those who do not.

Similarly, lower SES does not appear to affect the PSE attainment of immigrants in Canada in the same manner it affects non-immigrants. Generally, immigrants in Canada (including Quebec) demonstrate higher PSE attainment compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, in spite of their SES, which can be in part attributed to the high educational capital of their parents and their correspondingly high aspirations for their children. This can mainly be explained by the existing immigration selection process in Canada, which targets immigrants with a high educational capital.

Nevertheless, while the negative effects of SES may be neutralized through parental human, social, and cultural capital for many immigrant groups, those from certain Black communities do not appear to reap these benefits. The negative effects of SES are expressly salient for immigrants of Haitian origin specifically. According to Statistics Canada (2007), 47% of Haitian children under the age of 15 live in poverty. In Quebec, Black VM salaries are the lowest in Canada (Labelle et al., 2007) and 39 % of Haitians earn a salary inferior to \$20 000 per year in contrast with 16% of the rest of the population. The portrait is similar in the U.S. where Black VMs represent 14.2% of the American population, yet account for 44% of low-income families (Milan & Tran, 2004). Moreover, Cone et al. (2014), found SES to be linked to the educational attainment of Haitian youth and thus, emphasize the importance of regularly considering SES when studying Black VMs in the U. S., due to its direct and indirect effect on their educational experience. Abada et al. (2009), affirm that the inferior SES of parental generations has a long lasting impact on Black youth's educational pathways. Furthermore, Canadian, American and British studies show more Black VMs complete college or vocational programs in contrast to the total population (Rothon, et al., 2009) and fewer (28%) to acquire university degrees (Sweet et al., 2010).

## **2.2 Postsecondary Perseverance and Attrition**

PSE participants eventually become graduates or non-graduates. Ma & Frempong (2008) qualify PSE graduates as those who graduate from a PSE institution, including continuers (to higher levels) and non-continuers. Conversely, PSE non-graduates include continuers and dropouts; continuers are students who attend PSE but have not yet graduated, and dropouts are those who attend PSE but have never graduated from it, and are no longer pursuing it.

PSE non-completion has been, and continues to be widely analyzed by researchers, in association with Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993). Tinto postulates that students' decision to discontinue PSE is determined by the interplay between their commitment and individual goals in PSE, and their commitment to the institution. In other words, PSE perseverance and attrition can be viewed as outcomes of an individual's interactional experience within an institution. Integration is a key concept of the model, and is described as a process in which students actively engage within the PSE community both academically and socially.

### **2.2.1 Academic Integration**

According to Tinto (1993), academic integration results from sharing common information, perspectives, and values with other members of the community. Academic integration can be hindered by factors such as previous school experience and academic adjustment, as well as attitude toward PSE (Ma & Frempong, 2008). The authors affirm that not being able to do well in academic coursework during the first year of PSE is a major reason for Canadian youth to dropout. Similarly, American studies show that between 30-40% of first year PSE students begin unprepared for college-level reading and writing (Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003). Furthermore, Kamanzi & Murdoch (2011) add that dropouts usually decide to discontinue within the first year. These students not only

report struggling with deadlines, and adopting effective study methods, but also spend less time on average studying than continuers.

While some immigrants benefit from a strong educational capital which facilitates their academic integration process, others begin their PSE journey at a disadvantage, having inadequate information about college opportunities and how to access them, cultural differences, citizenship issues, language barriers, and experiencing racism and discrimination (Baum & Flores, 2011; Sweet et al., 2010). Furthermore, in Canada, those who attend community colleges as opposed to university, often have varying levels of academic preparation and lack of familiarity with the PSE system<sup>5</sup> (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013).

Moreover, Ma & Frempong (2008), posit failure to pursue university studies specifically, as opposed to technical or trade school, as a major reason why Canadian youth drop out of PSE. In fact, those who set their PSE goal as trade school were 12.5 times more likely to drop out of PSE than those who set university as their PSE goal. This, compounded with the finding that those who attend the most selective institutions are significantly more likely to complete a degree (Baum & Flores, 2011), is particularly relevant as it relates to Black VMs, given their tendency to enroll in proletarian, vocational institutions over university, and the difficulties they experience in terms of PSE completion.

According to Boudon (1974), social class and low cultural capital are likely to explain the above-mentioned trends pertaining to educational attainment. More specifically, Boudon postulates that individuals act rationally in order to achieve their goals in light of their beliefs about a situation. Therefore, families evaluate the benefits, costs, and risks in their decisions about PSE, and choose the most useful combination of all three. A benefit such as PSE completion is evaluated by the distance between initial social position and the level of education required to obtain another. Families consider costs and risks associated with the possible PSE investment in terms of time and financial loss, ruptures with family cultural environment, risk of failure, etc. If the advantages outweigh the

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<sup>5</sup> This is especially true for first generation immigrants

costs, the likelihood of PSE completion increases. Moreover, decisions vary according to social origin. While privileged families rarely choose programs inferior to the university level, for underprivileged families, shorter duration vocational programs may appear more attractive in terms of benefits and required sacrifices. Therefore, the decision to pursue technical programs in PSE, combined with unfamiliarity with the PSE system, and the absence of parental support in the navigational process, could possibly play a role in the social integration in PSE of Black VMs.

### **2.2.2 Social Integration**

Social integration occurs when students develop strong and effective social ties as a result of daily interactions, and is considered pivotal to students' ability to persevere to graduation (Tinto, 1993). Integration can be facilitated via avenues such as participation in orientation programs, volunteering on campus (Ma & Frempong, 2008), making contact with positive role models and mentors (Swail et al., 2003), and fostering relationships with faculty, staff, peers, friends, and family (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006). Thus, inadequate social networks often discourage integration, ultimately resulting in lack of perseverance (Ma & Frempong, 2008).

Further, qualitative studies reveal that social networks provide an important source of support to immigrants in PSE (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). In contrast, the lack thereof, results in feelings of loneliness, sadness and isolation, and has been identified as a major predictor of PSE non-completion as stated above. Some obstacles encountered by immigrants due to a lack of strong social networks include structural challenges regarding credit transfers, unresponsive university staff, and lack of services or aid. Participants expressed feelings of discouragement, frustration and invalidation (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). Furthermore, although the availability of organizations and a critical mass of other VMs help reduce feelings of isolation and alienation (Swail, et al., 2003), over reliance on immigrant peers may result in students being misinformed or experiencing integration challenges.

Moreover, Tinto (1993) suggests that students must go through a separation stage where they must leave their former communities and part from past habits and patterns of association before they reach an incorporation stage as competent members of a PSE institution. Kenny & Stryker (1996) found that social adjustment to college for ethnically diverse students was primarily a function of their family support networks, which could act as a facilitator as well as a hindrance to integration (Ma & Frempong, 2008). Given that Black VMs demonstrate the strongest sense of attachment to their ethnicity (Abada, et al., 2009), it would be reasonable to hypothesize that their success in Tinto's separation stage could be compromised.

Finally, based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, Swail, et al. (2003) highlight the underrepresentation of Black VMs among faculty members at colleges and universities in the U.S., coupled with the fact that Black VM student contact with positive role models in PSE is even more significant than it is for non-VMs. As such, the authors note the lack of relatable mentors and diversity in the student population, coupled with stress related to direct or indirect racism and discrimination as possibly having an effect on the nature and quality of Black VM students' interactions within the PSE institution, as well as their overall social experience, which could ultimately have some form of impact on their life transitions and pathways.

### **2.3 Transitions and Pathways**

From a life course perspective, life transitions are defined as changes in roles and statuses that represent a distinct departure from prior ones, and include experiences such as starting school, entering puberty, leaving school etc. (Hutchison, 2010). These transitions are embedded in trajectories, which involve long-term patterns of stability and change, and multiple transitions. The concepts of transitions and pathways are relevant to educational journeys of Black VMs as they encompass key transitions such as migration and acculturation to host societies, and educational systems during the life course.

### 2.3.1 Transition to Host Society

Immigrants and their children transition from their home countries for various reasons such as career opportunities, political or economic instability, concerns about security, reuniting with family members etc. (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). Hutchison (2010) highlights the importance of examining these resettlement experiences, which usually involve a grievous acculturation process to new physical and social environments. Qualitative studies in Canada and the U.S. reveal that immigrant families often feel shock and disappointment at the realization that their expectations of the host society as open and accepting, and significantly better than their countries of origin, are not true (Cone et al., 2014; Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). Many immigrant parents face unanticipated markers and challenges such as deskilling, downgrade in social status, difficult linguistic adaptation, educational lag, and feelings of marginalization and injustice (Potvin & Leclercq, 2011).

Further, Potvin & Leclercq's (2011) exploratory study, aimed at identifying significant factors and key moments in the social, migratory and academic pathways among 50 first and second-generation immigrant youth between the ages of 16 and 24 in Quebec, revealed painful psychological experiences during the separation and reunion processes through the discourses of the participants; including separation from extended family members in the country of origin and inability to maintain those relationships after the migratory process, family conflicts resulting from shifts in family roles due to extended separation periods or reconstitution of families, and a general sense of betrayal and disappointment regarding an untrue idealistic portrait of the host country delivered by parents prior to the migratory experience.

Moreover, from a quantitative angle, Abada, Hou & Ram's (2009) study of group differences in attaining university degrees among fifteen second-generation VM and ethnic groups<sup>6</sup> revealed that 50% of VM youth have felt out of place due to ethnicity, culture, skin color, language, accent, and religion. The researchers found that feelings of

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<sup>6</sup>All groups included a sample size of approximately 50 participants.

exclusion during childhood because of ethnicity were associated with PSE attainment. In addition, further studies indicate that childhood events sometimes shape people's lives 40-50 years later (Hutchison, 2010), underscoring the importance of considering factors related to time when analyzing the educational pathways of Black VMs.

### **2.3.2 Transitions Specific to Haitian Immigrants**

The above transition outcomes appear to be magnified when it comes to Haitian immigrants. In addition to contending with shifts in cultural practices, which may lead to cultural misunderstandings and isolation (Cone et al., 2014), the social experiences of Haitian youth stem largely from racism and social determinism (Potvin, 2008). This author suggests that Haitian immigrants in Quebec, expect recognition of their social equality and their rights as citizens, but quickly become victims of discrimination and social rejection.

Cone et al. (2014) describe a similar portrait in the U.S. In their qualitative study involving 12 Haitian students in South Florida, examining how identity formation is shaped by school structures and pedagogical practices, results revealed the educational capital of Haitian students to be devalued by U.S. schools, and conversely, the American pedagogical practices to be poorly understood by Haitian parents. The authors conclude that cultural misunderstandings between home and school may lead to Haitian students being perceived as "inferior" by the dominant social group, by virtue of their ethnicity, due to larger social structures, ultimately pushing them into a low SES class, with little opportunity for educational (and economic) advancement.

While the American social and educational context differs from that of Canada, comparable tendencies can be found when considering VMs' access to employment. VMs demonstrate difficulties adopting "Canadian" cultural values that are defined by the dominant culture and esteemed in the labor market, consequently placing them at a disadvantage during the hiring process. In fact, they may be rejected by certain employers



due to cultural factors such as style of dress, communication style, accent, etc. (Kamanzi, 2012).

### **2.3.3 Educational Transitions among Haitian Immigrants**

Educational pathways intersect multiple life spheres of individuals and their families (Hutchison, 2010). As Haitian immigrants transition through the educational system, many encounter a shift in educational curricula, styles of teaching, acceptable ways of learning, grading procedures and educational policies (Nicolas, et al., 2011; Potvin & Leclercq, 2011). At HS levels in both Canada and the U.S., Haitian students are disproportionately channeled into low ability streams, and they are subjected to lower teacher and administrator expectations (Sweet et al., 2010; Nicolas, et al., 2011), less challenging and euro-centric curricula, and a deficit of non-White teachers (Taylor & Krahn, 2013). For example, in the U.S. White teachers represent 87% of the national teacher population (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Earl Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008) while in Canada and Quebec, the percentage of VM teachers are 5.4% and 2.7% respectively (Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli, 2007).

Furthermore, in the few studies that dissect perseverance in PSE by ethnicity or country of origin, Haitians face more hardships than most (Baum & Flores, 2011). Krahn & Taylor (2005) underscore that Black youth become more exposed to systemic racism and blocked opportunities in their pursuit of career goals, and suggest that their confidence and motivation in pursuit of PSE could be decreased consequently. However, “research has begun to recognize the power of humans to use protective factors to assist in self-righting process over the life course to fare well in the face of adversity, a process known as resilience” (Hutchison, 2010, p.32). Anisef & Kilbride (2004) also make reference to *ethnic resilience* as the ability to achieve unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress. This resilience could potentially play a role in the educational pathways of Haitian immigrants, which are often non-linear, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 2.4 Synopsis of the Literature

In sum, the ethnic resilience referred to above, has been revealed through previous studies, which have demonstrated that immigrants do not qualify as an at-risk population of not attending, or completing PSE (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004). In spite of key predictors of attainment such as parental socioeconomic and educational status (Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007), or challenges related to academic and social integration (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013), immigrants continue to fare well and persevere in the PSE market, partly due to strong individual and parental human, cultural, and social capital. However, the picture becomes muddled when specific sub-groups of immigrants are closely examined, such as Black VMs. Most studies have compared immigrant and non-immigrant PSE participation and perseverance (Finnie, et al., 2011; Shaienks & Gluszynski, 2007), which is susceptible to concealing significant variations among immigrant sub-groups (Sweet et al., 2010). Furthermore, studies that have examined the educational pathways of VMs specifically, have tended to group VMs into one large category (Blacks, Asians, Latinos...), often due to data limitations (Abada, et al., 2009; Thiessen, 2009).

Quantitative studies on Black VMs and Haitian youth have revealed that they have high PSE aspirations and tend to enroll in technical and vocational programs (Abada, et al., 2009; Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011) and lower prestige, tertiary institutions (Rothon, et al., 2009). Furthermore, they are significantly at-risk of not completing PSE (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011), contrary to the general PSE portrait of immigrants in North America. Therefore, it is worthwhile for this phenomenon to be expanded qualitatively, by examining the educational pathways of Haitian youth with a finer lens, in order to explore what dimensions play a role in their PSE pathway construction.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Given the many aspects that interact in immigrant PSE attainment, perseverance and attrition, it is necessary to draw on a number of concepts in order to understand the PSE pathway construction among second-generation Haitian youth. Therefore this chapter presents a composite conceptual framework, which guides the research methodology. Thus, a general overview of Doray's (2011) *integrated perspective of learning and educational pathways* is provided, followed by an adapted gestation of the key concepts that have accounted for individuals' educational experiences in previous studies. Each concept is discussed, culminating to the retained concepts of *pathways*, and *school and family configuration* (Tirtiaux, 2015). As such, the chapter concludes with the resulting research question and specific objectives.

#### **3.1 Overview of the Integrated Pathway Perspective**

Doray's integrated perspective on learning and educational pathways in PSE is a contemporary approach involving a synthesis of concepts stemming from different perspectives in order to account for the atypical educational pathways followed by many students in modern society. Contrary to the standard linear pathway prescribed by education systems, involving sequential progression through levels, and age-related participation (Heinz & Kruger, 2001); atypical pathways exist. These atypical pathways often involve "stopping-out" (versus dropping out) and retuning at a later time (Ma & Frempong, 2008), frequent withdrawals, or reversals such as moving from a university program to a technical one (Picard, Trottier & Doray, 2011). As such, the unanticipated variability and new phenomena encountered in recent studies related to educational pathways, revealed the necessity of a distinct and original conceptual framework encompassing the connection between institutional and human development (Heinz & Kruger, 2001), in order to analyze attainment, perseverance, attrition and pathways in a longitudinal manner.

Thus, the *integrated pathways perspective* consists of concepts emanating and overlapping from multiple approaches, mainly, the life course approach, reproduction theories and interactionist perspectives. The life course approach situates individuals as the product of their own stories and considers how historical, social, cultural and institutional dimensions relate to individuals' life roles associated to family, education and work, throughout their life courses (Hutchison, 2010). Reproduction theories recognize the structural aspects related to social origin, while interactionists consider the integration of individuals in social groups or institutions (Picard, et al., 2011). As such, the key concepts accounting for the educational experiences of individuals follow.

## **3.2 Conceptualization of the Research**

The concepts that account for the educational experiences of individuals include *academic tracks, educational and learning trajectories, school and learning careers, and learning and educational pathways*. These terms have been used interchangeably in much of the literature, as well as in everyday language. However, from a theoretical standpoint, these terms all represent distinct concepts, which should not be confounded (Doray et al., 2009) and are thus defined and distinguished in the sections that follow.

### **3.2.1 Academic Tracks**

*Academic tracks* are broadly defined as successive steps taken during an individual's progress through the school system (Sylvain et al., 1985, in Doray et al., 2009) entailing moving from one level to another, transitioning from HS to PSE, etc. This concept assumes that individuals' educational progression mirrors the organizational structure of the education system. In analysis, it accounts for the complexity of the individual's journey and differences between social groups within an educational institution. However, because it reflects the linearity of the formal education system, this concept

does not make it possible to account for non-traditional educational paths involving interruptions or alterations.

### **3.2.2 Educational and Learning Trajectories**

As mentioned above, the term *trajectory* can take on a number of meanings, depending on which approach it stems from. For Doray (2011), *educational trajectories* denote the sequence of positions occupied by an individual within an educational field. This concept has origins in social reproduction theories, implying that educational trajectories are based on social background. Thus, the school experiences of the working class will differ from those of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1979). The concept is further elaborated to *learning trajectory* (Gorard, Rees & Fevre, 1999), which is defined as an individual's participation in education and training that is anticipated by social and educational background. Whilst it is possible to consider atypical trajectories using this concept, the agency dimension of the individual could be muted in the analysis, because of the emphasis on social background in how the trajectory unfolds.

### **3.2.3 School and Learning Careers**

*School careers* subsume the academic choices individuals make, as well as their progress or non-progress through academic levels (Bourdieu, 1977). Bloomer & Hodkinson (2000) qualify *learning careers* as the development of dispositions to learning over time. From an interactionist perspective, the career is thus composed of objective situations which individuals are involved in, and the subjective meaning they ascribe to their situations (Doray et al., 2009). As such, this concept is analytically useful regarding the integration or evolution of individuals in social groups, or institutions, and has been used to explain atypical educational pathways. However, since the emphasis is on the school experience in the construction of identity and attitudes toward school, this concept may

not account for the global scope of the dimensions, such as the extracurricular experiences involved in atypical pathways, and how they interact.

### **3.2.4 Learning and Educational Pathways**

*Pathways* are broadly defined as a succession of events and positions occupied by individuals during their life course (Doray, 2011). They are rooted in socio-historical contexts and highlight the interdependence between life spheres, and the role of individuals in the authorship of their lives. Furthermore, *learning pathways* comprise educational experiences and events regardless of context, taking place over a long period of time, while *educational pathways*, a subset of *learning pathways*, are a sequence of situations and events occurring at a given time within the educational system (Doray, 2011). *Learning* and *educational pathways* effectively account for life bifurcations, which are described as configurations in which contingent events or disturbances can be the source of major shifts in individuals' trajectories (Bessin, Bidart & Grossetti, 2010).

While there is much overlap among the above concepts, there are also key points of divergence. *Pathways* and *academic tracks* both account for progression through different levels of schooling of individuals, however, *pathways* are distinguishable from formally structured, highly linear *academic tracks*, as they account for bifurcations causing atypical pathways for an increasing number of students (Taylor & Krahn, 2013). Similarly, while *trajectories* and *careers* are reliable in the analysis of the educational experiences and progression of youth, they place a large weight on social background and the role of the institution in the individual's experience, respectively. *Pathways* allow for a broader analysis placing equal consideration on historical, social, cultural and institutional dimensions related to individuals' life roles in sequences of events or situations. As such, due to the non-traditional paths that characterize immigrants' educational experiences (Cone et al., 2014; Potvin & Leclercq, 2011) which can include a wide array of circumstances such as interrupting studies for (often unanticipated) family related reasons, switching from a university program to a technical one, returning to

studies after dissatisfactory work experiences etc., the *learning and educational pathways* concept will be retained for the analysis of the educational pathways of Haitian immigrant youth.

### **3.4 Dimensions of Educational & Learning Pathways**

In this section, the four axes which describe *educational pathways* as well as how they account for the dimensions that demarcate the educational pathways of youth will be presented. The axes include: *interactions between individuals and educational institutions*, *dynamics between the objective and subjective aspects of individuals' experiences*, *interactions between school and extracurricular experience*, and *the relationship to time* (Doray, 2011; Doray et al., 2009). These axes are utilized in the analysis of the data, presented in the coming chapters pertaining to the results of the study.

#### **3.4.1 Interactions Between Individuals and Educational Institutions**

Pathways are the outcome of complex transactions that occur between students and educational institutions (Doray, et al., 2009) and thus, should not be studied as separate entities (Pallas, 2003). Institutions have the ability to promote flexibility in pathways through mechanisms such as continuing education or age delay. Conversely, they can hinder access through selective processes such as evaluations of knowledge, and aptitude rankings (Picard, et al., 2009). As such, the pathway decisions made by individuals can be linked to structural factors and their dispositions toward school. Therefore, this axis would make it possible to analyze structural factors such as the application processes, institutional policies, disciplinary measures, tracking systems, at-risk labeling, and policy changes, as well as individuals' dispositions toward school, pertaining to school performance and achievement, study habits, participation in campus life, and decisions about what levels to pursue in PSE.

Haitian youth in Quebec are described as a group which experiences significantly higher than average educational difficulties and unfavorable circumstances (Tchoryk-Pelletier, 1989 in Lafortune, 2012) including at-risk labeling, educational lag, school abandonment (Mc Andrew & Ledent, 2008), streaming into welcoming and special education classes, and/or general adult education (Potvin & Leclercq, 2011). They also appear to be subjected to racism and negative perceptions from teaching personnel and peers, more than other minority groups (Lafortune, 2012). Therefore, this axis is also useful in the analysis of the academic and social integration experiences of Haitian youth, including their adaptation to student life and their acquisition of the necessary competencies to successfully navigate through PSE, given that previous school experiences have an effect on PSE perseverance and access (Doray, 2011).

### **3.4.2 Dynamics Between the Objective and Subjective Aspects of Individuals' Experiences**

Pathways involve objective aspects consisting of predefined educational organizations, identifiable social positions, statuses and events, and subjective aspects involving students' dispositions to their school experience (Doray, 2011). The dynamics between these aspects allow for the account of several dimensions including individual thinking processes, individual agency, identity formation and the development of resilience. It can also aid in the analysis of individuals' reactions to their success or failure, to discrimination, or to how they are perceived by peers and school staff. As such, it would be possible to capture important information about how these experiences interplay and how Haitian youth react subjectively to these experiences in their PSE pathway construction.



### **3.4.3 Interactions Between School and Extracurricular Experiences**

The relationship between school and extracurricular experiences accounts for the impact of situations or events within contexts other than school, which can either, enhance or constrain pathways (Doray et al., 2009). Such situations would include a variety of life events such as health problems, pregnancy, marriage, work/study conciliation, etc. This axis would be important in guiding the analysis considering the influence of SES, access to human and social capital, migratory experiences, social relationships, global economic conditions, cultural heritage, living conditions, and family (Doray, 2011).

Further, studies conducted in Montreal of Haitian immigrants reveal an array of circumstances that could play a direct or indirect role on individual decisions to pursue and complete PSE including high unemployment rates, inferior salaries, unequal access to housing, language barriers, higher than average single-parent families, negative media images and relationships of conflict between the police and Haitian youth (Lafortune, 2012). As previously mentioned, since there are very few studies which examine the PSE pathways of specific VM groups, this axis will help shed light on how they are shaped by experiences occurring outside of school for Haitian youth.

### **3.4.4 The Relationship to Time**

Individual pathways take place at a specific time in history of a society and school establishment (Picard, et al., 2009). As such, the past, present and future time dimensions are all accounted for in the analysis. An analysis that accounts for an individual's past experiences provides a better grasp on the influence of social background and previous school experiences as well as macro-sociological influences occurring before PSE participation (Doray, 2011). Present dimensions, for example, changes in PSE programs, can contribute to pathway bifurcations. Pathways are also influenced by future dimensions through expectations, indecision, or thoughts of dropping out, thus, impacting school perseverance or abandonment (Doray et al., 2009).

The *relationship to time* property of pathways allows for a consideration of the interaction among the three other aforementioned axes (*interactions between individuals and educational institutions, dynamics between the objective and subjective aspects of individuals' experiences, interactions between school and extracurricular experience*), allowing the pathway to be positioned within different time frames over an individual's life course, while reiterating twists and turns that can occur in the educational pathway from primary school to PSE (Hutchison, 2010). Furthermore, it would be possible to analyze the familial socialization dimension within any, or all three time frames.

Family socialization is central to the analysis especially considering the positive impact parental involvement has on educational outcomes (Pong, Hoa & Gardner, 2005) and social mobility in general (Santelli, 2013) for immigrant youth. It is well documented that immigrant parents value education as a viable means for social advancement and thus provide greater support for their children in achieving educational success. However, some studies have shown discrepancies between high parental aspirations and the effectiveness of the support they are able to provide to their children (Mogu  rou & Santelli, 2012). Thus, a concept accounting for family socialization is a necessary addition to the conceptual framework.

#### **3.4.4.1 School and Family Relational Configuration**

Tirtiaux (2015) configures parents and children together in a specific forum of mutual expectations and identity transactions. His configuration integrates the notion of social class competition and struggles in PSE and thus bridges social reproduction theories in the same manner as the *integrated pathways perspective*. Further, the configuration encompasses how mutual expectations are constructed and solidified over time and history between parents and youth by considering biographical episodes (school performance, childhood life, divorce, etc.). As such, the diversity of the relationships between youth and parents is effectively accounted for through the interactions between

the parents' role in the education and future orientation of the youth, and the youth's management of parental expectations in their PSE decisions.

The conceptualization of the school and parental configurations involves two fundamental notions: parental ambitions and parental involvement. Ambitions involve the aspirations parents hold for their children, while involvement refers to the parental degree of intervention in everyday life (education, recreation, social activities, choices made by the youth, etc.). These notions interact in a way which parents exert different degrees of control over their children, whereby parents can exercise high levels of control in the educational pathways of their children at one extremity, in contrast to youth that are afforded high levels of freedom by their parents at another. As such, Tirtiaux (2015) outlines 4 distinct parenting styles exhibited by families in the PSE pathway construction process: 1) elitist, 2) companion, 3) cocoon, and 4) laissez-faire.

#### **3.4.4.1.1 The Elitist Parenting Configuration**

This configuration can mainly be characterized by higher than average parental ambitions regarding future education and profession for their children. Transmission of cultural capital begins at a young age in order to prime children to compete academically. Parents choose highly reputable schools, promote extracurricular activities to improve achievement, and foster intensive educational practices. Elitist parents demonstrate a desire to control their children's social and academic environments and tend not to accommodate their children's interests, especially if they are in contradiction to their very high ambitions.

#### **3.4.4.1.2 The Companion Parenting Configuration**

In comparison to the elitist configuration, companion parents also have strong academic and professional ambitions for their children. However, they are more open to the

interests of their children and allow more autonomy than elitist parents. They value accountability and self-governance with respect to their children's academic and professional choices. The role of these parents is therefore an active, supportive, yet distanced manager in their children's education. Thus, parents have a companion attitude in their educational practices, which can include regular monitoring of school performance and effort put forth toward studies, and interventions when deemed necessary.

#### **3.4.4.1.3 The Cocoon Parenting Configuration**

The cocoon parent exhibits a significantly higher level of parental supervision over their children, both in terms of social and educational situations. Often decisions are made for the children without regard for their desires. In contrast to the aforementioned configurations, academic and professional ambitions are rather moderate. As such, aspirations are more in line with children's academic abilities and there is little importance placed on extra-curricular activities. In terms of educational practices, cocoon parents generally choose neighborhood schools as opposed to those of prestige, since the emphasis is placed on the social well-being of the child in attempt to ensure access to a suitable social circle. The parents of this configuration are usually more concerned with future professional integration and therefore prefer less prestigious options that lead to rapid or certain professional integration in the PSE decision-making process.

#### **3.4.4.1.4 The Laissez-Faire Parenting Configuration**

The laissez-faire configuration is built on an individualistic foundation. As such youth operate their own lives and make their own decisions pertaining to their future. Parents believe that autonomy and freedom are necessary parts of development and thus, rarely intervene in the youth's choices pertaining to future studies and profession. Therefore, they do not express any particular ambitions beyond the general notion of educational

attainment, and are uninvolved in educational practices. As such, they are similar to the cocoon parents in terms of their preference for future professional integration over professional prestige.

To conclude, the *school and family configuration* is a useful tool in the analysis of the family socialization among immigrant youth which can help shed light on the dynamics between cultural capital and SES as they relate to PSE outcomes and pathways in combination with the *learning and educational pathways* concept. Figure 1 below represents the fusion of these two works.

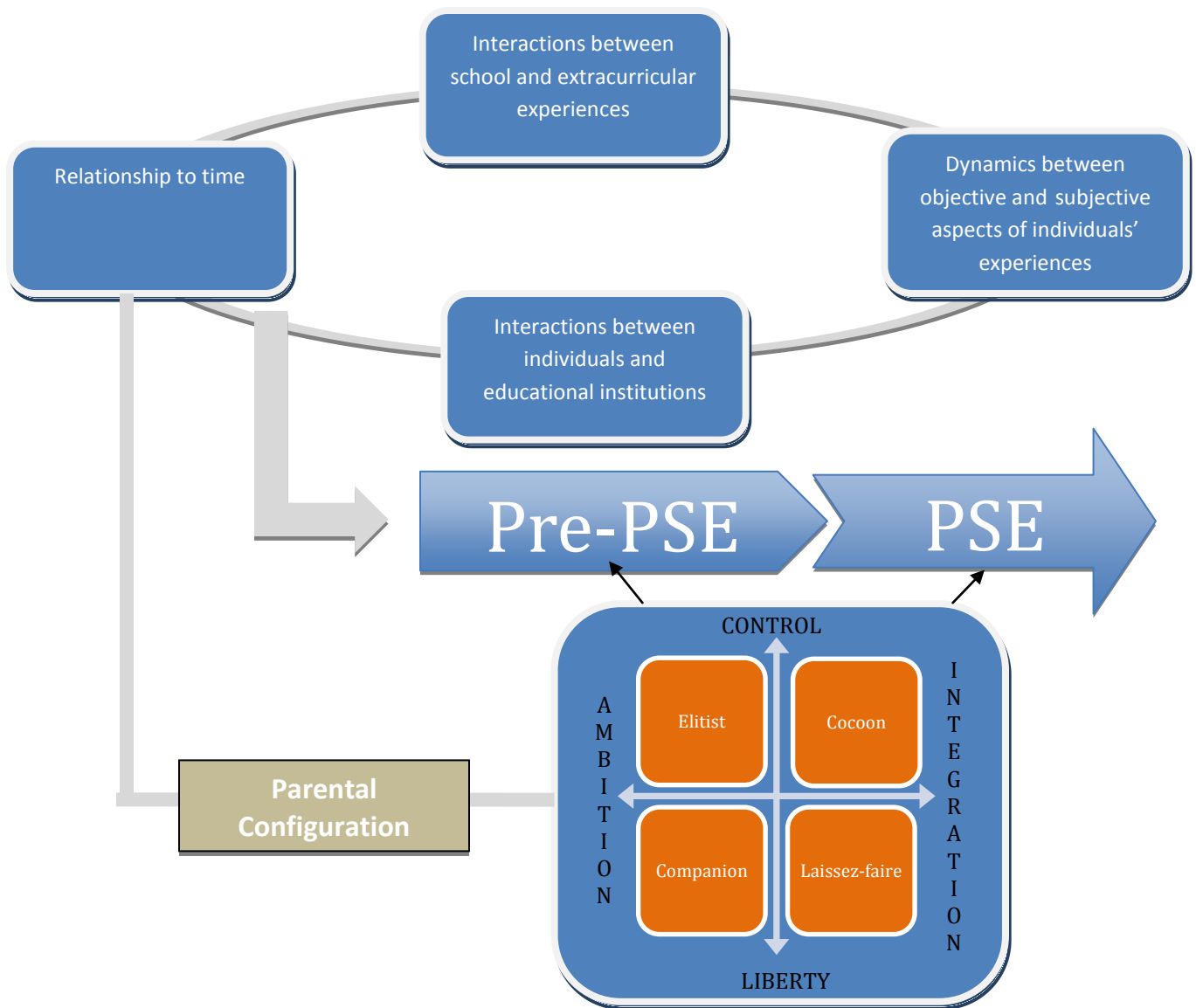


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

Thus, the present study, which examines the educational pathways of Haitian youth will contribute to the study of pathways in education by finely examining the dimensions that play a role in the construction of PSE pathways of second-generation Haitian students, and possibly display information that may not be possible to access through quantitative analysis, namely, interactions between the subjective and objective life experiences of these youth. This study is innovative since it appears to be the first qualitative study (to our knowledge) to examine the PSE pathways of Haitian youth, a group that has been unsystematically grouped with other VMs (Nicolas, et al., 2011) from this conceptual lens. As such, the research question and specific research objectives, which guide the methodology, are listed below.

### **3.6 Research Question and Specific Objectives:**

In light of the information exhibited in the literature review and the conceptual framework, the *pathway* concept effectively allows for the simultaneous analysis of atypical pathways, the time dimension and individually agency in the pathways of Haitian youth. As such, the general research question and the specific research objectives are the following:

#### **General research question:**

What aspects delineate the educational pathways of Haitian youth, spanning from primary to PSE?

#### **Specific research objectives:**

1. Describe the PSE pathways of Haitian youth.
2. Analyze the dynamics between the objective and subjective dimensions of Haitian youth's PSE pathways.
3. Analyze the interactions between Haitian youth and the CEGEP institution.

4. Analyze the interactions between the extracurricular experiences of Haitian youth and their CEGEP pathway.
5. Analyze the time dimension in the educational pathways of Haitian youth, from primary school to CEGEP.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodological Approach**

In this chapter, the methodological framework, which guides the inquiry and allows for the research objectives to be attained, is introduced. The objectives of the present study are to describe the educational pathways of second-generation Haitian youth attending CEGEP, to develop a deeper comprehension of the interplay between their life experiences, the educational institutions they encounter and their extracurricular experiences, as well as to better understand the dynamics between the objective, subjective, and temporal dimensions of their PSE pathways. As such, a detailed description of the research type, the participants, the data collection methods, the data collection strategies, and the adopted analysis strategies are presented below.

#### **4.1 Type of Research**

This qualitative inquiry employing life story methods, utilizes secondary data to study the plausible dimensions related to the educational pathways of Haitian youth attending CEGEP. The retrospective narratives collected through the primary research project, make it possible to gain insight into the educational experiences, perceptions and PSE decisions of the participants, and the dimensions that played a role in their development.

##### **4.1.1 The Primary Research Project**

The primary study headed by Marie-Odile Magnan, professor in the Department of Administration and Foundations of Education at the University of Montreal, explores the school experiences of second-generation, immigrant PSE students, and their choices pertaining to the PSE linguistic market in Montreal. The main objective of the study was to analyze the relationships between the school experiences and the PSE choices made by



immigrant youth. The data collection phase for this project has been completed, and the analysis is thus in progress.

The 60 life stories collected through the primary study include 11 accounts from second-generation Haitian participants, which were retained for the present study. Using a qualitative approach, the focus is directed on their experiences beginning at the primary school level over their academic life course, and the various dimensions that played a role in shaping their PSE pathways.

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative Research**

As previously mentioned, the method of inquiry employed in this empirical study is qualitative. Qualitative research “helps us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to meanings, experiences and views of the participants” (Pope & Mays, 1995, p. 44). From this angle, a qualitative approach makes it possible to understand the meanings participants ascribe to their life experiences and how they interact with their PSE educational pathways from their own viewpoints, while accounting for social, economic, historical, and institutional dimensions. Furthermore, this approach also allows for the consideration of the heterogeneity of situations and the diversity of pathways and experiences (Groulx, 1997). As such, it is possible to direct particular attention to the atypical PSE pathways of immigrant youth (Doray, 2011). Finally, given the retrospective nature of the data, the life story method utilized, is an appropriate method of analysis, as it is founded on the study of temporality (Burrick, 2010).

#### **4.1.3 Life Story Method**

The terms life story, biography, autobiography, life history (Legrand, 1993), are sometimes used interchangeably, but are also considered distinct, depending on the

perspective (Burrick, 2010). From a sociological standpoint, life stories involve a person telling episodes of their life experience to another person (Bertaux, 2001). The goal is to obtain descriptions of the life courses of individuals in socio-historical contexts in order to understand how they develop through the social relationships, mechanisms, and processes that shape them (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Sanséau, 2005).

Furthermore, life stories are often used to investigate questions pertaining to social relationships that can be clarified through a subjective account (Bertaux, 1981) of temporal dimensions (Burrick, 2010). As such, values, definitions of situations, knowledge of social processes, and rules acquired through experience (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984), regarding school and extracurricular situations can be expressed by the participants and comprehensively analyzed by researchers while accounting for the different timeframes over the participants' life courses.

#### **4.2 Description of the Participants**

The research participants are second-generation immigrant students, at the CEGEP level in Montreal. Participants were born in Quebec<sup>7</sup>, to immigrant parents and completed their primary and secondary schooling in the French education sector of Montreal. In order to participate in the research, the participants had to have been between the ages 17-30 at the time of the interviews. The recruitment was done through campus advertisements and social networks, mainly through an agreement between the research team and the CEGEPs, which agreed to broadcast the recruitment ad (Annex 1) by email or through *Omnivox*, an online portal that the students consult regularly. Research assistants responded to the emails and provided any requested information to the potential participants. All those who responded to the email and met the criteria were selected, and were compensated \$20. Therefore, purposive sampling was employed, using a selection of volunteers not known to the researcher, according to the needs of the study (Morse, 1991).

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<sup>7</sup> Four participants were born in Haiti and immigrated to Quebec in their early childhood years.

Among the 60 participants of the primary study, 11 participants were of Haitian origin and were retained in the analysis of the present study. The participants include nine female and two male students whose immigrant parents come from various social, familial and educational backgrounds (Annex 2). The age of the participants range from 17-26, and all respondents were single at the time of the interview (never been married), and had no children. Three of the participants reported having no income, four reported earnings between \$1-\$9999, three reported earnings between \$10 000 - \$14 999, and one did not report an income. Furthermore, the parents of the participants were all born in Haiti and spoke creole as their mother tongue. Regarding the educational background of the participants' fathers; two did not finish HS, two completed HS, six completed university among which, one completed graduate studies, and one did not respond. Similarly, two of the mothers did not complete HS, three completed HS, two completed college, and three completed university. A variety of parental occupations were also reported, such as chauffeur, student, nurse, industrial designer, correctional service agent, retiree, etc. As such, this subset provides diversity in key areas that interplay with shaping PSE pathways (Rothon et al., 2009; Sweet et al., 2010), which is useful in ensuring a rich portrait of the views of the group (Pires, 1997), given the exploratory nature of this study.

### **4.3 Data Collection Methods**

The main data collection method in the primary study was the use of semi-structured interviews including open-ended questions, which placed the participant in the role of a narrator during the interview (Burrick, 2010). These interviews, which were conducted between Fall 2013 to Winter 2015, lasted approximately 90 minutes in duration. They were completed within one session, and were administered in either English or French, depending on the preference of the participant, with the use of an interview guide (Annex 3). Furthermore, they covered five main themes including 1) the participants' family experiences during childhood and adolescence, 2) school experiences in the youth sector of Montreal, 3) experiences in CEGEP, 4) linguistic, cultural and geographical identity,

and 5) future plans regarding PSE and work. As such, all five themes explored, are relevant to the present study, as they make it possible to analyze the social, economic, institutional and historical aspects related to the PSE pathways of the participants, as well as the dynamics between the objective and subjective dimensions of their personal experiences in, and outside of school.

Moreover, a life story method was utilized, which is centered on encouraging participants to tell their stories (Sanséau, 2005). Thus, this method enables the researcher to understand the point of view of the participants regarding specific aspects that shape their educational pathways, contrasted with those aspects highlighted in research findings in North America, such as academic and social integration (Tinto, 1993), migratory and educational transitions (Nicolas et al., 2011; Potvin & Leclercq, 2011), experiences of racism and discrimination (Cone et al., 2014; Potvin, 2008), parental cultural capital (Mc Andrew, 2001), and SES status (Nicolas et al., 2011) over a fragment of time, in the participants' life course.

#### **4.4 Data Collection Strategies**

The interviews referred to above were conducted on an individual basis, by either the research director, or the research assistants of the primary study, and were mainly held on the institutional campus of the participant. Moreover, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The format of the interviews involved the researcher beginning by establishing the social context and reaffirming the purpose of the interview. Throughout the process, the researcher encouraged the expression of the participant by showing genuine interest, while strategically intervening in order to facilitate the development of any discourse pertaining to the themes which constituted the interview and supported the research objectives, as outlined by the life story method (Sanséau, 2005). As such, the 11 participants were able to provide a rich and detailed account of their school experiences from elementary school to PSE, their familial history and migratory experiences, their

perceptions related to their interactions with institutions and individuals, as well as their future PSE endeavors.

#### **4.4.1 Ethical Considerations**

The researchers of the primary study were granted an ethics certificate by the *Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche* (CPÉR). As such, the participants signed a consent form (Annex 4), informing them of the framework and objectives of the research, as well as their rights as participants. Therefore, they were made aware that their participation was voluntary, of the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time, and their choice to refuse to answer questions as they wished. Moreover, they were informed that the collected data could also be used to make secondary analyses in other research projects.

As such, an ethics certificate was also granted by the CPÉR pertaining to the pool of secondary data of this study (Annex 5). Finally, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants has been fully upheld by replacing participant names with pseudonyms in the data analysis, and ensuring that the data is stored in a secure file with limited access.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis Strategy**

Three levels of analysis were utilized in order to produce the most comprehensive interpretation of the results. The first stratum consisted of a longitudinal analysis of each life story which allowed for the sequential reconstruction of the educational pathway of each participant, within a time frame, while linking them to their surrounding family, social and school dimensions. The information was compiled in *pathway matrixes* (Annex 6), summarizing each participant's experiences individually. This first step allowed for a dense familiarization of the data, which prompted a second level, thematic analysis.

Thus, a cross comparison between the 11 life stories was conducted, extracting the similarities and/or differences within the corpus, through a manual coding process. Distinct themes emerged between the participants, namely, 1) relationship to the curriculum in HS, 2) experiences with mentors and guidance counselors, 3) CEGEP transition and integration, 4) relationship to the community, 5) perception of parental involvement, and 6) parental ambitions and expectations. As such, the participants' collective representations were organized and interpreted according to the key dimensions at play in the formation of PSE pathways<sup>8</sup>, in conjunction with the major axes of the theoretical framework highlighted in the preceding chapter (Doray, 2011)<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, the themes revealed through the coding process pertaining to the parents were classified according to Tirtiaux's (2015) *school and family relational configuration*, which generated an interesting portrait of collective representations and parenting style trends.

The final level of analysis allowed for the centering of the pathways in the framework and a deeper understanding of the complex social and abstract processes and experiences carrying underlying meanings and rationales within the corpus. This was accomplished through a typological analysis comparing these social realities to profiles known as *ideal-types*, established through the construction of a typology (Pilote, 2006; Weber, 1978). An *ideal-type* can be characterized as an abstraction of individual characteristics and their relationships to social contexts in opposition to an exact representation, or a typology of individuals (Schnapper, 1999). Therefore, to arrive at a cohesive typology, a *piling method* was used, by generating core meaning units inductively through a cross-sectional comparison between pathways. The typology that was formed consists of three profiles whereby each of the 11 life stories was classified within the profile that was most characteristic of their experiences<sup>10</sup>. As such, a broad interpretation of the historical,

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<sup>8</sup> Refer to chapter 2 for a detailed description.

<sup>9</sup> The interactions between individuals and educational institutions, the dynamics between the objective and subjective aspects of individuals' experiences, the interactions between school and extracurricular experience, and the relationship to time.

<sup>10</sup> Some participants could be categorized in more than one profile or even all three. However, the goal was to select the profile closest to the participant's experience.

structural, and social dimensions revealed in the data was possible in juxtaposition with the components of the narrative and thematic analyses.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The main goal of this inquiry was to discover the aspects that delineate the PSE pathways of Haitian youth. The existing database from which the results of this study were obtained, provided optimal conditions to reach this goal. The life stories collected through qualitative methods not only allowed for the extraction of a diverse subgroup of Haitian CEGEP students, but also involved interview questions that were highly compatible with the specific research objectives<sup>11</sup>. It was thus possible to develop a tri-leveled analysis, which gave rise to an inclusive portrait of the Haitian youth and their educational pathway experiences. As such, the results of the analysis are presented in the following chapters.

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 3, p.33 for a detailed description.

## **Chapter 5**

### **General Findings**

The chronological reconstitution of the life stories among the participants made it possible to identify numerous dimensions, which interplayed in the shaping of their pathways. The thematic analysis revealed individual, social and systemic dimensions that either enhanced or hindered the individual paths. Furthermore, family cultural capital and habitus, as well as parental aspirations and dispositions occupied an important space in the corpus. Thus, parenting style became a focal point of the analysis (Tirtiaux, 2015). As such, this chapter presents the general findings surrounding the collective representations among the participants and their families, which emerged prior to the analysis of the individual pathways. The first section describes the main common themes that emerged from the corpus among the participants specifically, whereas the second section highlights the inter-mutual themes among the parents as recounted by the participants.

#### **5.1 General Findings Among Participants**

While the corpus of this study is comprised of 11 unique and diverse individual life stories of Haitian CEGEP students, several common subjective and objective experiences were revealed through the analysis of the data. As such, the collective perceptions of cultural identity, low expectations pertaining to academic success and negative portrayals of the Haitian community, as well as the challenges encountered in the transition and integration processes to CEGEP are elaborated below.

##### **5.1.1 Subjective Collective Identity: *I am not Quebecois, I am Haitian***

The literature suggests that a developed sense of mistrust among Black VM youth toward school authorities can lead them to experience feelings of exclusion from their



neighborhoods, communities and schools. Thus, this sense of non-belonging is noted as an important factor in explaining the educational disadvantage observed among Black youth (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Potvin, 2008). As such, the analysis of the results reveals a general inability among the participants to relate to the dominant group, which appears to play a role in the shaping of their PSE pathway. In spite of their second-generation immigration status, the participants in the study generally do not identify culturally with being Quebecois. In essence, there is a tendency for the participants to retain the cultural identity of their parents. Among the 11 participants, one stated that they were Quebecois (Walter), one stated they were Canadian (Tania), and three participants embraced both their Haitian and Quebecois cultures equally (Karine, Sandra, Lorna). The six remaining participants expressed a strong sense of identity to the Haitian culture in exclusivity. For example, Mirlande considers herself Haitian even though she was born in Quebec. She affirms that she does not consider herself Quebecois and would never declare herself as such on a document:

*Non je fais juste dire, parce que techniquement parlant, oui c'est vraiment je suis Québécoise-Haïtienne, c'est juste que personnellement dans ma tête je suis Haïtienne point. Mais oui, je suis née ici. Fait que quand eux [amis], ils me disent ça [t'es Québécoise], tu sais ça implique, c'est ça justement je sais pas qu'est-ce que ça implique. Qu'est-ce que, leur association dans leur tête, donc genre ça vient m'agresser, c'est ça je leur demande pourquoi tu dis ça? (Mirlande, age 24)*

In this excerpt, despite Mirlande's acknowledgement that she is at least part Quebecois because she was born in Quebec, she does not find it sufficient to adopt a Quebecois identity. The intensity of her sentiments is underscored by the fact that she feels attacked when peers imply that she is Quebecois versus Haitian, even though she does not have a clear understanding of what the implication means. Moreover, she further dissociates herself by highlighting the perceived differences in culture in terms of food, hairstyling, respect for elders and authority, parenting styles, and recreational activities. She recalls feeling excluded in primary school when questioned by her teacher about what she did over the weekend, as the normative dominant culture did not represent her reality:

*C'était comme : «Est-ce qu'il y en a qui sont allés à leur chalet ?», moi je me sentais exclue tout le temps parce que tu sais j'avais rien vraiment à dire, je suis allée voir ma famille, pis c'était ça l'activité, c'était tout le temps : «Est-ce que vous êtes allés dans votre bateau ?», c'était comme, nous c'est pas notre réalité. (Mirlande, age 24)*

Similarly, Jackson professes having an inability to relate, and trouble understanding the attitude of his Quebecois peers in HS who repeated grades several times, drank alcohol, and smoked during school hours. He also denounces the celebration of the Quebec national holiday, as he perceives it to promote the exclusion of non-Quebecois:

*Puis moi j'ai arrêté de fêter ça [la fête du Québec], parce que je trouve que c'est une fête qui est rendue tellement politisée, que j'veux même plus m'investir dans la fête du Québec. Je trouve, au contraire c'est une fête qui m'énerve, c'est une période de l'année que j'aime pas. C'est une période de l'année que si je peux travailler c'est sûr que je vais travailler. Parce que c'est une période de l'année que les gens affichent leur drapeau. Puis là, là au contraire, je ressens que je suis Noir. On me le rappelle. Tu sais l'expression « Québécois de souche » devrait même pas exister. Le peuple Québécois est un peuple d'immigrants. Donc, déjà là... (Jackson, age 26)*

Not only is Jackson's detachment from the Quebecois culture apparent in this passage, but like Mirlande, he feels a sense of exclusion as he perceives that his cultural differences are explicitly highlighted (in this case, the color of his skin) when paralleled with the dominant culture patterns.

Furthermore, certain participants make the distinction between "being" Haitian and Quebecois simply by making an association to skin color. For example, Mirlande attaches the term "White" exclusively to Quebecois and French Europeans: « *Blanc pour moi c'est genre Québécois et Européens de France, mais pas t'sais comme les Roumains, dans ma tête c'est pas des Blancs.* » Similarly, Phara, while stating that she is Black, firmly declares that her cultural identity is Haitian, which will never change. She thus distances herself from a Quebecois identity: "*Québécois c'est quelqu'un...sont Blancs*". According to Phara, being Quebecois is associated to having white skin. In addition, Phara reveals some negative preconceptions pertaining to being Black:

*Je sais pas, je sais pas, c'est toujours ça qu'on m'a mis dans la tête depuis que j'suis toute petite, comme faut que tu travailles fort pour trouver un bon métier, qu'ils embauchent beaucoup comme ça, tu vas être plus sûre de trouver un emploi parce que t'sais, y'a des emplois que ça va être plus dur pour toi de rentrer dedans à cause que t'es Noire, t'es immigrante. (Phara, age 19)*

It would be reasonable to hypothesize that if Phara felt a stronger attachment to a Quebecois identity, her family's cautionary advice regarding future employment obstacles may not have been internalized. However, because she strongly self-identifies as Haitian/Black, this anticipated obstacle appears to be further confirmation that she does not belong to the Quebecois cultural group.

Moreover, in many cases, the cultural identity of the participants and the feeling of being Black or Haitian as opposed to Quebecois became more apparent as they progressed from primary to HS. Participants almost unanimously expressed a feeling of unity and belonging at the primary level. Whereas cultural differences were not notions they were cognizant of in primary school, in HS they became almost hyper-evident, manifesting as a *HS effect*. Ruth underscores that while in primary school she had friends from many different nationalities. Contrastingly in HS, she noticed that people tended to divide themselves by ethnicity:

*Hmm, au secondaire, c'était vraiment différent du primaire, là il y avait plus de divisions ethniques, puis j'ai plus commencé, genre, c'est vraiment là que ça s'accentuait, au secondaire de me sentir encore plus haïtienne. Puis, je me sentais un petit peu, comme dans une bulle. (Ruth, age 18)*

Not only does this social pattern cause her a heightened awareness of “being Haitian”, but it also fosters a sense of exclusion at the same time. Similarly, Lorna, who considers herself Haitian while acknowledging her Quebecois culture, went from an exclusively Quebecois identity in primary to developing an acute awareness of “being Haitian” and a sense of difference in HS:

*Oui, dans cette école -là, il y avait beaucoup beaucoup de Noirs. C'est en arrivant au secondaire que j'ai connu davantage des Noirs, parce que dans mon école primaire, on était pas beaucoup. (Lorna, age 22)*

Pascale who attended a predominantly Black HS recounts a similar experience:

*Boff, au secondaire, mon identité... je me posais pas de questions parce qu'on était tellement en majorité. On était vraiment en majorité les Haïtiens, y avait les Noirs, les Noirs haïtiens et y avait les Noirs africains, mais y en avait pas beaucoup t'sais des Congolais francophones... C'était juste, c'était devenu normal pour moi de pas être en minorité. Comme j'tai dit c'est vraiment au cégep que j'ai vu que j'étais une minorité de jour, parce que de soir c'est pas vrai. Y a beaucoup plus d'immigrants de soir au cégep. Mais c'est, j'me posais pas la question. J'étais haïtienne. Des fois on parlait en créole pour être sur que quelques personnes comprennent pas, mais sinon on était en majorité fait que... (Pascale, age 22)*

It is interesting that an increased exposure to other Black peers seems to foster a stronger sense of like identity, while an increased exposure to White peers appears to have a reverse effect. As illustrated through the previously mentioned accounts of Mirlande and Jackson, as well as Pascale's CEGEP experience, increased exposure to non-Haitian peers causes a heightened awareness of differences and thus a stronger sense of exclusion in contrast to the sense of belonging that appears to manifest when there is an increased exposure to Haitian peers.

Phara's discourse confirms the *HS effect*, however her experiences were based on specific subjective cultural differences revealed in the corpus:

Mais tu te sentais quand même, au primaire, tu te sentais Haïtienne?

*Au primaire, non je savais pas, je pensais pas à ça du tout. C'est plus au secondaire, j'étais plus que, j'étais plus haïtienne, je le sens que j'suis haïtienne, c'est comme ça que ça fonctionne.*

Au secondaire, c'était quoi la différence, pourquoi tu le sentais plus?

*Ben t'sais tout le monde prenait le bus, y'avait des sorties qu'ils faisaient. Moi j'peux pas faire ça, mes parents veulent pas que je fasse ça. Et ma façon de manger et tout, puis c'est ça.*

Donc plus dans les sorties, la nourriture. Y'avait-tu d'autres différences?

*Mmm, non, non. C'était ça à peu près. Comme je rentrais chez moi, c'était les devoirs tout de suite. C'était pas je vais regarder la télé. Tu fais tes devoirs. Après tes devoirs, tout est fini puis là tu regardes la télé, puis après tu vas dormir. (Phara, age 19)*

The prohibition from participating in social activities after school is a marker that many participants (Walter, Lorna, Jackson, Pascal, Karine) refer to when highlighting differences between their own parents and those of their Quebecois peers. It is interesting that Phara and a few others perceive this as a factor that heightens their Black or Haitian identity. In Jackson's case, in spite of his parents' strict rules about after-school activities, he considers himself as "normal" until he moves to a different neighborhood in his second year of HS. He recalls one of his first encounters in his new school with one of his teachers, which for him, solidified the notion that he was Haitian and thus an outsider.

*Ouais, là y'a quelqu'un qui nous a fait prendre conscience assez rapidement qu'on était pas comme les autres... Euh, ben moi j'me rappelle un cours j'suis arrivé, premier cours, la prof elle dit : «ah on a beaucoup de communautés ethniques aujourd'hui, vous monsieur vous venez d'où ?». Pis là ça a commencé par moi, là j'la regarde pis j'lui dis : «ben, j'suis né ici.» (Rires). «Donc, j'sais pas de quoi vous parlez.» Pis là elle fait : «Ben là t'es pas né ici dans la salle de classe». Donc là déjà là le rapport a été déjà assez froid, puis là j'étais, ben là, j'comprends pas trop. (Jackson, age 26)*

In this excerpt, Jackson appears to have a desire to be a part of the dominant cultural group, and to minimize his distinctness from it, yet, the teacher appears to insist on making his differences evident. This passage is consistent with findings in the literature review, which highlight the struggles that second-generation Haitian youth feel, in terms of their identity as a minority group that is regularly subjected to prejudices and racism (Potvin, 2007).

This sense of non-belonging in HS is also reflected in some of the participants' rapport to the history curriculum specifically. Mirlande believes the course to be inaccurate and idealistic : « *ça avait l'air vraiment idéaliste, tout le temps, les histoires, j'aimais pas vraiment ça le portrait qu'on faisait du premier colon Québécois, je trouvais que, je sais pas, je suis sûre que ça témoigne pas vraiment de la réalité* ». Ruth considers the course too accentuated on the Quebecois:

*...euh, puis dans les cours d'histoire qu'on apprenait, de l'histoire du Québec, c'était vraiment, je voyais vraiment les Québécois, ils étaient vraiment, euh, dedans là, puis moi, je, on vient pas d'ici, donc je me, je me considérais pas vraiment Québécoise au secondaire, oui. (Ruth, age 18)*

The underrepresentation of immigrants in the Quebec history course seems to cause a personal feeling of exclusion for Ruth, which also appears to have an impact on her identity construction. Similarly, Sandra who is one of the three participants who adopts both her parents' culture and the culture of her birth place is retrospectively unable to relate to the content of the course:

*Ben, j'avais pas le même esprit critique que j'ai maintenant. Je dirais que dans ce temps là, j'étais comme oui oui oui, mais là en y pensant je me dis c'est pas mon histoire. Oui, je suis née au Québec, mais c'est pas mon histoire, parce que mes ancêtres sont pas Québécois, sont pas venus de la France pour coloniser. En fait, j'ai plus l'impression d'apprendre la culture d'un autre pays que d'apprendre ma culture à moi...mais j'ai plus l'impression d'être quelqu'un, dans un autre pays, qui apprend la culture de l'autre pays. Fait que, je me sens pas attachée à l'histoire du Québec. Je l'apprends parce que j'habite ici, je vois comme l'évolution pis tout ça, mais à part de ça c'est pas, tu sais, si j'avais eu le choix, j'aurais pas nécessairement, tu sais j'aurais été contente de oui apprendre l'histoire d'où est-ce que j'habite. (Sandra, age 19)*

Like Ruth, it appears that her cultural differences are accentuated, and an “us” versus “them” dynamic appears to be at play in spite of the fact that she is willingly and admittedly a part of both the “us” and the “them”.

The discourses highlighted above capture some key dimensions that play a role in the participants' tendency to culturally self-identify as Haitian versus Quebecois, mainly

beginning in HS. Among these dimensions, namely 1) differing cultural patterns, 2) increased exposure to peers of the same culture, 3) racial representations, 4) the *HS effect*, 5) negative classroom experiences, and 6) an inability to relate to the history curriculum; all emphasize differences between the dominant culture and that of the participants. In the next section, the collective representations regarding the community will be discussed.

### 5.1.2 Subjection to Low Expectations and Negative Portrayals

The participants' cultural self-identity implicates the dynamics between their subjective and objective experiences both in and out of school in terms of the formation of their educational pathway. For many of the participants, certain experiences directly or indirectly related to their feeling of being either Black or Haitian, were associated to a negative experience or perception. More specifically, three participants (Mirlande, Jackson, Pascale) expressed facing lowered expectations either from their educational institutions or within their communities. In contrast, two participants (Walter, Sandra) used these negative representations as a marker to distance themselves from their Haitian culture.

To begin, Mirlande asserts that she is subjected to racism on a regular basis both at school and within the workforce. She recounts an incident that occurred at CEGEP:

*Ouais, y'a beaucoup, on a comme une pression de plus parce qu'on est comme, tu sais souvent, les gens s'attendent...parce qu'il y a beaucoup plus de problèmes de réussite scolaire, disons la communauté noire, pis t'sais exemple, on ressent cette pression autant par les gens, t'sais les commentaires. En tout cas, je me permets à le voir comme si c'était du racisme là, mais exemple comme tantôt je suis allée voir pour l'API<sup>12</sup>, puis là, la dame elle dit «t'es en quel programme ?», je lui dit «en réadaptation physique», «ah ok, ouais, pour l'annulation», mais je sais pas c'était comme, comme si elle avait genre, j'étais comme, pourquoi tu as assumé que ça allait être ça?  
(Mirlande, age 24)*

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<sup>12</sup> Acronym for *Aide pédagogique individuelle*, individual academic counseling

Firstly, Mirlande seems to have internalized the general negative perception associated to her community when it comes to academic success. As such, a perhaps unfounded assumption made by the CEGEP personnel is interpreted as racist possibly because she strongly identifies with being Black. Also, there does not appear to be any other justification for a comment as such for Mirlande. Her conclusion is that she is automatically expected to be in academic difficulty, by the virtue of her skin color. Interestingly, Mirlande processes such experiences in a way that seems to motivate her academically, in spite of her frustrations. While she acknowledges feeling added pressure, she appears to be driven to utilize it to countermand the lowered expectations she feels subjected to.

From a different angle, Pascale and Jackson feel these lowered expectations to a larger degree within their own communities. Both make reference to unfortunate outcomes they witnessed among their friends. Jackson experienced a seemingly predetermined path first-hand in his childhood neighborhood, and questions whether he would have been subjected to the same fate as his comrades had he stayed in that environment:

*...je sais que beaucoup de personnes ont mal tourné. Ça c'est peut-être quelque chose qui m'a marqué à Rivière-Des-Prairies, c'est que beaucoup de mes amis ont mal tourné. Beaucoup. Puis ça a éclaté, après ça y'a eu les gangs de rues, ça a éclaté. Rivières-Des-Prairies c'est à côté de Montréal Nord, ça a éclaté. Puis il faut dire que peut-être que à l'époque on avait pas beaucoup de, de, de chemins menant vers le succès, on avait pas beaucoup de modèles. Y'a beaucoup de mes amis qui ont mal tourné. Je sais pas si moi-même j'aurais mal tourné en restant là. J'ai, j'ai eu des morts, des gens qui ont été en prison. Y'a eu des gens, juste aujourd'hui on voyait, il s'est passé des vols, des braquages, puis là y'affichait les visages. (Jackson, age 26)*

By questioning his fate, and underscoring the low probability of success in his community, Jackson reveals that he has internalized the negative associations to his community, like Mirlande. However, his progress and persistence in his PSE pathway (discussed in detail in the chapter that follows) coupled with the absence of role models



in his environment, seems characteristic of an “ethnic resilience”, highlighted in the literature review (Anisef & Kilbride, 2004).

Similarly to the recounts of Mirlande and Jackson, Pascale explicitly states that there is a general expectation of failure toward the students of her school, and by association her community. Again, this internalized negative perception, seems to have enhanced her pathway rather than constrain it:

*Puis j'ai toujours voulu travailler dans des écoles comme [« X »], [« Y »], des quartiers défavorisés pour apporter un message positif. Parce que quand tu viens de [école « X »], on s'attend à ce que tu finisses mal. Quand tu viens de ce quartier là, on s'attend que tu finisses mal. Puis ce message là que je veux leur faire comprendre que c'est pas vrai, c'est pas ton milieu qui va te mettre des bâtons dans les roues si tu travailles assez fort... C'est ça, c'est pas mal comme ça que je me vois. J'aimerais bien travailler dans les quartiers défavorisés. (Pascale, age 22)*

In contrast, to the above participants who use the negative perceptions of their community as incitement to achieve success, others discern them as a reason to disassociate themselves from the community. For example, Walter, one of the few participants who culturally self-identifies as uniquely Quebecois, with a high cultural capital background, became more and more detached from his Haitian culture over the course of his pathway. Below, he highlights the negative actions he has observed within his community:

*... parce que dans ce quartier-là, y'avait vraiment beaucoup d'Haïtiens, fait que c'était beaucoup plus d'Haïtiens qui discriminaient un peu les autres. J'ai déjà vu un groupe d'Haïtiens qui battait un latino après l'école. Puis je m'en rappelle plus pourquoi, mais c'était juste, vraiment juste des Haïtiens qui le battaient...C'est une personnalité haïtienne qui... ils doivent se...se prouver, se faire remarquer. (Walter, age 18)*

Walter's case is interesting because he demonstrates a reverse subjective identification. While he was born in Haiti, he does not consider himself culturally Haitian: “*Mes valeurs... Ben j'ai pas encore vraiment déterminé mes valeurs. Mais je sais que ma culture est québécoise* ». As such, Walter seems to adopt a type of outsider standpoint

about his community whereby he does not approve of the flagrant or violent behavior that he has observed. Likewise, Sandra who considers herself equally Quebecoise and Haitian, also distances herself from the Haitian part of her culture when faced with representations she perceives to be negative.

*....Tu sais, parler fort, tu sais des comportements 'm'as-tu vu', tu sais danser dans les corridors pour absolument rien, faire du tapage, crier, non. Moi c'est pas moi du tout...Non. Moi j'aime pas ça. Tu sais des fois leur, on entend souvent à la télé, les gangs de rues, les noirs puis tout ça, je me dissocie de ça. Moi j'aime pas ça. Non. C'est pas des comportements que j'apprécie nécessairement. (Sandra, age 19)*

Like Walter, Sandra, also from a high cultural capital background, finds the behavior of her peers sometimes boisterous which seems to cause her to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. She also underscores the negative portrayal of Blacks in the media. She appears to be aware that this is a common representation and dislikes that she may be considered a part of this group in its negative portrayal.

It is noteworthy that in all cases the participants demonstrate a desire to dissociate themselves from the negative part of their community's image, whether the notions are internalized or not. While some participants separate themselves from the community as a collective in reaction, others are motivated to better themselves. Pascale goes a step further in the development of her plans to return to her community has a role model. Given that a lack of role models within the participants' communities was revealed in the data (Jackson, age 26; Pascale, age 22), the role of guidance counselors discussed in the next section is particularly relevant.

### **5.1.3 Challenging Transition Process to CEGEP: *Poor Guidance and Counsel from Guidance Counselors***

Guidance counselors “advise current and prospective students on educational issues, career planning and personal development and co-ordinate the provision of counseling

services to students, parents, teachers, faculty and staff” (Service Canada, 2015, para. 1). Of the eight participants who met with a guidance counselor during the CEGEP application process in HS, five had unfruitful experiences to varying degrees. In one case (Phara), undesired and inferior options were explicitly imposed on the student. In another (Tania), the participant felt that their time spent with their guidance counselor was pointless and slightly confusing. Further, certain participants whose pathways can be characterized by significant challenges in the CEGEP navigational process (further discussed in chap. 6) appear to be directly or indirectly impacted by the guidance counselors’ recommendations, or lack thereof.

To begin, Phara, whose parents have a high educational capital and whose academic performance is classified as “good”, was advised to pursue a vocation as a nursing assistant in spite of the interest she expressed for CEGEP studies in the field of social work:

*... il me disait n’importe quoi, conseiller en orientation au secondaire, c’est pas bon du tout. Il me disait n’importe quoi, il voulait que...il m’envoyait faire un DEP<sup>13</sup>, il voulait même pas que j’aille au cégep...Il me disait : « ah non t’as pas les notes pour rentrer au cégep, tu vas pas pouvoir rentrer au cégep, tu vas jamais pouvoir entrer au cégep ». Là j’étais comme ça a pas de sens. J’avais même été parler avec la directrice. Y’avait la moitié des filles qui sortaient de son bureau en pleurant tellement il décourageait les gens. Moi, il m’envoyait faire un DEP infirmière auxiliaire. Puis j’avais dit que je voulais faire travail social et il m’avait dit : « Ah t’as pas les notes pour faire travail social, tu vas jamais pouvoir entrer pour ça », des affaires comme ça. (Phara, age 19)*

Considering the information revealed in the previous section regarding the lowered expectations that some participants subjectively experience, this excerpt is significant as the guidance counselor appears to impose his own will on the participant, suggesting an inferior level of study than what the student is aiming for. Moreover, even though the counselor uses his professional judgment to deem that Phara’s grades are not good enough, he does not offer any alternative ways to access CEGEP in counterpoise.

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<sup>13</sup> Acronym for *Diplôme d’étude professionnelle*, a diploma for vocational studies.

*... Ben y'avait regardé, moi j'avais dit je veux faire travailleuse sociale, il a sorti mon bulletin et y'a dit : « iii non j'pense pas que tu vas pouvoir faire travailleuse sociale...qu'est-ce que moi je te proposerais c'est de faire un DEP », là il m'a sorti un cahier de DEP, « tu vois y'a ça, ça, ça...toi lequel que tu préfères? ». J'ai dit : « ben là infirmière ». Là après il a dit...comme y'avait pas vraiment réussi à me convaincre, il m'avait vraiment découragée, là j'ai dit infirmière c'est quelque chose que je voudrais faire, c'est juste que je le fais pas parce que c'est trop d'études. Après y'a dit : « ok infirmière en DEP, tu vas être capable, après tu vas être capable de continuer ta vie avec ça ». (Phara, age 19)*

In this excerpt, Phara found her whole career plan changed in an unfavorable direction based on one meeting with this counselor. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled in a pre-university program at CEGEP “X”, however, it is reasonable to hypothesize that her pathway may have been altered in an adverse manner had she not had access to other alternatives due to her family’s high cultural capital (both parents being university graduates).

In Jackson’s case, the lack of guidance and absence of role models are themes that are strongly present in his discourse. He underscores not having any teachers or mentors he could turn to for support throughout his pathway, especially during his transition to CEGEP. In Jackson’s senior years of HS, he developed a strong aspiration to become a police officer. However, one of the requirements of the police technology program included swimming abilities, which he did not possess. Like Phara, his meeting with his guidance counselor did not produce any operable alternatives:

*Ah oui oui, non j'avais vu le conseiller d'orientation. C'est juste que je savais pas où aller. J'veux dire, moi mon obsession c'était ça, policier, prof de maths. Policier était vraiment au-dessus, donc euh, dans le fond, le conseiller avait rien à me conseiller, j'veux dire, t'avais les notes mais y'avait des tests de natation. (Jackson, age 26)*

The obstruction Jackson encountered in accessing the police technology program that he desired represents a major turning point since he did not have another career in mind,

which led to many bifurcations in his PSE pathway while he was trying to figure out what he really wanted and enjoyed as a career (further discussed in chap. 6).

Similarly, Pascale feels that she and her peers were faced with a strong lack of preparation and information when it came to the CEGEP application process. Pascale asserts that her time with her HS guidance counselor was useless, as she and her peers did not have the slightest comprehension of what the counselor was actually presenting to them.

*... y avait une madame qui venait, la madame qui s'occupait de tout ça, de nous parler de tout ça, en secondaire 5. On comprenait rien de ce qu'elle nous disait. C'était juste pour manquer un cours t'ais. Ta! C'est fou! Je suis encore révoltée parce que je connais tellement de monde qui ont arrêté, qui ont saboté leur cote R<sup>14</sup> justement parce qu'ils savaient pas... (Pascale, age 22)*

The fact that Pascale refers to the counselor as “the lady who took care of all of that” is indicative of the high level of unawareness she was experiencing during the CEGEP application process. Moreover, her retrospective astonishment regarding the R-score sabotage among she and her peers further highlights how little they understood the CEGEP navigation system and the rules of the game.

Moreover, unlike the two aforementioned participants, Pascale’s family has a low cultural capital. The guidance counselor was one of the very few information sources she had access to regarding her transition to CEGEP:

*Parce que je savais pas quoi faire puis la madame qui venait à l'école pour nous conseiller elle a dit que vous êtes pas obligés de ta ta ta ta. Vous pouvez faire vos cours de base et en même temps apprendre d'autres... avoir une petite base, un peu pour vous préparer pour savoir vers quoi vous diriger. Fait que plein de mes amis, on a tous été en accueil intégration. Puis c'est parce qu'on pensait que c'était la réponse qu'on cherchait tous. (Pascale, age 22)*

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<sup>14</sup> R-score, the CEGEP equivalent of grade point average (GPA).

Unlike Phara who did not follow the advice of her guidance counselor, Pascale's pathway seems to have been directly impacted by the counselor, as she blindly followed her instructions, without having a clear understanding of the outcome. Pascale's pathway is also riddled with bifurcations, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

To a lesser degree than the participants mentioned above, Tania was unsure about her career goals when she met with her HS guidance counselor who recommended a program in anthropology. She asserts that she did not have an understanding of what "anthropology" was and felt that the meeting did not serve any purpose: "...*Il m'a dit : « ben va en anthropologie ». Et j'étais comme : « hein c'est quoi ça »? Ça ne m'a pas vraiment servi honnêtement.*"

Similarly, when it came time for Karine to choose a CEGEP, she was unhappy with the outcome from the advice that she followed from her guidance counselor:

*...au début j'aurais voulu rentrer à [cégep X], dans ma tête je me dis que j'aurais eu plus de chance d'être acceptée à [cégep X] qu'à [cégep Y], mais c'est juste qu'on m'a conseillé, la conseillère en orientation m'a dit comme ça que : « tu peux prendre une chance à [cégep Y] », parce que c'était un bon cégep aussi également donc j'ai dit ok, je vais essayer, mais j'ai pas été acceptée. (Karine, age 17)*

Like Pascale, Karine also has a low family cultural capital. As well, her meeting with her counselor seems to have had an impact on her pathway. Karine was denied acceptance into her first and second choice programs at CEGEP "Y", however, she did not make an application to any other institutions based on her counselor's recommendations. As such, she strategically enrolled in her third choice program in order to avoid prolonging the beginning of her postsecondary studies. Like Phara, Karine's counselor appears to deliver subjective advice rather than providing her with all the necessary information to make her own decisions.

The participants' discourses regarding their experiences with their guidance counselors revealed some concerning practices, namely the imposition of the counselors' personal

recommendations and the lack of operable and clear alternatives made available to the participants. Further, in some cases these practices appeared to directly impact the participants' pathway, especially those from a low cultural capital background. The next section will bring to light the outcome of the participants' transition process from HS to CEGEP.

#### **5.1.4 Challenging Integration Experiences Within the CEGEP**

As discussed in the literature review of chapter 2, academic and social integration play a significant role in students' PSE outcomes (Tinto, 1993). As such, it is insufficient to analyze a student's pathway without considering the institutional dynamics in relationship to their future goals. As we will see in more detail in chapter 6, some students had uncomplicated experiences at CEGEP while others encountered unexpected obstacles pertaining to their academic and professional career choices, and challenging integration experiences in their PSE institutions.

As such, among the 11 participants of the study, seven reported difficulty adjusting to CEGEP life (Pascale, Cynthia, Karine, Phara, Jackson, Lorna, Tania). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that all of the participants who reported a turbulent transition to CEGEP also reported a difficult integration process (Pascale, Karine, Phara, Jackson, Tania). The most discernible academic integration cases can be highlighted through the recounts of Pascale, Jackson and Lorna.

Following the advice of her HS guidance counselor, Pascale enrolled in a Springboard<sup>15</sup> program because it was close to her home and she was not aware of any other options at the time of enrollment. As a new CEGEP student with extremely limited information and undetermined future goals, her time in the program became frustrating, as the assigned work did not meet her needs as a bewildered student:

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<sup>15</sup> A program designed to help students gain the necessary requirements to access an accredited CEGEP program leading to a diploma.

*J'allais à l'école, mais même mon cours d'accueil et intégration j'y allais même plus, c'était plate. Parce que dans le cours d'accueil intégration qu'est-ce qui faisait c'est que chaque personne devait faire comme un travail sur la carrière que tu veux faire. Mais moi je le sais pas, moi j'suis là pour, pour découvrir mais non la façon que le cours était fait c'est comme si tu savais déjà que tu voulais faire ça. Puis là fallait que tu fasses un travail toute la session sur ça. Mais je le sais pas! Fait que la j'suis comme je perds mon temps, traitement de texte j'men fous! (Pascale, age 22)*

Clearly, Pascale was not able to make any meaningful connections to her personal goals, as they were not yet identified. Moreover, if we recall the description of the purpose of the program given to her by her guidance counselor (*...avoir une petite base, un peu pour vous préparer, pour savoir vers quoi vous diriger*), Pascale's expectations of discovering her passions were not met.

Jackson who also experienced a high degree of uncertainty during his CEGEP transition process, attended three different PSE institutions, and followed four different programs before successfully choosing the program he is presently completing. Due to his indecision and bewilderment, he began his CEGEP pathway in the social science program, which he had no interest in: « *...puis j'voyais pas où ça m'emmenait, je faisais les cours pis je comprenais pas où ça allait m'emmener puis je trouvais ça plate, inintéressant.* » (Jackson, age 26). Even though Jackson was enrolled in a pre-university program, he faced the same challenges as Pascale in the sense that he was unable to make a meaningful connection to his future professional goals, which were not yet determined.

In contrast, Lorna who was relatively decisive compared to Pascale and Jackson, and who is among the few participants who had a positive experience with her HS guidance counselor, began to doubt her decisions when she started having serious difficulties in her math course. Her apprehension led to an interruption in her studies after completing her first year of CEGEP.

*... j'ai pris une année sabbatique parce que, lorsque j'ai arrêté j'étais plus sûre de qu'est-ce que j'aimais, j'avais beaucoup de difficultés avec mon cours de mathématiques. Ça a fait en sorte que*



*j'ai remis en question ce que je voulais faire, donc d'étudier en administration, alors là je me suis dit je vais arrêter... (Lorna, age 22)*

Lorna's case is interesting as it is consistent with the literature, which suggests that negative academic experiences encountered specifically in the first year of PSE are a major reason for dropouts among youth in Canada (Ma & Frempong, 2008).

Karine and Tania also encountered integration challenges in their first year of CEGEP. While the above-mentioned participants had significant difficulty pertaining to their academic integration, Karine and Tania encountered more social integration difficulties, another key predictor of PSE non-completion among immigrants (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). Karine recalls making friends as an uneasy process that she eventually worked through.

Est-ce que tu t'es bien intégrée ici au cégep? Comment s'est passé l'intégration?

*Au début, quand je venais d'arriver, au début très timide, mais pas très très timide, mais j'étais timide. Je parlais pas beaucoup, mais maintenant j'ai pu me faire des amis sans même savoir comment j'ai pu faire...C'est juste arrivé. Pas des amis parce que c'est un peu difficile pour moi de me faire des amis facilement, mais c'est comme des fréquentations... (Karine, age 17)*

In this passage, Karine's social network appears to remain weak as she modifies the word *friends* to *acquaintances*. Further, Tania recounts a similar experience whereby her social network was composed of old friends who were mainly Haitian, and not always available:

*Au cégep ouais ouais. La pause ça ça l'a été dure pour moi. Ben je trouvais que comme, ben j'avais des amis au cégep, mais tu sais on avait pas les mêmes pauses et tout et je me retrouvais toute seule et tout et je ne connaissais personne. Au début, moi je suis vraiment renfermée. Je n'avais pas d'amis et je me sentais seule et je trouvais que [cégep X] c'était grand. Mais là ça va.*

Est-ce que tu as rencontré des amis? Du monde?

*Ouais j'ai rencontré du monde et là j'étais contente. Mais au début ouais c'était pénible d'aller au cégep. (Karine, age 17)*

The social integration component seems to be an important dimension for Tania. Feeling overwhelmed and isolated in a new environment caused her to describe her time at CEGEP as arduous. However, once she overcame such obstacles and established a social network, she began to enjoy her experiences.

In contrast, Phara who is in her second year of CEGEP concedes that is not possible to establish close social ties, and similarly to Tania, mainly sticks to her old friends from HS.

*Ben, au cégep, tu peux pas vraiment te faire d'amis. Je connaissais déjà des gens fait que j'étais avec eux, mais tu peux pas vraiment te faire d'amis dans tes cours...dans les cours oui je parlais à du monde qui étaient assis à côté de moi, je faisais mes travaux avec eux, mais c'est pas comme si je pense garder contact avec eux après la session, c'est plus comme pour le cours.*

Puis là encore là t'as pas observé des gangs dans le cégep?

*Non, ici au cégep je reste pas à l'école. Je finis mes cours, je m'en vais. Sinon je parle trois secondes avec mes amis que je connais ça fait longtemps puis c'est tout... (Phara, age 19)*

The opportunity for Phara to develop a social network at CEGEP appears to be blocked, as she is unwilling to spend any time on campus beyond attending her courses. It is noteworthy that Phara's approach to socializing once classes end is consistent with the rules enforced by her parents during primary and HS, whereby any afterschool social activities were strictly prohibited. This tendency was also identified among Karine and Tania whose parents also forbade extra-curricular activities.

Finally, Cynthia who is currently in her last semester of a three-year technical program in special education, had a difficult time adjusting from her first year and throughout the majority of her CEGEP pathway:

*Ouais, ben comme ma première année, j'ai pas tant aimé que ça, c'était...c'était tellement bébé dans ma classe, dans ma cohorte. La première année j'ai vraiment pas aimé tant que ça...À cause du monde puis je me voyais pas là-dedans, j'avais pas l'impression d'avoir ma place. Je veux dire j'aimais, tu sais j'aime l'idée de cette profession-là, mais je me voyais pas là-dedans. Un mélange de tout, je me sentais juste pas à ma place. Puis là finalement j'avais continué puis là en deuxième année on avait commencé un de nos stages qui deux jours par semaine toute l'année, que j'ai fait dans un CHSLD, puis ça avait été tellement difficile. (Cynthia, age 20)*

In spite of being one of the more apt participants in the navigational process, having clearer goals pertaining to her studies, and no stress during the transition process to CEGEP, Cynthia's social challenges appear to be more pronounced than the others who faced similar obstacles, and endured for a longer period of time. Given that her pathway was continuous, she was the same age as her peers yet she found them to be immature. Not only did she have trouble relating to her peers, she was also uncertain about her program choice and considered dropping out in her first year. In addition to feeling out of place in her program, she also developed a poor relationship with her stage supervisor, the person who is responsible for guiding her through her field experience:

*Comme dans le sens que c'était vraiment confrontant, la personne qui était là pour m'encadrer je m'entendais juste pas avec, avec une des deux, puis l'autre elle était pas souvent là elle qui devait être avec moi puis y'avait tellement de manquement d'éthique. Moi je suis, au primaire on m'avait dit ça, non au secondaire, que je suis réactionnaire, quelque chose de même. Dans le sens que si je vois quelque chose qui me dérange je vais m'indigner, puis y'avait tellement de manquement d'éthique pour les personnes... (Cynthia, age 20)*

It is interesting to contrast Cynthia's case to those who experienced transitional difficulties. In all cases, the latter experienced more pronounced challenges either academically (Pascale, Jackson) or socially (Tania, Phara, Karine) whereas Cynthia encountered obstacles at both levels. As such, the twofold nature of Cynthia's integration challenges is noteworthy as both can act as hindrances to successful PSE completion (Ma & Frempong, 2008).

The participants' integration experiences uncovered in the data help shed light on the possible obstacles that may have an impact on their pathways. The analysis allowed for a connection to be made between the transition and integration processes. However, the participants' transactions at school produce an incomplete account of their experiences. Therefore, it is beneficial to consider further dimension that could explain their hardships. As such the role of parents will be discussed in the next section.

## **5.2 General Findings Among Parents**

As underscored in the literature review (chap. 2), PSE social integration for ethnically diverse students can be largely attributed to their family support networks (Kenny & Stryker, 1996). Furthermore, a high family cultural capital is linked to better school performance and the pursuit of PSE (Kamanzi et al., 2009). Conversely, the lack thereof, is a significant disadvantage, as necessary information that is crucial to the preparation for, and the navigation through PSE, is likely unavailable or inaccessible (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). It is thus necessary to account for the family dimension in the analysis, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the construction of each participant's PSE pathway. The family dimension implicates the parents' influence and participation in the participants' decision-making and process. As such, the analysis of the participants' discourse regarding their parents revealed two key themes: 1) common perceptions among parents regarding professions of prestige and ambitions for their children, and 2) a shift in parenting style during the PSE decision making process.

### **5.2.1 Parental PSE Ambitions for Their Children: *Doctor, Lawyer...Nurse***

What is evident across the corpus and supported in the literature are the moderate to high aspirations Haitian parents hold for their children (Nicolas et al., 2011). In all 11 cases in the corpus, regardless of cultural capital or SES, the parents put forth the importance of education in their discourse, and contribute to its attainment to varying degrees, at

various points in the participants' pathways. An interesting tendency that stems from these aspirations is the common future professions these parents hold for their children. Among the eight participants who mentioned their parents' hopes for their future profession, doctor; lawyer; and nurse were perceived as the most prestigious professions almost to exclusivity.

Sandra for instance, whose parents have a high cultural capital, suggest the following : «...mes parents qui voulaient que je fasse un bon métier, ils voulaient que je sois avocate, médecin... ». Similarly, Mirlande's parents who have a low cultural capital in contrast, offer the exact same suggestions for her and her siblings: “*idéalement, ils voulaient tous qu'on soit des médecins puis tous des avocats*”. Tania's parents who also have a low cultural capital suggest law as a profession:

*Ouais au début, elle voulait que je sois avocate. Parce que je lui ai dit que je voulais aller en sciences humaines. Et là elle a dit : « ben là qu'est-ce que tu vas faire avec sciences humaines, avocate? » Et là j'ai dit : « Non trop de paperasse ». Et là elle a dit : « Non mais soit avocate, tu vas gagner beaucoup d'argent... » Et j'étais : « Ben non, je ne veux pas ». Elle était : « Ben débrouille-toi avec ton programme ». Elle pense que mon programme sert à rien...Alors pour ma mère dans sa tête ça sert à rien sciences humaines. Elle attend que je sois à l'université pour voir si ça a vraiment servi à quelque chose. (Tania, age 18)*

The parents referred to above regard these specific professions as higher status and higher income access. Tania's mother considers her choice to study social sciences as a waste of time and has trouble supporting her daughter's decision. Furthermore, it is intriguing that the nursing profession emerges as the parental program of choice for the female participants among the subgroup. For these parents, nursing is perceived to be just as prestigious as law or medicine in many cases, even though the level of PSE required and associated income are inferior by comparison.

*Ben tous les Haïtiens veulent que leurs enfants soient infirmières, tous les Haïtiens veulent que les enfants soient avocats, ou t'sais ingénieurs! (rires) Désolée, je ris mais...C'est très populaire chez les Haïtiens d'être infirmière. Y a des avocats, les Haïtiens aiment les gros titres. (rires). (Pascale, age 22)*

In this excerpt, nursing is grouped with law and engineering as a high status profession. Pascale underscores the rampant perception of nursing and law as professions of prestige among her community. She also appears to acknowledge these professions as prestigious herself. Furthermore, Tania's case is interesting, as her mother, who has a negative perception of technical programs in general, and advises Tania against pursuing one, changes her mind when she finds out that nursing sciences is a technical program:

*...au début, ma mère ne voulait pas que je fasse une technique, mais après elle a vu que les techniques c'était bien. Et là elle a dit : « ben fait ce que tu veux »...Je pense qu'elle a su qu'infirmière c'était une technique. Et là, ça l'a tout comme : « oh wow c'est bon, c'est bon les techniques ». (Tania, age 18)*

Tania offers a telling subjective explanation as to why these professions are so popular among her community:

*... Ben c'est parce qu'il y a beaucoup de parents haïtiens qui travaillent dans les hôpitaux et ils voient que les infirmières sont mieux traitées qu'eux peut-être. Peut-être pour ça qu'ils disent : « ah, infirmière, c'est bon ». (Tania, age 18)*

Her hypothesis regarding the perception of her parents in relationship to their own professions could be reasonable, as the overrepresentation of the Haitian community in low status employment positions, especially in hospitals, was confirmed in the literature review (Labelle, et al., 2007). Moreover, Karine adds:

*... Mais ma famille ils étaient tous ravis que j'aïlle rentrer en infirmière, mais après ça non, je veux pas... C'est très très bien perçu! Tout le monde en Haïti veulent que leur enfant devienne infirmier à cause du salaire parce que ça fait des beaux salaires. Surtout les agences, ils donnent des plus beaux salaires encore que si tu travailles dans un CSSS ou tout ça. Donc, c'est ça. (Karine, age 17)*

Karine, who has also internalized the collective disposition toward nursing, interprets this trend simply as an attractive means to access a higher salary. She also demonstrates

inside knowledge as she provides specific details about the salary benefits of the profession and how to access them.

Furthermore, there was only one case among this subgroup where the parents did not suggest the doctor, lawyer or nurse profession to their child. This case is interesting, in the sense that the participant's mother chose to dissuade her daughter from the cultural norms pertaining to perceived high status professions:

*...il y a beaucoup d'Haïtiennes qui sont infirmières, ou toujours les mêmes affaires, puis les gars, ils font du taxi ou des trucs vraiment toujours pareils, puis ma mère voulait vraiment que je me diversifie comme, comme j'ouvre vraiment mes horizons, puis que je m'intègre dans la, dans la, dans la société des Québécois, oui. (Ruth, age 18)*

Ruth's family's cultural capital is moderate, as both her parents attended CEGEP. According to Ruth, her mother believes the Haitian community holds a narrow outlook when it comes to education. As such, she encourages her daughter to gain more diverse experiences by promoting integration to the host society and culture.

Another striking tendency lies in the fact that not one participant in the entire corpus chose to pursue studies or revealed future aspirations toward either three of the preferred professions within the community. For example, Pascale mentions that although her sister is a nurse, she would not consider it as an option for a future profession. Also, she has given some thought to becoming a lawyer but decided against it after doing research:

*Moi, infirmière? Non! J'ai une soeur qui est infirmière mais, pas moi! Avocat, j'hésitais. Je voulais être avocate parce que j'aime ça m'obstiner. Mais finalement, non, c'est plate, j'ai pas envie de, quand j'ai fait des recherches justement en accueil intégration, tu passes plus de temps à la paperasserie. J'avais rencontré quelqu'un à Rosemont, y avait comme un kiosque puis tu pouvais rencontrer plein de monde. Puis j'suis restée là, je posais... j'avais comme un carnet puis je posais plein de questions puis t'sais, tu passais plus de temps à... c'est pas vrai ce que tu vois à la TV, Objection! Avant d'arriver là, y a beaucoup de choses à faire mais on le sait pas t'sais. Mais finalement je leur ai dit non, rester assis devant un bureau à lire les lois et tout là, non.*

*C'était pas, non. Je veux bouger, je savais que je voulais pas rester là à chercher une loi. Ah cette loi-là je vais l'utiliser, non je trouve ça plate. (Pascale, age 22)*

This passage reveals the importance of the collective representations, which serve as a backdrop in Pascale's decision-making process. She discusses her choices at length in relationship to the collective representations, albeit her decision to go against what is valued in her community. Similarly, although their parents suggest nursing as a future profession, Karine and Lorna both declare they have no interest in that field: "*Ma mère un jour elle m'a suggéré de devenir infirmière, là j'ai dit non, jamais c'est pas un domaine que j'aime* » (Lorna, age 22). Many of the participants do not appear to hold high status and salary at the same level of importance as their parents. Moreover, while parents tended to communicate their aspirations regarding generalities of PSE, significant changes regarding their implication in their children's academic endeavors were revealed, as discussed in the following section.

### **5.2.2 Shift in Parenting Style During PSE Decision Making Process and Beyond: *The Laissez-Faire CEGEP Parent***

In order to understand the dynamics between parenting style and the participants' PSE decision-making process, Tirtiaux's (2015) *school and family relational configuration* was utilized in the analysis (as highlighted in chapter 3). This configuration allows for the consideration of the role of the parent in the education and future orientation of the participants, as well as how the participants process the expectations emitted by their parents, and thus how they relate to their PSE decisions.

The analysis of the results revealed a tendency for the parents to shift their parenting style when the time arose to make decisions pertaining to PSE. As such, among the 11 participants, four were elitist (Sandra, Phara, Ruth, Mirlande), four were companion (Tania, Cynthia, Walter, Karine,), and three were cocoon (Lorna, Jackson, Pascale) prior to the PSE decision-making process. Among all participants, two remained consistent in



their style of parenting while the nine remaining shifted to a laissez-faire style of parenting during the PSE decision-making process, to varying degrees.

The first parenting style fluctuation can be observed through Ruth's case. Ruth's mother, in spite of her moderate educational capital, played an important role in Ruth's educational path since primary school. We can recall from chapter 3 that an elitist parent generally has higher than average ambitions for their children's educational and professional future. Prestigious schools are usually chosen and the pursuit of excellence is a founding notion of the family habitus. Therefore, Ruth's mother did research regularly to select the best schools, forbidding Ruth to attend the HS of her choice, which was deemed less prestigious; opting instead for a reputable private school. However, during the transition to CEGEP, a noticeable decline in involvement occurred.

*...quand je parlais avec ma mère elle me dit : «C'est ton futur, puis j'suis là pour t'aider pour te conseiller tout, mais, à l'école, c'est toi qui va à l'école, c'est toi qui, qui vas à l'école, c'est toi qui vas étudier, c'est à toi, donc »...(Ruth, age 18)*

In this excerpt, the mother's reverence for education and availability in terms of support remains present, but she clearly passes the reigns to Ruth, giving her control over her decisions pertaining to school. This is further supported by Ruth's decision to change CEGEP institutions and programs without informing her parents.

*Mon père il s'occupe, il s'occupe pas de, d'éducation, donc il a su que j'ai changé de l'école, le premier jour d'école (rires). Le premier jour que je suis venue à [cégep X], il l'a su que j'ai changé d'école, mais, euh, ma mère, ma mère, ma mère elle comprenait, en fait elle comprenait pas pourquoi j'ai, je suis allée à [cégep Y], parce qu'elle savait, je l'avais dit que voulais vraiment aller à [cégep X], et tout ça. Puis elle m'a dit : «Pourquoi t'as fait tout ça, na na na», puis, mais mon changement de programme ma mère elle le sait pas. Mes deux parents, ils le savent pas (rires). Oui, parce que, encore une fois il va me dire : «Pourquoi tu changes, na na na», puis, oui. (Ruth, age 18)*

Ruth appears to have accepted her newly attributed autonomy, as she chooses not to implicate her parents in her decisions regarding her CEGEP institution and program of

study. She prefers to inform them later as a means to avoid being questioned. She is aware that her parents are available to give her some general feedback, but for decisions of substance, she does not feel the necessity to involve them. Moreover, Ruth interprets her parents' laissez-faireism, as part of the development of her independence and maturity, which she welcomes and appreciates: "*Oui, et j'ai commencé à plus me donner, plus de, indépendante. Puis me promener, pour s'habiller, puis je commence à vieillir puis, oui* ». (Ruth, age 18).

The next case illustrates a more pronounced shift to a laissez-faire parenting style. Phara's parents, who both have a high educational capital, also demonstrate the previously mentioned characteristics of elitist parenting during HS. Further, they were very strict about her extra-curricular activities and applied a lot of control over her after-school activities and social life, forbidding unsupervised activities with peers and watching television after school. However, Phara's autonomy increases significantly when it comes to making decisions about her PSE. She recalls a discussion about her future profession and the CEGEP institutions she was considering with her mother:

*Ben ma mère m'a demandé qu'est-ce que je voulais faire, j'ai dit travailleuse sociale, elle a dit : « ah c'est bon, c'est un bon métier »...puis elle a dit : « tu veux aller à quel cégep? », là j'ai dit [cégep X], elle a dit « c'est là que tu veux aller? », j'ai dit : « oui » et là après elle a dit : « ok, pas de problèmes »...Ma mère est pas quelqu'un de compliquée, elle accepte tout ce que tu lui dis, elle va pas chialer...(Phara, age 19)*

While the lines of communication about PSE remain open, virtually all decisions pertaining to PSE including program and institution are left up to Phara. Like Ruth, she appears to welcome the independence she is afforded and appreciates her mother's accord with her choices.

Similarly, Mirlande's parents have a low educational capital, and demonstrate many characteristics of elitist parenting during HS such as private school enrolment, exposure to multiple extra-curricular activities, and prestigious future ambitions. She recalls her parents vaguely inquiring about what she wanted to study but never had a meaningful

discussion about the topic. Mirlande interprets her mother's laissez-faireism as a consequence to past experiences with her older brother that were somewhat turbulent:

*Exemple, parce que la personne avant nous, notre frère, lui elle a comme beaucoup plus souffert si on veut sur ce plan, sur le plan académique. Il avait de la facilité à l'école, mais il s'en foutait royalement, fait que tu sais en nous voyant aller à l'école, j'imagine qu'elle s'est juste dit, genre «Je vais pas les stresser, je vais rien dire, on va les laisser voler de leurs propres ailes». Fait que, pas du tout stressée. C'est juste plus mon père qui disait, qui répétait que «ah, ça serait bien que vous soyez docteurs, ça ferait de l'argent, bla, bla, bla». Mais tu sais il a pas insisté vraiment. (Mirlande, age 24)*

In contrast to Ruth and Phara, Mirlande is more aloof about her autonomy. She asserts that her work ethic, academic success and independence can be attributed to virtues that simply exist within her, versus the influence of her parents.

Karine's parents, who also have a low educational capital, make the shift from a companion style of parenting at HS to laissez-faire at CEGEP. The companion parenting style is characterized by the autonomy that is afforded to the youth regarding their academic and social life, while maintaining high aspirations, and offering support more so, from the sidelines. Below, Karine confirms that her mother allows her to make her own decisions regarding her PSE, with minimal intervention:

*Oui, elle m'a dit vas-y. Ben elle me fait confiance surtout que, elle voit comment j'ai pu réussir mon secondaire sans avoir redoublé du tout, alors que j'étais dans une école publique, donc elle m'a dit vas-y.*

Elle avait pas en tête un cégep en particulier?

*Non.*

Elle avait pas en tête un programme particulier?

*Non, mais c'est vrai qu'elle aurait voulu que j'entre en infirmière, mais elle m'a dit qu'éducatrice c'est bon aussi parce qu'on peut s'ouvrir notre propre garderie, mais moi ça m'intéresse pas d'ouvrir une garderie, mais en même temps...c'est ça. (Karine, age 17)*

For Karine's mother, her daughter's success in HS is an indicator that she can be trusted to succeed without further support. She is confident that her daughter will make sound decisions about her PSE. While she offers general feedback and vague suggestions regarding possible future professions, she does not feel the need to participate beyond in the process.

In like fashion, Cynthia's parents who also have a low educational capital have limited communication and involvement in Cynthia's decisions about PSE. Similar to the aforementioned parents, the importance of education remains salient, but parental implication of a more specific nature is absent:

*Ben, ils ont rien dit en particulier, ils étaient contents que j'étais acceptée. Ben mon père c'est sûr qu'il aurait voulu comme avocat ou médecine, mais tu sais ils savent que mettons ils auraient pas pu m'influencer pour ce qu'eux veulent. Fait que peut-être ils pensaient, mais ils m'ont pas dit. C'est ça. (Cynthia, age 20)*

Cynthia believes that although her parents do the best they can in terms of their contribution to her educational success, their unfamiliarity with the PSE system creates a plateau in terms of their implication. Therefore, she is allowed much freedom with respect to her choices about PSE.

*Ben ma mère est tellement, tu sais ma mère est pas mal, elle est plus, pas refermée, mais je veux dire, un exemple, mettons que c'est sûr qu'à l'université, je devais être comme dans les films dans une chambre...En résidence puis je pourrais pas habiter chez moi, j'étais comme « ben non, t'es pas obligé! » Mais non c'est ça...Ouais, mais c'est ça, elle connaît pas trop, mais c'est sûr qu'elle veut que j'y aille, puis mon père aussi. (Cynthia, age 20)*

The next case illustrates a more pronounced parenting style shift. Recalling the high level of supervision, which characterizes the cocoon parenting-style, these parents tend to be more concerned with future social integration and tend to exhibit moderate ambitions when compared to the aforementioned groups. Similarly to Phara's case, Pascale's parents ran a very strict household and extracurricular activities were forbidden. Pascale

recalls being reprimanded even when her time spent away from home was used for studying:

*...Des fois je rentrais chez nous à huit heures du soir puis chez nous, la famille haïtienne... (claquement de doigts)... très autoritaire, très stricte. En plus que je suis une fille. Donc c'est pire. Fait que j'avais beaucoup de problèmes par rapport à ça, j'allais à la bibliothèque mais on me croyait pas. (rires)(Pascale, age 22)*

While Pascale's social and academic activities were strictly monitored throughout her pathway, by the time the application process began for CEGEP, she had no parental guidance or input regarding the application process, nor the choice of institution, program, or future profession.

*Ils voulaient que j'aïlle au cégep...on m'a toujours encouragé à continuer et continuer. Mais continuer dans quoi? Faire quoi? J'ai jamais senti vraiment qu'ils savaient exactement qu'est-ce que je faisais. (Pascale, age 22)*

Like the participants referred to above, the emphasis is placed on PSE attainment, however, during the process, and once attainment is achieved, very little guidance or involvement is available from the parents. Similar to Ruth, Pascale's parents are none the wiser regarding her program or progress.

*Ils me poussaient à aller à l'école, mais ils ont jamais vraiment spécifié. J'ai toujours dit que j'irais à l'université ça ils le savent. Mais il y a jamais eu un, une fois peut-être ma mère m'a dit « Pourquoi tu fais pas comme ta soeur? Deviens infirmière, tu vas faire de l'argent rapidement! » Mais ils ont jamais, ils savent même pas ce que je fais. En fait, c'est récemment que je parle à ma mère, elle me dit «Mais tu fais quoi toi? Où va l'argent? » (rires). Mais elle m'a jamais vraiment poussée dans quelque chose. (Pascale, age 22)*

The data pertaining to the participants' parents reveals a laissez-faire parenting tendency among most of the parents during the transitional process to CEGEP and beyond. This is an important revelation when coupled with the previously mentioned findings involving the difficulties encountered in HS during the transition process and the integration

challenges once CEGEP is attained. The parental laissez-faireism plays an important role in the participants' decision-making process and consequently the construction of their PSE pathways, which will be explored in the following chapter.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, some compelling common dimensions were revealed through this portion of the analysis. The participants' collective representations regarding the development of their self-identity and their relationship to their communities provide important information in understanding possible hindrances or enhancements to their PSE pathways. In particular, sentiments of exclusion and subjection to low expectations could be encumbering for some, yet catalyzing for others. Moreover, the transitional and integration experiences to CEGEP add depth to the information present in the literature. More specifically, not only were integration challenges confirmed, but the role and impact of HS guidance counselors appears to be much more substantial and dismaying, especially for those who do not come from a high cultural capital background. This is further compounded by the significant and seemingly abrupt laissez-faireism among the parents of the participants (even those with a high cultural capital) during the PSE decision-making process, in addition to their particular professional aspirations for their children. As such, a deeper interpretive analysis is necessary in order to bridge these findings to the individual pathways of each participant. Therefore, the next chapter introduces a PSE pathway typology among the participants in conjunction with the interplay between their objective and subjective experiences, the educational institutions they encountered, their extracurricular experiences, and the dynamics among their families, as underscored in the conceptual framework in chapter 3.

## Chapter 6

### Typical Pathways

This chapter synchronously presents the classification and typological analysis of the data. An inductive approach was utilized to generate profiles from the reduction of the data in order to understand the complex experiences and processes in the pathway constructs via the typology that was formed. As such, the comparative analysis gave rise to a typology consisting of three types of pathways that delineate the abstract relationships and experiences among the participants. These ideal-types can best be characterized as *exploratory*, *constrained* and *disoriented pathways*. Thus, each pathway is elaborated through a general description, highlighting the trends related to participant aspirations, decision-making, transitions, CEGEP integration, and agency. Moreover, a comprehensive analysis was carried out through a detailed description and interpretation of an individual profile within each ideal-type, in conjunction with the major axes of the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3, namely the dynamics between participants' extracurricular experiences, interactions with the CEGEP and their objective and subjective dimensions. This refined level of analysis was a necessity in order to provide a more nuanced perspective of the highly complex educational pathways that emerged.

#### 6.1 The Exploratory Pathway

As the name suggests, the *exploratory pathway* is characterized by the participants' motive to discover the future possibilities of their academic and/or professional endeavors. The students who experienced an *exploratory pathway* were generally undecided about their personal and professional goals to varying degrees. Therefore, they chose studies based on personal interests and focused on university attainment rather than future professional integration. For these participants, CEGEP is viewed as a gateway to a higher degree of education whereby the time to self-explore can be afforded. Among the 11 participants of the study, 4 (Walter, Lorna, Tania, Ruth) demonstrated an *exploratory pathway*.

### 6.1.1 General Description of the Exploratory Pathway

In essence, a sense of serenity, initiative, and enthusiasm toward university studies can be attributed to the *exploratory pathway* participants, albeit their undecided personal and professional goals. As such, all four participants enrolled in a pre-university program in the social science field with various specializations (general sciences, languages, administration.) A possible explanation for this tendency is the general nature of the social science program and its perceived favourable gateway to university, as Tania affirms: “...*je me suis dit que peut-être que sciences humaines, t’sais ça l’ouvre quand même des portes*”. This disposition is in alignment with the participants’ focus on their program of study, access to university and personal interests, rather than future profession.

For this group, the choice of CEGEP institution is generally based on location, ambiance and availability of programs. Tania, Walter and Lorna consider location when making their choices. Whereas Tania and Walter choose the CEGEP that is closest to their residences, Lorna opts for the CEGEP that is furthest away from her home as an exploration opportunity to expand her social network, as well as to distance herself from her immediate environment. Tania, who has a low cultural capital background, prioritizes location over the reputation of the CEGEP: “*Ben c’est à 20 minutes de chez moi et c’est sciences humaines et il donne ça dans tous les cégeps. Alors, je me suis dit que je n’allais pas me casser la tête pour aller dans un cégep plus réputé* ». (Tania, age 18)

Ruth and Walter consider ambiance, availability of programs, and language of instruction as the most important aspects in their choice of institution. Ruth plans to attend a university in the U.S. and makes a decision to switch from a French CEGEP to an English one, in preparation for her future university plans. Walter chooses the only CEGEP offering an immersion program in Mexico that will better enrich his experience while complementing his passion for language arts. Here, a parallel can be drawn to Walter’s HS experience where he opted for an enriched program within the public school he was attending. These manifestations are characteristic of his family’s higher cultural



capital and companion parenting-style by which academic success is deemed highly important without necessarily aiming for the highest prestige in terms of program of study or profession (Tirtiaux, 2015).

Furthermore, the program ambitions for the four participants range from moderate to high. According to Tirtiaux (2015), the degree of ambition towards a program is measured by the payout in terms of social mobility and prestige. For these participants, personal interests take precedence over prestigious professional integration. For example, while Lorna's parents suggest nursing, a highly respected profession among her community, Lorna chooses to follow her childhood dreams of working in an office environment over prestige or salary, and thus decides to pursue studies in administration. Similarly, while Walter's parents do not express any specific professional ambitions, he also decides to follow his passion, which is languages: "*Parce que j'adore les langues, toutes. J'aime ça faire des connections entre les langues. J'aime ça traduire*". In both cases, future professional integration or prestige do not weigh heavily in the decision making process. While Tania's parents were slightly more concerned with her program choice, Tania stands firm in her decision to explore her own options given the mild parental influence she faces. When questioned about whether her mother accepted her decision to forgo studying law as she suggested and desired, Tania replies that it was not her mother's choice to make: "*...ben elle n'avait pas le choix. Ce n'est pas elle qui va faire mes études*".

Among the parents of this ideal-type, Tania's mother who has the lowest cultural capital was the only parent who remained consistent in terms of her companion parenting style throughout the construction of the pathway to CEGEP. For the other three participants, in spite of the variation in their cultural capital, the parental ambition of the parents among this group is mainly expressed in discourse yet rarely in practice. In other words, postsecondary attainment is a major component of the family habitus. However, when it comes to the decision-making process, parents tended to demonstrate low to moderate involvement, offering vague opinions about program of study, but generally leaving important decisions up to the child as seen in the previous chapter. For instance, while

Walter's parents expect his pursuit of university studies, he underscores their liberal views and dispositions towards his choices. Similarly, while Lorna had a strict upbringing, whereby her academic progress was closely monitored, all of the decisions pertaining to CEGEP are left entirely up to her. The general tendency involves a high degree of autonomy accorded to the participant during the transition process to CEGEP and once it is attained.

As such, all the participants experienced some form of indecision ranging from a moderate to a pronounced degree. In order to deal with their uncertainty, the participants demonstrated a tendency to use strategies such as processes of elimination, and proactive endeavours, while ruminating multiple dimensions surrounding their postsecondary pathways. In Tania's case, she briefly thought about pursuing a technical program in aesthetics, but decided to opt for the program that would give her the most options in university instead:

*Bien moi ça m'a toujours tenté d'aller à l'université et ça ne me tentait pas de faire par exemple travail social, tu peux faire la technique et travailler ou tu peux faire sciences humaines deux ans et après aller à l'université. Ça ne me tentait pas de faire trois ans et 3 ans encore. C'est un peu ça...et au début ma mère ne voulait pas que je fasse une technique, mais après elle a vu que les techniques c'était bien. Et là elle a dit : « ben fais ce que tu veux ». (Tania, age 18)*

Tania seems to have internalized her family's original unfavourable view about technical programs, which appears to contribute to her choice of a pre-university program. In addition, she pays considerable attention to her future university plans and thus chooses the program with the clearest and shortest route to her goal.

Similarly, after careful consideration of her future goals while accounting for her personal interests, Ruth decides against a technical program in favour of a more straightforward path to university:

*Quand, quand j'ai réfléchi à ça, au cégep, j'avais pensé au début, je pensais, peut-être à une technique en réadaptation, parce que c'était exactement ça dans ce temps-là. Euh, parce que je*

*faisais, avant je faisais, avant, avant, avant, je voulais être physiothérapeute, donc je voulais poursuivre une technique en réadaptation, puis là, je me suis dit non, je veux plus faire ça, comme ça, j'ai pensé à comptabilité, quand j'ai pensé à une technique peut-être, en gestion et commerce, ou, quelque chose, une technique, euh, reliée, mais finalement, euh, je me suis dit ça allait prendre trop, parce que j'ai toujours pensé à l'université, donc, c'est pas... pour les parents ça a toujours été, euh, «Tu vas aller à l'université pour avoir une bonne job» puis, tout ça, oui... Ils avaient pas de problèmes avec la technique, mais ils parlent que je fasse l'université, après. Puis moi, je me suis dit, ça allait vraiment trop long (rires), donc, pré universitaire, puis, université. (Ruth, age 19)*

While Ruth's family's cultural capital is higher than Tania's, she does not face the same negative perception of technical programs as Tania. Both participants appear to have a similar family habitus, whereby university attainment is heavily engrained. This tendency can also be extended to Walter and Lorna. Like the others, Walter's main goal is university attainment. However, he seems to have a clearer vision of his future professional project. He therefore builds a pathway that provides him with many university options such as linguistics, translation, and teaching. When faced with mild indecision during his transition process to CEGEP, he chooses language arts over science, as he perceives language arts to be the program in which he would be the most successful.

Among the participants in this subgroup, Lorna has the most favourable academic profile coupled with a moderate cultural capital. However, she demonstrated the highest degree of indecision, which eventually leads to a temporary interruption in her pre-university, social science studies:

*...pendant un an je travaillais et puis c'est ça. Je réfléchissais, j'essayais de voir quel autre domaine dans lequel je pouvais aller, qu'est-ce qui m'intéresserait, mais je me suis rendue compte que finalement que non, c'est ça qui m'intéresse, et puis j'aime beaucoup les maths malgré que j'avais beaucoup de difficultés. Puis ce cours-là, comme je sors de ce cours-là, je l'aime beaucoup mais je me suis dit, c'est un cours difficile. Pour que je le réussisse, il faut que je prenne les mesures nécessaires. Mais je me suis rendue compte que c'est pas parce que je l'aimais pas. Je pense que j'étais juste dans une phase, peut-être un petit plus de paresseux, de découragement,*

*qui a fait en sorte que j'ai remis en question. Mais sinon, je sais que c'est ça qui m'intéresse...*  
(Lorna, age 22)

Lorna's concerns about her grades caused her to question her entire academic plan. Her time off from school benefitted her, as she was able to self-reflect and re-evaluate her options. Her absence from her academic environment aided her to make important decisions and the confidence in her choices was quickly re-established. Thus, this excerpt reinforces the importance of personal interests in the absence of specific professional goals, which characterizes the decision-making processes of this ideal-type.

While Lorna experiences a notable level of tension related to her academic performance in her decision-making process, the participants exhibited minimal stress overall, albeit the discernible uncertainty they faced. For example, there is an absence of any economic constraints, in fact three of the four participants work on a voluntary basis while studying (Tania, Ruth, Lorna), in spite of assured financial support from their parents. Similarly, since parental influence for this group is generally moderate to low, little to no tension exists pertaining to parental expectations regarding program choice.

With regards to the continuity of the pathway, the participants maintain a generally continuous one, with minor changes as it is actively constructed. Tania, in her third semester, and Walter, in his first; exhibit a classically linear pathway. Tania relies on the multiplicity of the social science program as a guide or an inspiration for her undetermined university goals, while Walter expects to broaden his future professional options beyond language arts, from a narrower starting point in the social science program. Ruth, only in her second semester, changes institutions as well as programs, but does not interrupt her studies at any point. These adjustments are made in order to fill a void she is experiencing as a result of choosing the most comfortable institution instead of the one she was originally drawn to in light of her American university goals. Finally, Lorna, who "stopped-out" for a year as aforementioned, ended up changing institutions upon her return, but not programs, as her indecision was adeptly resolved.

In spite of the participants' variable CEGEP integration experiences, what remains consistent among this subgroup, are their very high university aspirations. All four participants expressed a strong desire to attend university regardless of cultural capital background. Walter and Lorna both base the majority of their CEGEP decisions on their university attainment. Likewise, Ruth had already taken standardized tests for university admission in the U.S., and like Tania, had created the shortest path to university for herself. Both have also expressed an intention to pursue graduate studies. As such, the *exploratory pathway* participants fall within a profile which supports the findings highlighted in the literature review related to the high university aspirations among Caribbean youth (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011). The following section entails a delineative example of an *exploratory pathway* through the story of one participant, by centering the ideal-type within the conceptual framework via an interpretation using the major axes of the *integrated pathway perspective* (Doray, 2011).

### **6.1.2 An Example of the Exploratory Pathway: Ruth's Profile**

Ruth was 18 years old at the time of the interview, in her second semester at CEGEP, in the general science program. She wishes to pursue university studies in the U.S. that will compliment her athletic interests in track and field.

Ruth's father immigrated to Quebec with hopes of providing his family with better living conditions and opportunities. In Haiti, he worked as a math and sciences teacher. However, when he arrived in Quebec, he got a job in a clothing factory and eventually became a taxi driver. Once he established himself, he sent for Ruth and her mother. In Haiti, Ruth's mother was an educator and went to college. Upon her arrival in Quebec, she worked in a factory and eventually completed a patient attendant course. Ruth's parents' social network generally consisted of fellow churchgoers or friends they knew from Haiti.

Ruth's education in Quebec began in a multicultural public school in the North end of Montreal. Ruth describes herself as an above average student who was quiet in class and well liked by peers. As a track and field athlete, she was well known, especially for being the fastest runner in the school. She has fond memories of her primary years and she feels that she was well received and benefitted from a generous amount of support from her mother and her teachers. She recalls some difficulties pertaining to her family's living arrangements. They had to relocate more than once within a year, due to poor living conditions involving rodent infestations, deteriorating facilities, and a fire in their home.

In HS, her family moved again but Ruth does not believe that the relocations had any impact on her educational success. When it came time to register for HS, Ruth was keen on attending the neighborhood public school where most of her friends from primary school were going. But, her mother had done some research; she was concerned about the reputation and high dropout rates of the public school, and perceived the private sector as offering a higher quality education. Consequently, Ruth's mother forbade her to attend the school of her choice. Ruth was very unhappy about her parents' decision and put up some resistance at the beginning. However, she eventually developed a strong liking and appreciation for all the resources and opportunities that were made available to her in the private school, pertaining to academics and sports.

While Ruth eventually accepted her mother's decision, some different challenges arose. Firstly, Ruth performed well up until her senior years, but her parents began having marital problems and discussing divorce. Consequently, Ruth became unmotivated, and her grades worsened over time. By secondary 5, when she knew that she had already been accepted to CEGEP, she stopped making an effort altogether. Nevertheless, when Ruth's mother noticed her suffering grades, she contacted Ruth's track and field coach, who had also become a mentor, to help her get back on track, which proved effective. In addition, Ruth also experienced social challenges in a school that was predominantly Quebecois. Ruth recalls that students tended to divide themselves by ethnicity. Therefore, cultural differences were accentuated and she began feeling a sense of exclusion. She underscores often feeling like she was in her own bubble and an inability

to relate to the curriculum in certain instances as mentioned in the previous chapter (p.46).

During the CEGEP application process, Ruth often met with academic advisors at her HS to discuss her career goals and to develop a long-term plan to apply to universities in the U.S. They explored the advantages and disadvantages of different programs and careers, and her teachers were also available to give her advice about CEGEP. Before gaining acceptance to CEGEP, Ruth began wanting to undertake a technical program in physical rehabilitation with the intent of eventually studying physiotherapy or accounting. After giving careful consideration and discussing with her advisors, she decided that a technical program would take too long to complete given her plan has always been to go to university, which was instilled in her by her parents at a young age. As such, she decided to enroll in a pre-university social science program with a concentration in administration.

Ruth chose to enroll in CEGEP “X” because most of her friends were going there. She did not attend the open house for this CEGEP, but she did so for CEGEP “Y”, which was her true first choice to begin with. After a year, she decided to go with her first instinct and transferred to CEGEP “Y”. She continued in administration but after one semester, switched to the general science program. Currently she is very happy with her decision. Although she does not have many friends, she knows someone who has been like a mother figure to her and has offered her much guidance and support. She likes her instructors and is highly involved in campus life through athletics. While she is still unsure about her career goals, she intends to link them to her athletic ones eventually. She is very much interested in studying abroad. As such, she has visited a few universities in the U.S. and is preparing to write entrance exams for these institutions. Ruth has also expressed a desire to pursue graduate studies in the future.

### 6.1.3 Interpretation

Ruth's portrait illustrates her personal interests and family habitus which are at the core of her decision-making processes coupled with the strategies she employs when faced with mild indecision or tension. This combination allows us to view the *exploratory pathway* through a finer lens as well as the dimensions that contributed to, or counteracted her ultimate sense of satisfaction and future ambition in her pathway.

#### 6.1.3.1 Extracurricular Experiences

In spite of her parents' laissez-faireism during CEGEP, as underscored in the previous chapter, Ruth seems to have benefitted from their elitist parenting style in primary and HS in terms of her academic success, access to social activities, as well as social network. For example, her parents remained firm in their choice of private school in spite of her opposition. As such, she eventually developed an appreciation for the many resources that were put at her disposal:

*...plusieurs ressources pour faire les devoirs, on avait des laboratoires informatiques, même, au premier secondaire, vraiment on avait un cours sur comment bien réussir...comment, comment faire ta page de présentation, comment faire tes recherches et tout, donc, j'étais vraiment, vraiment contente d'avoir tout ça. (Ruth, age 19)*

Ruth also discovered track and field in HS, which appears to play a key role in the construction of her identity and academic pathway.

*... j'suis comme ça, même dans la vie de tous les jours, dans d'autres choses, avec, même avec tout...mon sport qui m'a appris comme ça, surtout de sortir de ma zone de confort pour aller loin dans la vie... (Ruth, age 19)*

Not only do her talent and interest in sports appear to have facilitated her social integration: "*j'étais quand même assez populaire, parce que j'étais très sportive*"



throughout her pathway, they also played a significant role in her choice of CEGEP as well as her future ambitions: “*je pensais aller à l’université puis, avec mon sport, je pensais peut-être faire une université américaine* ». Ruth’s interest in sports is strongly present in her discourse and is constantly at play pertaining to her PSE decisions.

Consequently, Ruth’s athletic endeavors provide her access to important mentors and resources that facilitated her transitions to CEGEP when faced with turbulence due to her parents’ possible divorce.

*C’est à partir du secondaire quatre et 5, ça a changé un peu, puis en fait j’avais, c’était en fait, euh, mes, mes parents, je sais la preuve, c’était catastrophique (rires). C’était la première fois que j’avais vu mes parents se chicaner avoir une grosse chicane, puis, tellement intense que, ensuite ma mère parlait de divorce, et tout ça, donc j’étais, je voulais pas l’avouer, mais j’étais secouée par ça. Puis, avec là, à l’école, puis j’étais déconcentrée, euh, j’ai commencé à réfléchir à d’autres affaires, puis les notes étaient moins bonnes, comparées à secondaire un et 3. En secondaire 5, c’était encore pire, euh, puis, en plus de ça, euh, justement à la deuxième étape je savais que j’allais être acceptée, j’étais déjà acceptée, puis là, je voulais plus pousser, je voulais plus, j’étais soulagée encore, puis, mais là, ma mère est allée voir mon coach, parce que mon coach disait; c’est une personne très importante pour moi, puis c’est vraiment mon coach, pour dire que mes notes allaient pas bien. Puis là, elle m’a fait sermon, m’a chicanée, m’a dit que c’était, qu’il fallait que, que, que les notes aillent bien si je voulais à continuer mes choix. Donc, euh, j’ai dû pousser encore, comme c’était le dernier mois d’école. (Ruth, age 19)*

While the marital problems of her parents’ seemed to have an adverse effect on her pathway, the social ties created through her interest in sports and her mother’s intervention appear to have impacted her pathway favorably.

As such, the eventual shift to a *laissez-faire* parenting style Ruth is subjected to does not seem to hinder her pathway. Furthermore, Ruth demonstrates motivation and initiative in taking responsibility for achieving her university goals. Therefore, while the parental marital problems seem to have had a brief adverse impact, Ruth’s personal interests, family values regarding PSE attainment, and social network, all appear to positively impact her pathway construction.

### 6.1.3.2 Interactions with the CEGEP

Ruth is well equipped to navigate the PSE system through her social network established in HS. As such, the groundwork for her university studies in the U.S. was set in motion through the help of her guidance counselor, teachers and coach. Furthermore, in spite of her parents' decreased participation in her academic decisions, she demonstrates autonomy while successfully gathering information pertaining to her future university studies out of the country. Ruth takes her own initiative by attending the open houses of her prospective CEGEP institutions and comparing the pros and cons of each in order to make an informed decision. Ruth conscientiously chooses a CEGEP that will provide the best opportunities in university over a comfortable situation, which would assure her ties to her old friends, and in spite of challenges she may face due to studies in her second language:

*...je voulais venir à [cégep X], mais j'étais quand même encore un peu stressée avec l'anglais, donc, à la dernière minute, dernier jour, j'suis allée à [cégep Y], puis, il fallait que ça soit là [cégep Y], puis ensuite je me suis dit, euh, je veux pas avoir de regrets dans la vie, c'est ça que je voulais, je voulais étudier en anglais, je voulais essayer donc, là j'ai refait une application pour aller en anglais. (Ruth, age 19)*

Ruth was pleasantly surprised at how well she did in her first semester, noting that it wasn't nearly as difficult as she thought it would be. Similarly, her dispositions toward school have been positive throughout her pathway to CEGEP. She has consistently performed well, demonstrating a strong sense of motivation, and has developed excellent study habits. Experiences as such appear to provide her with the serenity and confidence in her decisions, which characterize the *exploratory pathway*.

### 6.1.3.3 Objective and Subjective Dimensions

The individual agency dimension is contributory to the positive outcome of Ruth's pathway to CEGEP. Ruth demonstrates resilience in several difficult circumstances

including her parents' marital problems as well as her fear of failing in an unfamiliar learning environment as aforementioned. Furthermore, she employs a number of strategies in order to deal with her indecision pertaining to her choice of program of study. Characteristic of the *exploratory pathway*, Ruth rules out the programs that would potentially elongate her pathway to CEGEP and accords the most importance to her university goals. In her decision making process, she also avoids choosing CEGEP institutions that she perceives less reputable: « *parce que [cégep W] c'était un peu reconnu pour être, euh, pas, avoir des personnes qui restent pas à l'école longtemps, puis des trucs, comme décrochage, puis des gens, des gens comme ça* ». As such, Ruth demonstrates a thinking process that further prioritizes her future ambitions, as well as a strong sense of responsibility and independence as a new PSE student.

#### **6.1.4 Conclusion**

Through Ruth's detailed account, as well as the general tendencies revealed by the group, a strong sense of determination toward the pursuit of university studies can be attributed to the participants who constructed an *exploratory pathway*, notwithstanding their unspecific or undecided professional goals. As such, their CEGEP choices were generally uncomplicated. Certain participants experienced transitional indecision. However, such rifts were quickly resolved without manifesting as a source of tension, but an exciting discovery opportunity instead. As such, the exploratory projects were constructed progressively along the PSE pathway. The participants tended to enact processes of elimination, and pro-active endeavors such as undertaking independent research, or consulting with guidance counselors, family members and peers. Thus, CEGEP is perceived as an enhancement of a current situation whereby decisions can be made with minimal tension resulting in a satisfactory end result for all four participants.

## 6.2 The Constrained Pathway

Of the 11 pathways investigated, 5 corresponded to a *constrained pathway*, characterized by the participants' decisive nature toward their personal and professional goals, in conjunction with considerable tension points at various stages (Cynthia, Phara, Sandra, Mirlande, Karine). As such, strategic decision making, actions taken, and sacrifices made by the participants are defining features of this pathway whereby the participants perceive CEGEP as a means to access and secure a better future.

### 6.2.1 General Description of the Constrained Pathway

In contrast to the *exploratory pathway*, the participants in this ideal-type have a better sense of their future professional goals and select their programs of study accordingly. At the time of the interview, four participants were enrolled in a technical program and one (Phara) who was enrolled in a pre-university program intended to switch to a technical one the following semester. The participants generally based their choice of institution on the availability of their desired program and its location. Phara and Sandra chose the CEGEP that was in closest proximity to their residences. For Cynthia, location was also important but she expressed that her choice was mostly based on the programs that were offered, which was also true for Mirlande. For Karine, the decision was more important as she was refused admittance to her first choice institution and thus chose the institution that offered her desired program by default.

The participants' main goals are aimed at job market integration and university attainment, in concordance with their personal interests. Interestingly, some intriguing dynamics between these dimensions and their decisions were revealed. Although technical programs emerged as the preferred study avenue for this subgroup, most of the participants perceived technical programs as a "first step" of a lengthier pathway. Tirtiaux (2015) describes this as a bridging strategy (*parcours par palliers*) in order to

manage the uncertainty of gaining access to university by first pursuing studies that are deemed more accessible whilst keeping university studies within reach.

The analysis of the results revealed three prevalent forms of constraint experienced by the participants, namely related to 1) economic phenomena, 2) accessibility to desired program of study, and 3) parental desires and expectations. Thus, when faced with these obstacles, bridging strategies were key measures utilized by the participants to abate or eliminate tension arising from these situations.

### *Economic Constraint*

Four of the 5 participants exhibited a pathway formed under economic constraint. Therefore, tension manifested between the participants' desired future aspirations and their access to financial resources. As such, rapid integration to the job market was a priority for all, causing them to use bridging strategies to access and finance their university studies. Further, the university aspirations for this group are high, in spite of the fact that they mostly enrolled in technical programs, as mentioned above. In fact, Cynthia intends to undertake graduate studies, Mirlande plans to attend university part-time while working and Karine had already attended an open house of her desired university at the time of the interview.

University access is a driving force in all of the participants' decision-making processes. Cynthia and Phara both chose a technical program because they understood they would have to assume the majority of the costs for their university studies. They professed that loans and bursaries were unattractive alternatives, because of their seemingly negative perception toward debt accumulation. Moreover, they associate technical programs to job assurance upon graduation, which will enable them to work while studying.

*...parce que j'veux faire une technique pour voir comme, c'est le travail tout de suite, puis après, dès que j'ai fini ma technique, je rentre tout de suite à l'université, mais j'ai déjà le poste, le travail que j'aurais augmenté comme ça. (Phara, age 19)*

Phara appears to have a sense of reassurance that she will gain employment in her field, which will allow her to consequently achieve her university goals in the face of economic constraint. Cynthia demonstrates a similar thought process:

*...une des amies à ma tante qui est éducatrice spécialisée aussi, puis elle m'avait dit que elle, pendant l'université elle travaillait à temps partiel au centre jeunesse. Puis elle réussissait à payer ses études, fait que je me suis dit que j'allais faire ça aussi. C'est pour ça que j'ai choisi une technique aussi. (Cynthia, age 20)*

Thus, the technical program appears to be a reliable solution to an otherwise problematic situation in terms of finances related to studies. Cynthia also, underscores her intent to persevere toward university studies:

*J'aime ce que j'ai appris, mais je sais que je ferais pas juste ça, je sais que je sortirai pas puis être éducatrice spécialisée, c'est une étape. Mais aussi je le perçois, genre même ma tante elle me demandait l'autre fois : «Mais tu vas tu à l'université? Mais t'es dans une technique». Mais oui. Y'en a qui pense que quand tu vas dans une technique tu continues pas, c'est pas 100% faux, y'en a plein dans ma cohorte qui continuent pas, mais ça dépend de qui t'es puis ce que tu veux, de ton plan. (Cynthia, age 20)*

This excerpt is interesting for a few reasons. Firstly, it clearly illustrates the bridging strategy of using the technical program as a stepping-stone to gain future access to university. Cynthia also creates the safest plan possible in light of economic constraint. While her high university aspirations are confirmed in the above excerpt, she also reinforces her intention of securing an income in order to finance her university studies. Furthermore, not only are her aunt's perceptions revealed, but they also parallel the literature pertaining to the tendency of Black VMs to enroll in technical programs when making PSE choices (Abada et al., 2009). Cynthia's account reveals that individual dimensions can come into play, which favor university access in spite of initial enrolment in a technical program. As such, Cynthia's decision to pursue a technical program in special education is not a limiting factor but rather a channel, which will provide her multiple options, including going to university.

Similarly, Mirlande who had already completed a technical program in graphic design, returned to CEGEP after an unfulfilling work experience in the position she occupied for two years. Her decision to pursue yet another technical program in physical rehabilitation was, like Phara and Cynthia, based on the fact that it would allow her to work while pursuing university studies part-time.

*...Puis la physiothérapie j'étais comme nice, sauf que j'avais beaucoup trop de préalables à aller chercher à l'université au cégep encore. Fait que, je me suis dit, ça me tente pas de faire mille ans à l'école donc j'ai opté pour la technique en réadaptation physique, puis probablement idéalement, je vais poursuivre, à temps partiel, quand je vais être, quand je vais avoir intégré le marché du travail. Mais pour l'instant, c'est pas mal ça. (Mirlande, age 24)*

This excerpt can be analyzed through rational choice theory, which postulates that individuals choose the most useful combination of cost-risk-benefit depending on their social status (Boudon, 1994), as highlighted in chapter 2. For Mirlande, who comes from a low cultural capital background, the time lost in wages in order to acquire the necessary pre-requisites to access a university program outweighs the benefits. This supports the notion that underprivileged families overestimate costs, and underestimate advantages, and thus tend to choose shorter duration programs. However, like the others characterized by this ideal-type, Mirlande strategizes in order to secure her access to university by employing bridging strategies to create a gateway to university studies in the future, in the face of unexpected circumstances.

### *Program Constraint*

While financial issues were a defining characteristic among this ideal-type, the data analysis revealed that accessing the desired program of study produced another significant form of tension among the participants. Phara and Karine in particular, are both faced with this constraint in their endeavors to gain access to the social work program in university. While they take differing avenues in order to assure themselves entry into the program, they employ similar strategies. For example, Phara uses bridging

strategies when her grades in HS do not qualify her for admission to the social work technical program in CEGEP:

*...[programme]de jour, puis j'allais ici de soir en accueil. Puis après la session d'hiver j'suis montée en accueil de jour, puis là j'ai fait mes cours, puis là j'ai fait une demande pour rentrer cette année en sciences humaines, pour monter ma cote R, pour rentrer en travail social l'automne prochain. (Phara, age 19)*

It is also noteworthy to recall that Phara was among those who had a negative experience with their guidance counselor in HS (chapter 5). Rather than follow the advice of the advisor to enroll in a vocational program, she undertook her own research to achieve her initial goal. While she was unable to access the technical program of her choice on her first attempt, Phara took several steps; including registering in a program she dislikes (social science), in order to gain entry to the technical program the following year. Phara thus employs bridging strategies to resolve the program tension as well as the aforementioned economic tension.

Similarly, Karine found herself in the same predicament as Phara when she was refused admittance to the social work technical program due to its competitive nature and limited space. Like Phara, this constraint caused her to enroll in a program in early childhood education as a compromise. Subsequently, Karine strategizes on securing university admittance to her original program of choice:

*Je me dis que si je suis pas acceptée à l'université, j'aurai au moins quelque chose en main, parce que...Si par exemple, je fais une pré-universitaire et que je suis pas acceptée dans le programme que je veux puis qu'il faut que j'attende un an on va dire, je vais travailler en tant que vendeuse ou commis, ça m'intéresse pas. Alors que si j'ai une technique puis j'ai pas été acceptée dans le programme à l'université et il faut que j'attende un an, je peux travailler, avoir un bon salaire aussi. (Karine, age 17)*

Here, the tension between desire of, and accessibility to the university program of choice is demonstrated, seemingly as a consequence of Karine's inability to access her first choice program in CEGEP. Thus, Karine's rational choice rests on the benefit of being



able to work in her desired field thanks to the qualification she will have acquired through her technical program. This benefit outweighs the possible time costs in the event that she is not accepted to university. Furthermore, bridging strategies are well illustrated through this excerpt through which a technical program is used as a vehicle not only to gain access to her desired university program, but to also acquire a backup plan in the event that her primary goals cannot be achieved, while simultaneously dealing with possible future economic constraints. Karine also goes a step further to ensure her admittance to her university program of choice by extending the length of her CEGEP program of study from 3 to 4 years: “*Je suis entrée l’année passé, donc je suis à ma deuxième année. Je me suis mis sur quatre ans donc il me reste encore...je suis en train de faire ma deuxième année. Donc, finalement, il me reste trois ans encore* ». However, she also asserts that she wants to finish as soon as possible.

*Oui, c’est ça et je veux le terminer, je ne veux pas passer plus de temps ici, je veux vraiment le terminer. C’est pour ça que je veux pas changer de programme. Je préfère travailler encore très très fort ici pour pouvoir entrer à l’université. (Karine, age 17)*

For Karine, a change in program would act as hindrance to her university access, as opposed to a prolongation in a program already in course, even though both require a similar extension in terms of time. Interestingly, like Phara, she developed her own strategies when faced with unproductive experiences with her guidance counselor as well as limited guidance from her parents.

### *Parental Constraint*

A pathway under parental constraint involves tension between the expectations or desires of the participants and their parents. This tension can manifest due to conflicting ambitions or the participants’ perceived sense of obligation toward the family. In some cases (Cynthia, Phara), there simply exists no tension due to the broad laissez-faireism among the parents. For others (Sandra, Mirlande), the tension manifests to a pronounced degree.

Sandra was faced with tension due to her CEGEP program choice, which was deemed unacceptable by her parents. This case is interesting as it provides insight into one of the two scenarios where parents did not demonstrate a laissez-faire style during the transition to CEGEP (parents remained in the elitist configuration). In fact, when Sandra communicated her intention to pursue massage therapy as a profession, her parents became very distraught:

*Mes parents qui voulaient que je fasse un bon métier, ils voulaient que je sois avocate, médecin, non. Moi je voulais pas, ça a pris du temps avant de comprendre. Parce que moi ça, non. Ça m'intéressait pas, je ferais pas quelque chose que vous voulez que je fasse. Moi c'est ma vie, je vais faire ce que je veux. Puis, c'est ça j'ai eu une petite confrontation avec mon père par rapport à ça. Mon père a pas vraiment bien pris que je lui dise que je voulais être massothérapeute. Il a fait: «Ben là là, si t'es pour être massothérapeute, avoir su je t'aurais mis à l'école publique, je t'aurais pas payé des frais de scolarité pour le privé». Mon père y'a vraiment pété sa coche à ce moment-là. (Sandra, age 19)*

Here, the tension between parental and participant expectations is clear. However, while Sandra seems firm in her intention to pursue her own personal interests, she is also impressionable toward the desires of her parents. She therefore resolves the tension through a compromise in program by opting for a program of study in special education, which is deemed more acceptable by her parents:

*Ben c'est sûr qu'ils ont eu un petit pincement au cœur, « ah notre fille deviendra pas médecin, elle deviendra pas avocate », mais ils ont compris mes motivations puis y'ont fait comme : « ah oui, puis ça te ressemble plus ça ». (Sandra, age 19)*

Thus, while the program does not carry the same prestige her parents aspire for her, they are reassured by her future university goals and Sandra is able to stay true to her personal interests resulting in a mutually satisfactory situation for both parents and child.

Moreover, parental constraint can also manifest in the absence of conflicting desires:

*...j'imagine que c'est une pression que je me mets moi-même, mais non me semble que c'est généralisé, et même du fait que mes parents ils n'ont eu tant de scolarité que moi et tout, je*

*ressens le besoin, t'sais comme, je sais pas comment dire ça, booster (rires) la famille, mais genre, je sais pas, c'est comme, t'sais j'ai pas le choix de performer, d'avoir l'école parce que j'ai eu la chance moi, contrairement à eux. (Mirlande, age 24)*

In this passage, the parental tension is indirect. Contrary to Sandra's case, Mirlande's parents do not express any strong ambitions or opposition to her choices regarding her future profession. However, parental pressure related to re-integrating the job market seems to exist: « *En fait, c'est plus pour tout court réintégrer le marché du travail, parce que je sais pas, j'ai comme la pression de l'âge* ». While Mirlande expresses that the tension is related to age, it can be argued that the tension stems from her inability to demonstrate her successful professional integration to her parents in a timely fashion. As such, the parental constraint is an added aspect that Mirlande accounts for in her weighing of the costs and benefits pertaining to her decision to forgo university studies for a technical program.

### **6.2.2 An Example of the Constrained Pathway: Mirlande's Profile**

At the time of the interview, Mirlande was 24 years old and had already completed a technical program in graphic design, as well as two years in the workforce. Dissatisfied with her professional outcomes, she returned to CEGEP and was in the process of completing her first semester of a three-year technical program in physical rehabilitation.

Mirlande comes from a family of six children among which one is her twin sister. Her parents both emigrated from Haiti before they met in Quebec. Her father works as a taxi driver and has a secondary three education. Her mother who arrived with a primary school education obtained her HS diploma and later, certification as a nursing aide. She now works in domestic home care. Their social network mainly consists of members of the Haitian community.

Since primary school Mirlande has been a self-motivated, above average student. She attended a public school in her neighborhood from kindergarten to grade 6 where she excelled academically. She was very competitive in achieving the highest grades among her peer group and rarely asked for help with her work, nor did she have a desire to do so. Similarly, she set very high standards for herself at the HS level. Her father wanted to enroll her in a private school but she was not keen on the schools in her new neighborhood in the South Shore of Montreal. After doing some research, she and her parents selected a small semi-private school in Westmount, which configured high on the provincial rankings, and offered a variety of enriched courses, as well as an international program. Students were required to do advance mathematics, chemistry, and physics and achieving under a 70% average could result in expulsion.

Mirlande was involved in many extra-curricular activities such as ballet, gymnastics, cadets and sports. At some points, although she was never in danger of failing any classes, she was not able to achieve the results she desired. Her parents were very involved in her academic and social development, however when it came to her academic achievement, she declares that she is the sole person responsible for her high performance: *“Je te dirais vraiment mes parents, genre côté académique, c’est moi qui me mettais de la pression, tout court. Peu importe le niveau... je veux dire, c’est pas mes parents qui m’ont inculqué ça, c’était...je sais pas d’où ça sort. »*

Similarly to her HS pathway, she completed a three-year technical program in CEGEP without difficulty, and immediately entered the work force as a print designer upon graduation. However, after two years, the job was becoming more and more unpleasant. She started feeling as though her new career lacked a human interaction component and she no longer felt comfortable as part of the team she was working with. She decided to quit her job and took up another one in a banking institution for one year. When this proved to be just as unfulfilling, she made a decision to return to CEGEP in a second technical program, specializing in physical rehabilitation. Mirlande plans to re-integrate into the job market as soon as possible with the intention of pursuing university studies part-time in the future.

### 6.2.3 Interpretation

Through Mirlande's profile, constraints in their various forms can be examined in greater detail. In addition, the key dimensions that play a role in her pathway formation and the assortment of strategies she employs in dealing with the tension she encounters, as well as in her decision-making processes, provide important insight into the understanding of the *constrained pathway*.

#### 6.2.3.1 Extracurricular Experiences

To begin, it is obvious that Mirlande's disappointment with her first career experience led to the continuation of her academic pathway.

*...je m'investis vraiment beaucoup dans ce que j'entreprends donc ça prenait juste trop d'énergie. C'était pas sain comme environnement pour moi, aussi le facteur, t'sais le contact humain que j'avais pas, j'étais tout le temps enfermée dans mon bureau à whatever. Puis c'était un environnement vraiment ingrat, t'sais c'est, j'en étais consciente, comme en faisant le choix d'être graphiste, mais pour le vivre, comme ça fonctionnait pas avec moi. J'ai besoin de me sentir utile. (Mirlande, age 24)*

As a responsible, independent and work-oriented individual, Mirlande seems to face a certain block in the achievement of her perceived potential, which eventually led her to take the necessary steps to change careers. Therefore, her return to CEGEP can be seen here as an important strategy and solution in dealing with personal tension. However, her decision to leave her vocation after only two years had a major impact on her relationships with her family and peers:

*Quand j'ai démissionné, wow, c'était comme oh my god, pas juste mes parents là, tout mon entourage (rires) à part une, deux personnes. Ils me déconseillaient vraiment de démissionner, ils disaient «laisse le temps agir, bla,bla,bla» Ouin, ma mère était, ben traumatisée que je veuille démissionner, ouais, on a vraiment essayé de me convaincre de pas prendre cette décision... (Mirlande, age 24)*

In spite of her family's initial elitist parenting style, here, the ambitions seem lower than the general disposition identified among elitist parents, who tend to desire highly prestigious professions for their children (Tirtiaux, 2015). Therefore, the changeover to a laissez-faire parenting style as well as the family's low cultural capital may explain the parental opposition to Mirlande's job resignation. Thus, job market integration exists as a priority over prestige for Mirlande's family, which is in concordance with the literature review pertaining to cultural capital in chapter 2. Similarly, the family cultural capital seems to play a role in Mirlande's carefully calculated decision to pursue a second technical program versus a university program, since underprivileged families tend to view the completion of lower level studies as a significant accomplishment and thus, do not tend to encourage higher level studies (Boudon, 1994).

Even though Mirlande appears to exert significant autonomy and confidence in her decision-making: « *on a vraiment essayé de me convaincre de pas prendre cette décision, mais je l'ai prise* », her posture regarding the job market (re)integration seems to mirror that of her parents:

*En fait, c'est plus pour tout court réintégrer le marché du travail, parce que je sais pas, j'ai comme la pression de l'âge. Je sais que je suis encore jeune mais, dans ma tête, dans mon monde, dans mon livre là, ça se passait pas comme ça, à mon âge j'avais déjà comme ma job, j'étais set, plus. Puis là, vu que ça a pas fonctionné, ben j'ai comme, je pense que c'est cette pression-là de revenir sur le marché du travail. (Mirlande, age 24)*

The importance of securing employment and earning a good salary seems to be a part of Mirlande's ethos as she is very anxious to return to the job market. Furthermore, time seems to act as a tension point as well. At 24 years old, Mirlande is very keen on finishing her studies. It is also reasonable to assume that she may be eager to relieve her parents' concerns about her withdrawal from the job market, given her competitive and perfectionist nature as well as the importance of her family's role in her life and the class and family habitus she has been exposed to. Therefore, the bridging strategy of choosing a more easily attainable program addresses the parental tension while simultaneously leaving future university access available.

### 6.2.3.2 Interactions with the CEGEP

Mirlande continuously navigates the PSE system with aptitude and autonomy, consistently doing independent research and attending open-houses at various institutions in order to make informed decisions. Returning to CEGEP as a mature student didn't come without its challenges, especially pertaining to her instructors and peers:

*Dans le sens, ils avaient zéro plan, puis les profs étaient juste comme sans expression ou des fois juste la matière qu'ils tentaient de nous transmettre dans le fond, je sais pas ils étaient juste devant leur Power Point puis ils lisaient, comme ça genre, puis leur cours étaient finis. Tu sais eux ils manquaient, ils avaient clairement pas de passion, certains profs en tout cas. Bref, il y avait un traumatisme des profs au cégep. Contrairement à mes profs au secondaire qui, ils étaient tous passionnés, genre vraiment intenses. Fait que c'est ça bref. (Mirlande, age 24)*

As a motivated and determined student, Mirlande appears to be underwhelmed by the perceived attitude of her teachers. This is perhaps a result of the fact that it is her second time doing a technical program whereby she possibly developed a more critical view given her personal and academic experience.

Moreover, Mirlande expresses difficulty relating to her mostly younger and Quebecois peers:

*Ben au début j'ai trouvé ça vraiment difficile là. Comme j'ai rien à leur dire, je sais pas, on est pas nés du même monde, déjà en partant puis là comme, on vient pas de la même génération. Fait que c'est bizarre. Ouais. (Mirlande, age 24)*

We can recall in the previous chapter, Mirlande expresses a very pronounced dissociation from the Quebecois culture (p.42). These perceived cultural differences, coupled with the gap in age between she and her peers appear to present an integration challenge as she also asserts being less implicated in school life, in contrast to her first CEGEP experience.

Nevertheless, Mirlande's interactions with the CEGEP are not all negative:

*Je suis allée au [cégep X], puis c'était vraiment proche de nous, t'sais à côté, ça me ressemblait plus comme approche, puis aussi un des guides, c'était vraiment drôle, en tout cas, il, je lui expliquais mon parcours, puis je lui disais «oh mon dieu, je me sens vieille, puis là je te vois toi, c'est vraiment une bonne chose que tu aies été guide», puis là il est : «je sais, puis t'sais c'était vraiment dur». Il m'expliquait son parcours puis ça me ressemblait tellement c'était genre ok non, wow là, ça a juste bien adonné, puis il disait vraiment que « ah, ça va être difficile, mais genre c'est pour la bonne cause, inquiète-toi pas»...Mais je te dirais, ouais ça a vraiment été ça qui a fait pencher la balance. (Mirlande, age 24)*

The presentation made by the CEGEP personnel during the open-house visit increased Mirlande's confidence in her choices regarding institution and program, as well as returning to her CEGEP studies. Not only is she consoled about her age-related malaise, but she is also comforted and inspired by the common experiences the guide shares. In fact, she asserts that their exchange had a direct influence on her decision to enroll in the physical rehabilitation program at this specific CEGEP. As such, her connection with the CEGEP guide appears to be a benefaction to her CEGEP integration as highlighted in the literature review regarding access to mentors and relatable members of faculty in PSE (Swail et al. 2003; Tinto, 1993).

### **6.2.3.3 Objective and Subjective Dimensions**

Frequent experiences of success have kept Mirlande motivated academically. Her ambition and self-sufficiency are dominant traits revealed in her discourse. Withal, in spite of her favorable academic profile, Mirlande expresses feeling added pressure to perform as a Black VM in contrast to others:

*...Parce que t'sais, exemple, ça m'est arrivé d'être comparée avec une autre étudiante, exemple, nous deux on est allées à la place, puis moi on met plus l'emphase «ah oui, toi t'avais ben de la difficulté, surement, c'est difficile hein pour toi ?», «Non, je parle français, je suis née ici, j'en ai pas de difficultés», ce commentaire-là «Tu parles-tu français ?», «Oui, je parle français chouchou», c'est frustrant. (Mirlande, age 24)*



Mirlande interprets the personnel's assumption that she is experiencing difficulty as a result of the color of her skin. What is interesting in the excerpt is that in the face of perceived racism, Mirlande asserts that she was born in Quebec and that she is French-speaking, conversely to her general disposition about her Quebecois identity, whereby she feels little association to the culture (see ch. 5).

Furthermore, Mirlande also communicates an underlying feeling of being subjected to lowered expectations and negative stereotypes from CEGEP staff members:

*...«Ah ouais ? T'as des notes comme ça, ah nice, c'est bien !», mais t'sais je ressens toujours le petit côté en arrière de ça t'sais, j'arrive pas à le voir que c'est «ah, tu peux avoir plus de difficultés comme une autre élève»...Mais ça m'est arrivé souvent que les cadres, genre me disent «t'as trop de cours ? Tu veux-tu en annuler ?», t'sais me prendre par la main «ah mais ça va être difficile pour toi hein ?», comme non, non... (Mirlande, age 24)*

It seems baffling for Mirlande to find herself in such a circumstance given that she does not appear to experience any academic difficulties throughout the entirety of her educational pathway. As such, the adverse effects of a deficiency perspective toward minority groups (Douglas et al., 2008) as well as the fact that Black youth become more exposed to systemic racism than any other group (Krahn & Taylor, 2005), may be observed through Mirlande's perspective.

Mirlande's experiences with perceived racism are not limited to her school environment. She professes facing unfair and racist treatment both directly and implicitly in the workforce : « Tu sais je travaille à la caisse, «ben comment ça t'as ce poste-là toi, tu devrais pas avoir de poste de même, tu nous voles nos jobs», as well as in the street: "...je disais ça de même, qu'il y a beaucoup de racisme encore. Que je me fais encore traiter de nègre, négresse pour rien ». As such, racism can be identified as another form of tension in Mirlande's pathway. She professes having to perform better and having to do more than others, in order to disprove the negative stereotypes and expectations she feels subjected to. While Mirlande's experiences with racism have caused her a great deal

of bewilderment and frustration, she considers herself very fortunate to have been so successful in school in the face of such circumstances.

*Mais je veux dire, j'avais quand même les chances de mon côté en étant bonne à l'école. Je pouvais pas, comme je leur laissais pas vraiment de place...en tout cas [le racisme], pour l'observer beaucoup, wow. C'est vraiment présent. (Mirlande, age 24)*

She believes that her focus on her education allows her to overcome obstacles related to discrimination and provides her the ability to refrain from giving such behaviors any attention and seemingly playing a role in the development of her resilience.

#### **6.2.4 Conclusion**

Albeit the relatively decisive nature of the participants towards their future professions, the corpus revealed a variety of tension points that interacted with their decisions, and produced pathway constraint. Thus, the decision-making processes of the participants were highly pragmatic in nature whereby costs and benefits were heavily weighed, and tended to involve bridging strategies. In other words, greater opportunities for success were ensured by the choice of programs that were more accessible (often technical programs) which may or may not provide a viable avenue to a university program or a program of higher prestige. Like the participants in the *exploratory pathway*, a strong sense of resilience emerged as a reliable mechanism in overcoming constraints.

### **6.3 The Disoriented Pathway**

The *disoriented pathway* manifests through the participants' very high degree of indecision, unawareness and confusion pertaining to PSE and its navigational system. While future profession is central to the decision-making process, the pathway to get there is nebulous and distressing. As such, the resulting pathways for the two participants (Jackson, Pascale) who demonstrated a *disoriented pathway* were highly atypical,

involving various turning points, bifurcations and multiple changes in institutions, programs and levels of study.

### 6.3.1 General Description of the Disoriented Pathway

Starting in HS, the *disoriented pathway* participants seem to begin their PSE journey at a disadvantage due to a lack of guidance and information. In spite of their high aspirations, they are faced with very obscure circumstances involving their transition to CEGEP. For example, Jackson's pathway is seriously set off-course from the indecision that arises when he discovers that he does not have the swimming pre-requisite to qualify for admittance to his desired program in police technology: "*Non, non, honnêtement je savais pas. J'ai toujours été indécis, je savais pas. J'veux dire à la minute qu'on nous a dit tu seras pas policier... »*. This indecision led him to enroll in a pre-university social science program based on the recommendation of his friends:

*Exactement, je savais pas où ça allait me mener pis tout le monde disait en joke «quand tu sais pas où tu t'en vas, tu vas en sciences humaines». Puis tu verras. Puis là j'ai fait mes cours en sciences humaines, j'aimais pas ça c'était plate. (Jackson, age 26)*

Jackson later regretted his decision. He was unable to make the connection between the courses he was taking and where they would lead him, in addition to finding the content boring. Pascale's experience is similar. While she had teaching as a future profession in mind, she did not have the slightest idea of what program to choose in order to achieve this goal. As a result, she enrolled in the Springboard program.

*On savait pas, c'est arrivé en secondaire 5 que tout à coup on nous a parlé du premier tour, de s'inscrire. Puis on s'inscrit où? Pourquoi là? Quoi? On était tellement pas préparés, oh my god. Puis la majorité sont allés en accueil intégration au cégep parce qu'ils savent pas, fallait juste t'inscrire au cégep pour t'inscrire au cégep. C'est malade, c'est malade moi j'ai été à [cégep X]. Pourquoi j'ai été à [cégep X]? Je sais pas. (rires) Je sais pas! J'ai été en accueil intégration en première session, ouais j'ai été en accueil intégration à [cégep X] parce que c'est pas loin de chez nous, je suppose. J'suis allée à [cégep Y] parce que beaucoup de mes amis allaient à [cégep y].*

*Parce qu'ils sont à [école X] fait que c'est plus rapide le trajet pour eux, j pense que c'est vraiment comme ça qu'on pensait. Puis on était pas préparé partout là. Vraiment, t'es là puis t'es comme « Qu'est-ce que je fais là? Qu'est-ce que j'fais là? » Ils nous ont pas préparé du tout...(Pascale, age 22)*

This passage illustrates the degree of bewilderment Pascale was faced with. She has many unanswered questions in terms of where to and what to study, and why. Therefore, she selects the Springboard program due to an unawareness of alternative options. Pascale appears to be operating on “auto-pilot” not only in terms of program selection but also CEGEP institution. In fact, both participants chose the CEGEP that is in closest proximity to their homes, seemingly for a lack of more meaningful criteria to base their choice on. Here, it is noteworthy that both participants were among those who had negative experiences with their school guidance counselors as highlighted in the preceding chapter.

What is also interesting is that both participants face very similar challenges in spite of their differing cultural capital backgrounds (Jackson having a high cultural capital, and Pascale having a low one), which can be further illustrated through the dynamics within their families. Both families deviated from the strictest parenting style (cocoon) to a laissez-faire one during the CEGEP transition process. We can recall from chapter 3 that parental laissez-faireism can in part be characterized by the importance and promotion of the general notion of PSE access in the absence of specific guidance pertaining to how to, or what to do, in order to achieve it.

*Ils voulaient que j'aille au cégep...on m'a toujours encouragé à continuer et continuer. Mais continuer dans quoi? Faire quoi? ...C'était vraiment à cause...j'étais au cégep, c'était pour ma mère, qu'elle soit contente. (Pascale, age 22)*

This excerpt exemplifies the existing ambiguity when it comes to parental expectations in relationship to the participant's PSE decision-making process. Pascale's family has a low cultural capital, which could possibly explain the vague nature of input as highlighted in the literature review (Boudon, 1994). However, Jackson's family which has a high

cultural capital demonstrates similar tendencies and seemingly to a more pronounced degree:

*Ben moi j'ai eu un problème que j'ai jamais su vers où j voulais aller. J'ai toujours voulu être policier, ça a toujours été une obsession, policier, prof de maths, pis t'avais tes parents qui te découragent. Les gendarmes d'Haïti, c'est pas bon. Ma mère m'a toujours découragé. Elle m'a jamais vraiment appuyé dans mes choix et tout. (Jackson, age 26)*

Not only is the parental laissez-faireism present, but it appears to be compounded by the negative general feedback from Jackson's mother pertaining to his personal and professional choices. While cultural capital seems to play less of a role in the family disposition, the cultural dimension seems to come into play whereby the negative perception of police officers seem to be part of the mother's ethos. Moreover, Jackson communicates a similar portrayal of his father: « *Puis mon père aussi m'avait « brainwashé » en me disant que ça [sciences humaines] t'amènerait nulle part. Puis j'voyais pas où ça m'emmenait.* » (Jackson, age 26). Again, Jackson receives very general feedback of a negative nature regarding his program of study, without any clear guidance or aid in the resolution of his indecision. Therefore, he seems to develop a sense of deluge and abandonment from his family when in need of support which grapple with his PSE aspirations:

*Mais t'sais, moi j'ai eu, mon problème c'est que j'ai jamais eu d'appui, j'ai jamais eu de référence. Mon grand frère y'a coulé des cours, donc c'est moi, j'ai fini mon secondaire avant mon frère. Puis euh, y'avait personne pour me guider. J'étais comme dans un océan je savais pas où j'allais, j'savais pas ce que je faisais, je savais pas où ça allait me mener. J'savais pas où j'allais, je, j'ai eu l'ambition de savoir où j'allais vers les dernières années. Je savais pas encore là, après ça j'ai changé enseignant en éducation physique, après ça j'ai vu que y'avait pas de débouchés. Fait que là, je savais pas où j'allais. Moi je connais plein d'amis qui ont des diplômes puis qui travaillent dans des domaines complètement nuls, dans des entrepôts, puis des trucs comme ça. Donc, c'est triste, je me cherchais. (Jackson, age 26)*

In the absence of guidance, Jackson applies a type of trial and error strategy in his PSE choices while relying on the lessons learned from peers to foster a sense of direction.

Consequently, both participants constructed atypical PSE pathways involving many bifurcations. In fact, Jackson's PSE pathway involves three changes in institutions, four changes in programs, and three different PSE levels of study.

*J'ai fait dans le fond sciences humaines un an, après ça j'ai changé sciences pures un an, 1 an et demi puis là ça allait pas bien dans mes cours, j'avais des échecs. Fait que là j'ai refini mes sciences humaines, j'ai été à l'université pour enseignement de l'éducation physique, zéro intéressant. Ben zéro intéressant...pas de débouchés. J'veux dire j'voulais pas me ramasser dans un gym à 15\$ de l'heure donc, puis faire de la suppléance, puis c'est très difficile à rentrer, tout le monde est là. Y'a plein de personne dans le programme puis ils prennent plein de personnes puis y'a pas de débouchés. (Jackson, age 26)*

In spite of Jackson's lack of direction in his pathway, the pay-off of his decisions is an important part of his discourse. As such, Jackson's rational choice calculations (Boudon, 1974) involve several dimensions. First, as discussed in chapter 2, individuals tend to continue their studies if the advantages of pursuing them outweigh the costs. In the first segment of Jackson's pathway, the benefit of acquiring a DEC<sup>16</sup> in a social science program outweighs the cost of studying courses that are unfulfilling for him. As such, he decides to continue his studies even though he does not enjoy the courses, nor does he have a clear vision of where it may lead him. Consequently, his dissatisfaction with the social science program seems to affect his subsequent choices. Pertaining to his university studies, the cost in terms of time lost in pursuing the program coupled with the risk of not obtaining a well-paying job outweigh the benefits of having a university diploma, leading him to abandon his university studies.

Furthermore, given that Jackson appears to be making many important decisions on his own, a poor social network can be hypothesized as a possible hindrance to his pathway. In fact, a lack of strong social networks often leads to significant challenges encountered in the PSE institutions (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013). Consequently, both Jackson and Pascale become reliant on peers as a resource in terms of aiding with their indecision and disorientation.

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<sup>16</sup> Acronym for « Diplôme d'études collégiales », a diploma for collegial studies.

*Puis là mon ami lui y allait aux cours de soirs à [cégep x], puis il m'en a parlé. Mais je savais pas que ça existait ça...Avoir su j'aurais fait mes cours de base depuis très longtemps mais je savais pas que ça existait. (Pascale, age 22)*

While the literature suggests that an over-reliance on peers may produce adverse results in terms of student integration (Sinacore & Lerner, 2013), it does not appear to be the case for Jackson and Pascale. Jackson finds peace of mind after consulting with a friend who recommends the technical program in paramedics he was enrolled in at the time of the interview: “*Pis euh, j'ai eu la chance d'aller dans le programme Paramédic, un de mes amis m'avait offert de faire le cours avec lui, pis ça a l'air super intéressant, c'est, c'est un domaine spécial en plus, donc*”. Similarly, for Pascale, the advice from a friend pertaining to part-time evening studies is the marker of an important turning point in her pathway when she is finally able to gain clearer insight on how to achieve her goals, given that she had no awareness of these options prior. The section that follows provides a closer look into the *disoriented pathway* through Pascale's experiences.

### **6.3.2 An Example of the Disoriented Pathway: Pascale's Profile**

At the time of the interview, Pascale was 22 years old and had just regained full-time status in a pre-university social science program after two “stop-outs” and four changes in institutions. Her goal is to attend university immediately after acquiring her CEGEP diploma to study education in order to become a French teacher.

Pascale is the youngest of four brothers and four sisters all born in Haiti. With the help of extended family members, her father established himself in Quebec by working in factories in order to be able to send for her, her mother and her siblings shortly thereafter. The transition to Quebec proved arduous, involving many sacrifices as well as the development of her mother's illness. Her mother currently works as an early childhood educator and her parents' social network widely consists of other Haitians they met at work or at church.

Pascale was seven years old and in the third grade of primary school when her family immigrated to Quebec. Creole being her only language of communication, she was placed in a multi-age welcoming class in her neighborhood public school in Montreal North. She recalls her initial social integration process as a difficult one, whereby she was often bullied by older students in her class, and excluded by peers in her age group. Nevertheless, she excelled academically and acquired the French language with ease. The following year, she applied to a school recommended by a family friend in close proximity of her home. For reasons unbeknown to her, she was refused acceptance and was instead referred to a school located further from her residence where she completed grade three in a regular program. She developed a liking for her new school and adapted well, stating that the environment made her feel “normal” and included. She credits her success in math to her teachers whom she deems competent and caring. In spite of her positive experiences at this school, her mother reapplied to their first choice school the year after. She was accepted and completed grades 4-6 successfully. While she did not enjoy her later primary school experiences as much as the earlier ones, she continued to excel academically. She considers herself a very fast learner, especially in comparison to other students. She developed a passion for reading, and she was very apt in mathematics, which she believes to be a result of her early years in Haiti where she sang in order to memorize her multiplication tables. While she perceives herself to be an excellent student, she states that she was very talkative and caused a lot of trouble in class.

In HS, Pascale attended the public school nearest to her home in a sports-study program, which she enjoyed, mainly because of the availability of a wide variety of activities. After a year, her family moved to the east end of Montreal causing her to have to change schools. Her new school was known for gang violence and it was not uncommon for it to be featured in the news. This transition proved particularly challenging, namely because the gang culture was organized by colors: although the school was in a “blue” zone, Pascale was from a “red” neighborhood which resulted in her being harassed regularly and involved in several fights as a new student. Eventually, she established a peer group and the intimidation dissipated. Academically, she continued to do well, however, she



began to experience some difficulty in math in spite of her success at the primary level. She maintains that she remained a disruptive student in class, yet would still perform well in spite of being removed from class frequently.

Pascale's pathway became highly problematic when it came time to apply to CEGEP. While her teachers were supportive and encouraging, she and her peers faced a strong lack of guidance, preparation and knowledge when it came to applying to CEGEP and making career choices. In spite of having access to an academic advisor, they were severely lost in the navigation process. Pascale asserts that the time with the guidance counselor was useless, as she and her peers did not have the slightest comprehension of what the counselor was actually presenting to them. As a result, she registered in a Springboard program. Pascale states that she simply chose the CEGEP that was nearest to her house and had absolutely no understanding why she applied to the program she chose. She ended up completing one semester in the Springboard program, followed by two semesters in the social sciences program. She felt so disoriented that eventually she dropped out. However, due to her absence of knowledge regarding withdrawal procedures, she simply stopped attending rather than withdrawing formally, which later affected her R-score, and ultimately resulted in her official expulsion from the CEGEP.

Eventually, Pascale took up a job, and after a year, decided to return to her studies. She signed up at a private college, however, due to personal problems she dropped out shortly thereafter as well. Once she worked through her personal issues, she tried to reapply to the CEGEP she first attended, but was refused admission due to her poor academic standing. Thereafter, she gained admission to a different institution as a part-time night student where she worked diligently at improving her academic record. Her hard work led her back to the pre-university social sciences program that she is now enrolled in full-time.

### 6.3.3 Interpretation

Pascale's profile reveals some very interesting dynamics between the historic, economic, social and institutional dimensions in her pathway, as well as the significance of her family's role in its construction. A broader interpretation of the *disoriented pathway* through Pascale's account allows for some key obstacles to be identified, as well as the ways in which they manifested, and ultimately how they were resolved.

#### 6.3.3.1 Extracurricular Experiences

As stated above, Pascale's family plays an important role in her PSE pathway and like the other families of the corpus, places a high priority on education, especially PSE access.

*... puis que mon père soit content, t'sais chaque fois que je commence l'école t'sais il est content. Il aime ça, il aime vraiment vraiment ça mais, j'allais au cégep, j'allais au cégep, j'allais au cégep... (Pascale, age 22)*

Pascale identifies her parents as key reasons for pursuing PSE. Nevertheless, her repetition of the phrase "*I was going to CEGEP*" seems to emphasize the nature of her parents' expectations whereby they simply halt at that very notion. A possible explanation for her family's disposition is their low human capital, which limits the nature of the guidance they are able to offer her. Here, the *laissez-faireism* seems to have a more pronounced impact for Pascale in relationship to the other participants, as it ultimately leads to an interruption in her studies.

*Quand j'ai arrêté, parce que j'ai arrêté d'aller au cégep pour comme une ou deux sessions, puis c'était l'enfer à la maison. J'avais besoin de me retrouver, j'avais besoin de savoir je vais vers quoi, où je me dirigeais parce que j'étais en classe puis j'étais comme « qu'est-ce que je fous là »? Fait que c'était l'enfer à la maison. (Pascale, age 22)*

Her parents' uninvolvement in her CEGEP navigational process seems contributory to her decision to drop out. However, while her parents were angry about her decision to discontinue her studies, it appears to be a strategy she employs in order to solve her problems independently, in the seemingly absence of any other resources. As such the family dimension seems to act as an enhancement as well as a limitation simultaneously, which coincides with Ma & Frempong's (2008) postulate regarding the dual impact that family support networks can have on PSE integration, underscored in chapter 2.

Furthermore, Pascale also faced some personal problems, which she does not elaborate on, that seem to have had a negative impact on her pathway as it led to the second discontinuation in her studies:

*Sauf que j'ai foiré, j'ai vraiment foiré [cégep z]. Excuse mon langage mais j'ai, ehm... ça s'est pas bien passé. J'ai eu plusieurs problèmes personnels durant ce temps-là, fait que là après [cégep z] j'ai arrêté. (Pascale, age 22)*

Retrospectively, Pascale expresses regret about her decisions:

*T'sais des fois j'avais juste envie de retourner dans mon passé puis de me donner une claque sur la face! J'avais été tellement, j'avais de bonnes notes à [cégep z], mais c'était la motivation. J'étais pas motivée, c'est ça que j'avais pas. J'avais juste besoin d'un chemin puis y a même des cours que j'ai fait que j'ai même pas de besoin maintenant. (Pascale, age 22)*

Pascale's own self-analysis reveals that her lack of motivation was counterproductive to her academic abilities and thus contributed to her study abandonment. This sense of discouragement seems to be connected to her feelings of bewilderment, which began early in the pathway and remained present for the majority of her CEGEP path. Nonetheless, the importance of PSE access within the family habitus seems to resolve the impediments she faces in the end, and ultimately lead to her planned perseverance: “Ben, mes plans... moi ça a toujours été clair que, ben, toujours...c'est pas vrai, mais aller à l'université.”

### 6.3.3.2 Interactions with the CEGEP

Pascale's solitude in the navigational process to CEGEP extends beyond the family dimension to the academic institutions she attended. She expresses feeling extremely unprepared even prior to the decision-making process when it came to her future academic pathway.

*On était pas préparés, ça vraiment pas. Puis je le dis puis je le redis, je sens comme t'sais si ma génération c'était une génération sacrifiée. Sacrifiée, on savait même pas dans quoi qu'on embarquait. Y en a pleins que je rencontre aujourd'hui puis ils ont arrêté l'école, je suis comme pourquoi: ben je sais pas quoi faire, je sais pas où me diriger. C'était pas une réalité qu'on a vécue, pour vrai la seule chose qu'ont sait c'est qu'en secondaire 3, il fallait avoir « 4-16 » ou « 4-36 »...Mais déjà là tu décidais de ton avenir mais tu t'en rendais pas compte parce que pour toi « 4-36 » c'est ceux qui sont plates là, c'est les petits intelligents qui écoutent. Puis « 4-16 » c'est tes amis t'sais, tout le monde est là. Pourtant tu fais pas un choix, tu viens de faire un choix décisif parce que t'es « 4-36 » au [cégep y] a des affaires qui te le demandent...Non, ils nous ont pas préparé. (Pascale, age 22)*

This passage illustrates a lack of direction and even misguidance as early as secondary 3 for Pascale. The implications of the different math levels (4-16 or 4-36) were very unclear to Pascale and her HS peers. Yet, these were dire choices pertaining to their CEGEP paths. There seems to be an unofficially streaming process happening as Pascale refers to her “sacrificed generation”, implying that she was among many who experienced the same fate, which resulted in very adverse PSE circumstances. This excerpt is interesting as it exemplifies the theory of social inequalities whereby individuals belonging to a dominated class are subjected to an illusion of equal opportunities for success, thus accepting their failures as normalcy out of unawareness of a school structure that reproduces social inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This can be further supported through the type of guidance that was offered by the school:

*...tout ce qu'ils nous disaient c'est qu'il faut se préparer, il faut au moins se préparer au cégep ça va être plus difficile, ça va être plus tough. « Travaillez dur, travaillez dur, vous êtes capables, vous êtes capables », mais on savait pas...(Pascale, age 22)*

Therefore, the students are provided with high hopes in the absence of tools or education on how to achieve them. Furthermore, the school institution seems to parallel the same problem Pascale faced with her parents. There is an over-emphasis on CEGEP access and a serious deficiency in terms of how to succeed at it. As a result, Pascale and many of her peers ended up dropping out.

*Premier tour, t'inscrire... ok, ben c'est sûr que je vais au cégep là c'est sûr. Y en a qui étaient avec moi au cégep ils ont lâché parce qu'ils savaient pas qu'est-ce qu'ils foutaient là. Ils sont juste partis. On leur a dit : « Ah non, il te faut des maths de ça, te faut tes sciences, tes sciences humaines, là là là ». Fait que t'allais aux adultes tu faisais tout ça, puis finalement c'est pourquoi je fais tout ça t'sais. Fait que...(Pascale, age 22)*

Again, the prominence of the PSE access notion from school and home seems to be effective as it is a certainty for Pascale and her peers. However, once accomplished, some significant integration issues arise. For example, many of Pascale's peers ended up in the adult sector where their chances of success were minimal in a seriously flawed system when it comes to meeting the needs of immigrant youth (Potvin & Leclercq, 2011). While Pascale did not end up in the adult sector herself, the impact of the misguidance she was subjected to is apparent in her early CEGEP experiences.

*...durant les deux sessions que j'avais été en sciences humaines, j'ai saccagé ma cote R. Fait que je pouvais pas rentrer, même [cégep y] là ils m'avaient expulsé. J'ai vraiment saccagé, j'avais sept cours j'en passais 2-3. Les autres, ça m'intéressait plus, j'y allais plus. Puis même maintenant encore, y a encore les impacts t'sais j'ai comme 92, après tu vois 13-14 que j'ai été deux fois dans le cours. T'sais j'aurais pu juste l'annuler mais je m'en foutais, c'était comme...Le prof va voir que j'suis pas là t'sais! (rires) Puis maintenant je travaille vraiment très, très fort pour remonter ma cote R au maximum pour les cours qu'il me reste à faire...(Pascale, age 22)*

Pascale's time in the Springboard program does not appear to have served any purpose, in spite of its main goal being to facilitate integration. Not only was Pascale unfulfilled with the courses she was following, but she still appears to have very little understanding of the navigational process by the time she transfers to the social science program. Her

lack of knowledge regarding the rules and procedures of failing out, or withdrawing from courses, had long lasting repercussions on her pathway, which she was still trying to repair at the time of the interview.

In contrast, when Pascale finally accessed the support she needed to navigate the CEGEP system through a mandatory assignment to an academic advisor, the benefits were quite apparent:

*...c'était la condition si je voulais être [étudiante] de jour. Si j'allais pas la voir ben ok tu seras pas de jour! C'était vraiment un suivi, elle me demandait comment ça va, elle m'aidait comment arranger mes examens, t'sais avoir une feuille puis tu sais exactement... Puis ça m'a aidé oui, c'était le fun de voir que quelqu'un était là pour... ouin. C'était emmerdant là parce que j'travaillais puis j'voulais me dépêcher pour finir plus tôt, y a des jours j'avais pas de classe, j'venais pareil mais ça... La madame a été gentille puis elle me donnait des petits trucs aussi. Puis c'est ça là j'suis à temps plein maintenant de jour, première session temps plein à [cégep x].*  
(Pascale, age 22)

Pascale's motivation seems to become renewed once she develops an understanding of what she is doing and gains a clearer vision of her pathway by way of proper guidance and encouragement. She clearly has a strong appreciation for her newfound support, which eventually led her to regain her full-time status as a day student in the social science program. This outcome coincides with the literature pertaining to the benefits of making contact with positive role models (Swail et al., 2003) and developing positive relationships with faculty and staff (Kuh et al., 2006) and subsequently, the adverse effects of their lack or inexistence (Ma & Frempong, 2008). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Pascale's access to these positive networks only became available when she was identified as being vulnerable to failure by the CEGEP. Pascale's turbulent pathway suggests that it would be necessary to make these resources available at the onset of the CEGEP pathway.

### 6.3.3.3. Objective and Subjective Dimensions

While a major part of Pascale's PSE pathway was tumultuous, like many of the participants in the sample, her resilience acts as sustenance for its success. In fact, Pascale associates her early experiences in the public school system to her adaptability and perseverance throughout her pathway in light of the fact that her parents could not afford to offer her a private school education:

*...J'suis contente de pas être allée [à l'école privée]. Je connaissais du monde qui y allait puis, quand ils sont arrivés au cégep, au secondaire ils étaient pas...ils étaient pas préparés pour ce qui les attendait, à côtoyer...On a vu, j'ai vécu des choses vraiment traumatisantes au primaire ou... non pas au primaire mais au secondaire, mais t'sais c'était de la violence, des batailles, na na na. Mais eux, quand ça se présentait à eux ils savaient pas trop comment réagir. Fait que par rapport à ça j'suis contente d'avoir fréquenté des écoles publiques. Les nationalités différentes... t'endurcir, ça ça m'a aidé à ça. Puis, tu vois les choses différemment, t'es plus, j'trouve que mentalement t'es plus, t'es moins bébé lala, t'es plus endurcie. J'suis pas une "thug" là mais comme... (Pascale, age 22)*

What is interesting in this passage is the dual impact of the low family cultural capital and SES. While it is possible that they may have played a negative role in terms of Pascale's transition and initial integration to CEGEP, it also appears to benefit the development of her resilience as well as aspects of her social integration. Although she encountered significant PSE navigational obstacles, she appears to be socially adept in an unfamiliar environment due to her HS experiences during which she overcame some traumatic situations.

Furthermore, Pascale is also aware of the low expectations that exist for those who come from neighborhoods such as hers, as well as the reality of the pernicious outcomes experienced by many of her previous HS classmates:

*...parce que quand tu viens de [école x], on s'attend à ce que tu finisses mal...Comme, ben, on me l'a envoyé dans face puis j'ai vu des filles qui allaient à l'école avec moi qui ont pas très bien fini parce qu'elles ont cherché la facilité pour avoir de l'argent plus facilement puis... T'sais ça te fait*

*mal parce que des fois je me dit mais pourquoi tu fais ça? Genre, pourquoi tu fais des conneries comme ça? Pourquoi tu fais ce qu'on attend de toi? Alors que tu peux viser tellement plus haut...Fait que, juste apprendre à ces enfants-là que t'sais ils peuvent réussir, y a rien qui les oblige à faire des choses négatives puis tout puis à rester en bas de l'échelle. (Pascale, age 22)*

Pascale's intentions seem to be to avoid the manifestation of such expectations. In fact, Pascale perceives success as a certainty. She also reveals her awareness of the social status of her community on a wider scale, as well as the necessity to improve it. Her motivation seems increased, not only to succeed and pursue higher levels of education, but also to countermand negative expectations and outcomes. As such, Pascale expresses plans to return to her community and visit other parts of the world in order to help young people like herself in the future.

Finally, while some obstacles, such as an inability to relate to course content and failing grades led to interruptions in her studies, her academic successes seem to contribute to her perseverance in contrast:

*...ouais je savais que j'allais là-dedans [enseignement], mais c'était pas une certitude alors que maintenant tu me poses la question puis je le sais. C'est une certitude que j'ai, peu importe qu'est-ce qui arrive. Je le sais là. Je devais aller à l'université, c'était long, je savais pas... j'aimais la psychologie, j'aimais la sociologie, je... ah! Finalement, c'est comme qu'après tout ce temps-là j'suis revenue au plan initial. (Pascale, age 22)*

As such, Pascale's acquisition of the necessary skills to navigate the CEGEP system, appear not only to subside her indecision, but also play an important role in her perseverance and future aspirations.

#### **6.3.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the *disoriented pathway* can mainly be characterized by the participants' indecision, unawareness and confusion in the early stages of the pathway. The decision-making processes are arduous whereby choices are made generally by trial and error and



tend to result in retrospective regret. While future profession is critical, the attainment process is nebulous and distressing, seemingly due to the lack of guidance and role models; a major theme in the discourse. However, the entirety of the pathway is not bleak. Participant resilience manifests as a key resolution to an initially ambiguous experience, resulting in a satisfactory and attainable academic and future professional project.

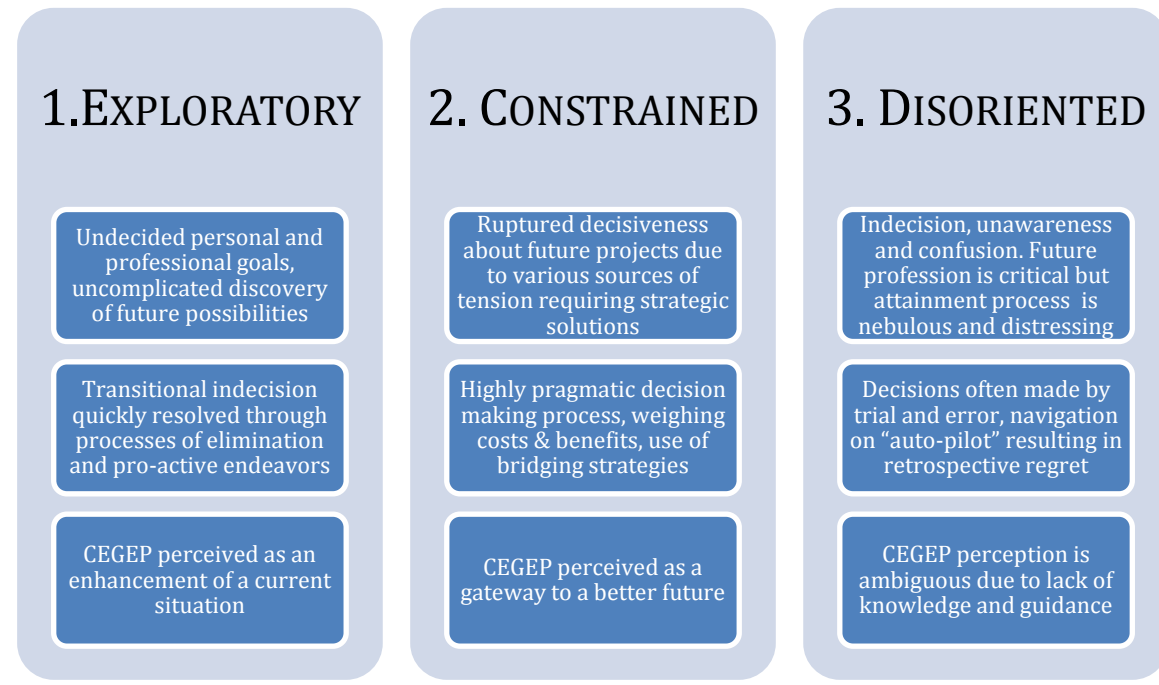
#### **6.4 Summary**

The typological analysis produced three ideal-types (table 1) which allowed for a rich description of the pathways undertaken by the participants, as well as a deeper understanding of the dynamics between the dimensions that demarcate them in conjunction with the general findings discussed in the previous chapter. The *exploratory pathway* can be typified by the undecided professional goals yet uncomplicated CEGEP experiences through which an emphasis is placed on university aspirations. Thus, CEGEP is perceived as an enhancement of a current situation and transitional indecision is quickly resolved through processes of elimination and pro-active endeavors. In contrast, the *constrained pathway* can be characterized by an arresting form of tension, mainly related to finances, program access, and parental expectations. As such, creative and practical strategies, notably, bridging strategies were enacted in order to secure a future gateway to university and consequently a perceived better future. Finally, the *disoriented pathway*'s defining features involve severe confusion and difficult decision-making and integration processes. The navigation of the PSE system is mostly done on "auto-pilot" and decisions are mostly made by trial and error. Nevertheless, future professional attainment and success remain critical in spite of the ambiguity in the CEGEP perception. While there is clear distinctiveness among each pathway, there were also apparent points of convergence, namely the evident internalization of the importance of PSE attainment through the family habitus as well as the substantial agency demonstrated by the participants. The resilience and strategy activation were consistent across the corpus in

the face of indecision and adversity and thus, a major enhancement to all three types of pathways.

**Table 1**

*Three Types of Postsecondary Pathways*



## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion**

The typology that was devised from the analysis allows for an intricate understanding of the interplay between the array of dimensions that characterize the complex educational pathways of Haitian youth, in conjunction with their collective representations and parental configurations. The goal of the research project was to explore these aspects spanning from primary school to PSE and the dynamics between them. The three types of pathways that emerged through the analysis illustrate the different decision-making processes, strategies, enhancements and hindrances occurring over the participants' pathway construction. Furthermore, the tapered interpretation of their experiences, brought to light the common social characteristics which allowed for the discovery of the historical, economic, institutional and social aspects that came into play in the formation of each of the pathways and how they are intertwined with parenting style and collective beliefs.

Since a *laissez-faire* parenting style was so prevalent in the CEGEP transition and access segment of the pathways, it is inevitably one of the common aspects across all three ideal-types. Together with the successful internalization of PSE access through and within the family habitus; the high PSE aspirations of the participants and their parents; and the agency dimension among the participants, the *laissez-faire* parenting style has several implications. At the onset of the pathway, the stage for success seems to be set in terms of the inculcation of the importance of PSE among the families. However, turbulence manifested due to the sudden change in parental disposition regarding how to access PSE as well as what to do in terms of program of study, CEGEP selection, and strategies that foster success. While the participants' high PSE aspirations were confirmed at the HS level, and existed in a non-*laissez-faire* parenting configuration, the challenges that were identified in terms of transition and integration surfaced once the parenting style shifted to *laissez-faire*, suggesting a connection to the shaping of their pathways.

While the conceptual framework allowed for the interpretation of the laissez-faire parenting style, the participants do not seem to have processed it as such. In fact, given that many participants were at a crucial developmental stage of detachment from their parents, the independence and autonomy resulting from the shift in parenting style seemed appreciated and sought. This detachment aspect in the decision-making processes coincides with students' low consideration of their parents' PSE desires for them in terms of future profession. More specifically, in spite of their parents' specific aspirations, mainly doctor, lawyer or nurse, the participants unanimously avoided fulfilling their parents' desires.

Nevertheless, the laissez-faire parenting style gave rise to one of the key dimensions that had a positive impact on the pathway: resilience. While decreased parental involvement caused some confusion, at the time of the interview, all of the participants expressed satisfaction with the point they were at in their pathway, in spite of the challenges they encountered getting there. The creative strategies demonstrated by the participants during points of tension or uncertainty, thus appear to play favourably on their pathway construction.

Parental laissez-faireism can also be connected to defining characteristics among the three profiles generated in the typology. The general notion of PSE access coupled with unspecific goals is mirrored in all three pathways. The *exploratory* participants' emphasis on their university programs versus future profession is a clear example. Similarly, although the *disoriented* participants did not experience the serenity of exploring their options, they nevertheless had a very unspecific sense of their goals, contrasted with their strong determination to access PSE. Moreover, while the *constrained* participants had a better idea of their professional goals, they experienced significant tension in their decision-making, whereby they tended to choose technical programs as a temporary compromise in spite of their university aspirations.

Furthermore, cultural and social capital together with SES surfaced as indisputably important dimensions in the formation of the pathways. Those with a moderate to high

cultural capital fell among those who benefitted the most from an uncomplicated process in terms of their choices. In spite of their indecision, they were generally reassured by their future university prospects. Most of these participants fell within the *exploratory* category. Those who experienced a *constrained* pathway with a high cultural capital generally had access to helpful resources such as psychologists or mentors within their social network, which helped to relieve the tension. Furthermore, Cone et al. (2014) suggest that the pathways of immigrant youth should not be analyzed without accounting for SES. In this case it is interesting to highlight that the *disoriented* participants both have a low SES background in spite of having differing cultural capitals. As such, they had the most troubling portrait including lack of role models, negative experiences with guidance counselors, and the most drastic parenting style shift from cocoon to laissez-faire. As well, the many interruptions in their pathways are a distinguishing aspect among this group.

Moreover, the negative experiences with guidance counselors are more critical for the participants with lower cultural and social capital backgrounds. Within the realm of a laissez-faire parenting style coupled with the lack of, or even misguidance among school staff, greater distress was demonstrated, as illustrated through the *disoriented* pathway. The institutional laissez-faireism seems to parallel that of the parents, whereby the youth receive very general guidance and encouragement but very rarely receive specific support. As such, the participants were faced with a double acting constriction. This manifested through high tension points in the *constrained* pathways and multiple bifurcations in the *disoriented* pathways which can be contrasted with those from higher cultural capital backgrounds who were able to access reliable resources through their social networks such as Ruth's coach, or Sandra's psychologist. Those with a higher cultural capital also had an easier social and academic integration to CEGEP. Difficulty in the navigational system was a major hindrance in the pathways and mainly appeared among those with a low cultural capital.

In contrast, regardless of cultural capital background, agency emerged as a defining characteristic in the pathway construction of all participants. For those who felt subjected

to low expectations or racism, these negative dimension were converted to positives as the participants used them as sources of motivation to avoid living up to them. The youth demonstrated creative ways to circumvent these hurdles and persevere. Similarly, in the absence of role models and guidance mentioned above, the participants demonstrated resilience by seeking resources independently in order to persevere. Finally, considering the impact of SES, cultural capital, academic and social integration, as well transitions underscored in the literature review, resilience is a key dimension that enhances the pathways of the youth in this study. As such, the relationships between these dimensions among the participants are summarized in the flowchart (figure 2) below.

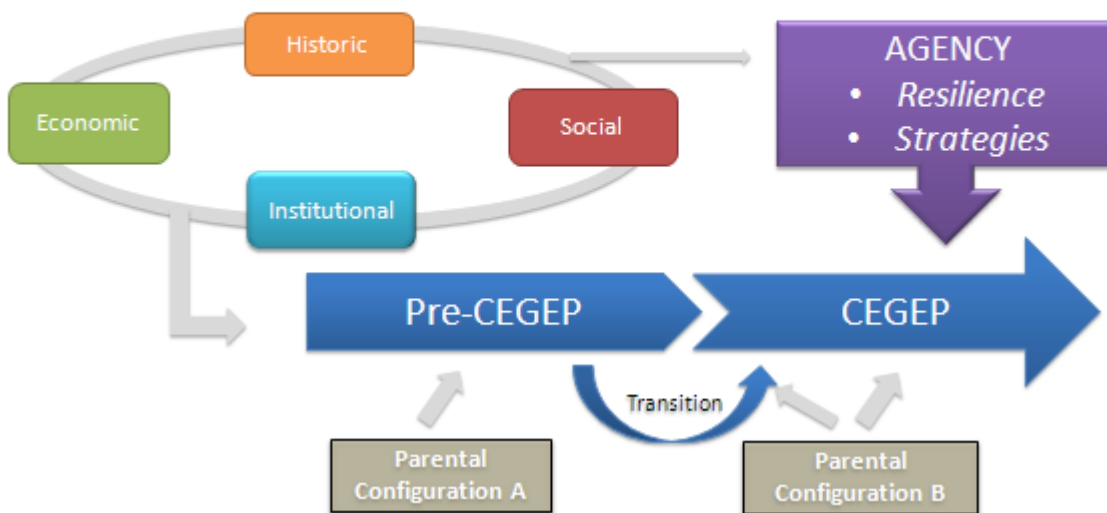


Figure 2: Participant postsecondary pathway summary

Per contra, here, it is necessary to underscore that the corpus consisted of youth who persevered to CEGEP and thus the experiences of those who dropped out of PSE remain unaccounted for in this study.

While the analysis produced a very rich yield of information pertaining to the PSE pathway construction among Haitian youth, some research limitations exist. From a methodological standpoint, it was not possible to tailor the questions asked during the interviews, or guide the discourse to the specific objectives of the research, given the

secondary nature of the data. However, all five of the major themes, and a majority of the questions that were asked during the interviews were relevant to the goals of the current study to varying degrees. More specifically, since the broad topic of this study is the educational pathways of second-generation Haitian youth, the questions pertaining to family experiences during childhood and adolescence, experiences during primary and HS, PSE experiences, cultural identification, and future plans were all useful, and thus, effectively addressed this limitation.

Similarly to the above, it was not possible to consider specific demographical elements in the subgroup, such as gender. The scientific literature review underscores gender differences for all individuals regarding PSE attainment, regardless of immigrant status, whereby girls are overall more inclined to graduate from HS and pursue PSE than boys (Sweet et al., 2010). Given that the corpus consisted of nine female and two male life stories, the data does not allow for speculation in terms of differentiating between the pathways of females and males on an analytical level. However, this differentiation remains an interesting component to consider in future studies.

Furthermore, a major part of the data is retrospective in nature, thus narratives delivered by the participants, can be subjected to omissions or modifications. Life stories can vary in form and content according to the social context at the time of the study and the investigatory situation (Burrick, 2010). However, according to Peneff (1990), the life story goal is not to reconstitute a memory, but rather to collect information on the immediate social environment of the individual. As such, the past time dimension allowed for the educational pathways of the participants to be positioned within different time frames over the participants' life course.

Moreover, since parenting-style surfaced as a significant dimension in the shaping of the pathways, the fact that the parents were not interviewed during the data collection phase is thus an unanticipated limitation. Given that the analysis is exclusively based on the youth's perspectives, it would be very interesting to know if the parents perceive

themselves in a manner that would result in the same interpretation emanated from their children, in order to add additional depth to the analysis.



## Conclusion

This study was conceived in light of the palpable school and social inequalities that exist and persevere among Haitian communities in Quebec. The first of seven chapters of this dissertation circumstantiates the relative unfavorable portrait of these communities within the PSE alcove in relationship to their non-Haitian peers, as well as the ominous individual and social impacts attached to it. Given the proven benefits of PSE coupled with the importance of the contribution of immigrant populations to the global economy, the trend of PSE abandonment among Haitian youth is an important matter of individual and social well-being, and equity.

The literature review contextualizes the above research problem by expanding on the reproduction of social inequality theories and the significant predictors of PSE access, attainment, perseverance and attrition. PSE attainment is largely impacted by human, cultural, and social capital, and especially by the constituents of parental education and family SES. More specifically, higher levels of capital tend to produce higher levels of attainment. Similarly, PSE perseverance and attrition are significantly affected by individuals' ability to successfully integrate into PSE institutions academically and socially. Finally, major factors that impact individual's PSE success are their life and school transitions. For Haitian youth specifically, these transitions sometimes involve higher instances of adverse circumstances than others related to discrimination and blocked opportunities, whereby *ethnic resilience* has emerged as a tendency in many cases (Anisef & Killbride, 2004).

As such, the key concepts of cultural capital, studentship, family socialization, agency, and perseverance are elaborated and organized into a framework in the third chapter. In order to account for the interplay between the life experiences of the participants, the schools they attended, their extracurricular experiences and their dispositions towards them, as well as the dynamics between students and parents during their academic and professional pathway construction, the framework consists of a fusion between Doray's (2011) *learning and educational pathways* and Tirtiaux's (2015) *school and family*

*relational configuration*. The framework allowed for the extraction of the key dimensions that played a role in the pathway construction as well as the identification of parenting styles, which evolved along the participants' pathways.

Subsequently, the methodological framework presented in chapter four entails the descriptive, thematic, and interpretative analyses employed. The descriptive analysis allowed for the sequential reconstitution of individual PSE pathways from primary school to CEGEP. The thematic analysis gave rise to the identification of common themes and collective representations among the participants and their families. The main common themes that emerged include subjective cultural identity, subjection to low expectations and negative portrayal, as well as challenging transition and integration experiences to CEGEP. Furthermore, the parents hold very specific future professional aspirations for their children (doctor, lawyer, nurse) and demonstrated a shift to a *laissez-faire* parenting style during the CEGEP transition and integration process. The last level of analysis resulted in the generation of a typology consisting of three pathway ideal-types characterized as *exploratory*, *constrained*, and *disoriented*. The *exploratory pathway* involves an uncomplicated CEGEP experience in spite of indecision regarding future goals, with an emphasis on university access rather than professional integration. The *constrained pathway* can be characterized by some form of stress in the CEGEP experience whether in the form of finances, time, school performance, etc. whereby the participants employed creative strategies to deal with the problems they encountered. Lastly, the participants who experienced a *disoriented pathway* were highly confused and uninformed about CEGEP beginning in HS, resulting in challenging transition and integration experiences.

The general findings were thus presented in juxtaposition with the PSE pathway profiles that emerged, in a manner to address the main objectives of the study: the analysis of the dynamics among the extra-curricular experiences, interactions with the CEGEP, and the objective and subjective experiences of the participants. Finally, the relationships and implications of the aspects that delineate the PSE pathways of the participants were discussed in the last chapter.

In spite of the limitations aforementioned, this inquiry is innovative due to the fact that very few studies have examined the PSE profiles of specific minority groups in isolation (Thiessen, 2009), especially from a qualitative angle. As such, the results provide intricate information regarding certain aspects that could have possibly been concealed in studies that have traditionally grouped Haitians into broader categories such as “Caribbean”, “Black” or “immigrant”. Thus, this study provides valuable insight into the perceptions of a substantially “at-risk” group.

Therefore, some major conclusions can be drawn from the research. Firstly, success seems to foster perseverance. All of the participants had favorable pre-CEGEP academic profiles (as far as they are concerned) and were thus highly confident in their academic abilities to pursue PSE. However, a lack of parental and institutional guidance and support is a significant hindrance in the PSE construction. While high PSE aspirations play a role in providing PSE access to the youth, their perseverance can become jeopardized in light of the constraint they face being left to fend for themselves in the PSE navigational process. This lends itself to a possible line of explanation of quantitative studies that have identified perseverance challenges among Black youth in PSE (Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011). In contrast, while many youth enrolled in technical programs, confirming the findings in the literature review (Abada et al., 2009), most professed using them as means of accessing university in the future. Therefore, the choice to enroll in a technical program is more of a strategy to facilitate university access rather than a settlement for a shorter, lower-prestige program. Furthermore, temporary interruptions in PSE can be misinterpreted as dropouts in studies of a quantitative nature. In all cases, dropping out was used as a strategy in the face of adversity. As such, individual agency is an important dimension that interplays positively in the PSE pathway construction.

As the corpus of this qualitative study consists of 11 participants, the results cannot be generalized across the second-generation Haitian population. However, the conclusions drawn can nevertheless complement quantitative studies on similar populations. They also have several implications attached to them pertaining to the issues raised in the

opening chapter. Firstly, by understanding the transition and integration challenges faced by this “at-risk” group, it is possible to develop support measures that can aid individuals in the navigational process, and thus save them the angst of wasted time, money, and institutional penalties that can inevitably play a role in PSE perseverance. Developing systemic measures that facilitate PSE success can lead to the reversal of negative self and media images of the community, the production of role models and future leaders, and job enhancement, which fosters social mobility, all of which are below average in the Haitian community (Lafortune, 2012; Potvin, 2008). As such, groups at risk of dropping out of PSE gain greater chances at perseverance, resulting in more university graduates, and consequently economic growth, civil engagement, and possible social change, especially pertaining to breaking a cycle of systemic discrimination.

In light of the boundaries of this study, future research is necessary. Given the importance of the parental configuration in the pathway construction among the youth, it is important to obtain the parental perspective in cross-reference to the participants’ discourse to develop a better understanding of the notable parenting-style shift. Furthermore, considering the high university aspirations of the participants and the dimensions that shape their pathways, it would be interesting to know whether university dropouts revealed through quantitative studies (Abada et al., 2009; Kamanzi & Murdoch, 2011; Thiessen, 2009) are in fact permanent, and if not, what strategies are employed to recommence and persevere. Finally, it seems urgent to investigate the practices among guidance counselors and other institutional actors when dealing with “at-risk” students and their families during the PSE preparation and transition process. If it is true that educational systems presuppose the possession of cultural capital among all students, it is more than likely that existing counseling practices might be ineffective in meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups.

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## **Annex 1**

### **Recruitment Email**

#### **Email Title – Research on Cégep students from immigrant backgrounds who have attended a French primary school and a French HS in Montreal**

Hi there!

We are looking for students wanting to participate in a research pertaining to the school experience of youths from immigrant backgrounds. If you are a college student from an immigrant background who attended a French primary school and a French HS in Montreal, your life experience and your school pathway interest us. We would really like to do an interview with you. The interview lasts approximately 1h30.

This project aims at better understanding your primary and HS experience and your cegep vocational choices.

If you match with the following criteria and that you are interested in participating to our study, please answer this email and we will be pleased to meet you:

- to be born in Quebec (or to have arrived in Quebec before the age of 5 years old)
- to have two immigrant parents (born outside of Canada)
- to have attended a French primary school and a French HS in Montreal
- to study in a Montreal cegep
- to be between the ages of 18-30

This research is conducted by Marie-Odile Magnan, assistant professor, Département d'administration et fondements de l'éducation, Université de Montréal.

You will receive a compensation of 20\$ for your participation to this research. The information you will give us will remain confidential (under the standards of the Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche de l'U. de Montréal).

Thanks helping us in getting a better understanding of your reality!

If you are interested to participate to our study, please communicate with Véronique Grenier, research assistant

**Project approved by the Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche (CPÉR) de l'Université de Montréal.**

**Annex 2**  
**Participant Demographic Summary**

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Primary School	High School	CEGEP Program	CEGEP Semester in Progress	CEGEP Discipline	University Aspiration	PSE Status (father)	PSE Status (mother)	Family Cultural Capital <sup>17</sup>
Sandra	F	19	Private	Private	Career/Technical	5/6	Special Education	Educational psychology	University	University	High
Tania	F	18	Public	Public	Pre-University	3/4	Social Science	Unknown	High School	High School (DEP)	Low
Cynthia	F	20	Public	Public	Career/Technical	6/6	Special Education	Literature/ Biblio-therapy	High School	Professional	Low
Walter	M	18	Public	Public	Pre-University	1/4	Social Science	Translation/Linguistics/ Teaching	Master's Degree	College (technical)	High
Karine	F	17	Public	Public	Career/Technical	3/6	Early Childhood Education	Social work	N-A	High School (DEP)	Low
Phara	F	19	Private	Private	Pre-University	1/4	Social Science	Social work	University	University	High
Lorna	F	22	Public	Public	Pre-University	4/4	Social Science	Financial administration	University	High School	Moderate
Ruth	F	18	Public	Private	Pre-University	2/4	Social Science	Unknown	CEGEP	CEGEP	Moderate
Jackson	M	26	Public	Public	Career/Technical	3/6	Paramedical Technology	N/A	University	University	High
Pascale	F	22	Public	Public	Pre-University	3/4	Social Science	Education/Teaching	Primary	Primary	Low
Mirlande	F	24	Public	Pub	Career/Technical	1/6	Physical rehabilitation	Physiotherapy	HS incomplete	HS incomplete	Low

<sup>17</sup> Family cultural capital was largely determined by the last level of education completed by both parents. Parental occupation and family structure (whether participant had regular contact with both parents was also considered)

## Annex 3

### Individual interview – English version

#### Interview questions – Cégep students from immigrant backgrounds who have attended a French primary school and a French HS in Montreal

Themes guiding the interview:

1. Family experience during childhood and adolescence
2. Primary and HS experiences in Montreal (in French schools)
3. Cegep experience in Montreal
4. Linguistic, cultural and territorial identification
5. Future plans

#### **To read to the respondent before beginning the interview**

During this interview, you will be asked to tell your personal life story, pertaining to your family and school experiences, your vocational choices and your sense of belonging.

You will not be asked to answer a list of survey questions, but to answer general questions about specific themes pertaining to your individual life course.

Thus, while doing the interview, I will ask you to tell me about your personal experience concerning these general questions. You will be free to answer it as you wish. Do not hesitate to tell me what you think might be interesting and pertinent and this, without feeling embarrassed.

Finally, I re-ensure that obviously all the testimony and personal information you will share with me, as well as my personal notes, will never appear on research publications. Nevertheless, if you are not comfortable to share some information, please feel free not to answer.

We are now ready to start the interview!



## **I – Family experience during childhood and adolescence**

1. To start with, I would like you to tell me about your family.
  - ✓ Family members
  - ✓ Language(s) spoken at home
  - ✓ Schooling and work of your parents in their country of origin
  - ✓ Work of your parents in the province of Quebec
  - ✓ Migration pathway (parent's country of origin, reasons for migrating, acculturation and integration process, etc.)
  - ✓ Travels in your parents' country of origin?
    - ✓ Why those travels? Attachment to the country of origin?
  - ✓ Family social networks in Montreal
  - ✓ Parents' and sibling's ways of relating to languages (namely French and English)
  - ✓ Parents' and sibling's ways of relating to Bill 101, education and French public school

## **II – Experiences in French primary schools and French HSs in Montreal**

2. What are your memories of your experience at a French primary school?
  - ✓ School(s) attended and parents' rationale for explaining their school choice
  - ✓ Ways of relating to school, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (course contents)
  - ✓ Academic record (success, difficulties, etc.)
  - ✓ Teachers' attitude toward diversity (especially linguistic diversity)
    - i. Have you witnessed or been victim of linguistic, cultural or religious conflicts? Unfavorable treatments directly related to linguistic, cultural and religious diversity?
  - ✓ Ways of relating to different school employees (teachers, principals, etc.)
  - ✓ Ways of relating to peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorisations, experiences of discrimination, etc.)
  - ✓ Ways of relating to the French language and to Bill 101
  - ✓ Senses of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.)
3. What are your memories of your experience at a French HS?
  - ✓ Schools(s) attended and rationale behind the choice of the school
  - ✓ Ways of relating to school, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (history, language courses, ECR – éthique et culture religieuse - courses, etc.)
    - i. First question : Are there any course that had an influence on you during HS? Why?
    - ii. What do you think of the history courses that you had in HS?
    - iii. What place do you feel you have in this history and toward the groups portrayed (mention the three groups if respondents do not know what to answer: Francophones, Anglophones, Aboriginals).

- ✓ Academic record (success, difficulties, etc.)
- ✓ Teachers' attitude toward diversity
- ✓ Ways of relating to different school employees (teachers, principals, guidance counsellors, etc.)
- ✓ Ways of relating to peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorisations, experience of discrimination, conversations about cegep vocational choices, etc.)
- ✓ Ways of relating to the French language and to Bill 101
- ✓ Sense of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.)

### **III – Postsecondary experience in Montreal**

4. Tell me about your school pathway at the cegep level.
  - ✓ First registration (date, year)
  - ✓ Different programs attended?
  
5. What led you to choose your current program?
  - ✓ For the curriculum content?
  - ✓ For career opportunities?
  - ✓ Importance of social network?
  - ✓ Influence from parents, guidance counsellors, friends, teachers, school principals, etc?
  - ✓ Linguistic reasons explaining your choice?
  
6. Could you describe me how you came to choose your cegep?
  - ✓ Influence from parents, guidance counsellors, friends, teachers, school principals, etc?
  
7. What are your memories of your cegep experience?
  - ✓ Day-to-day experience
  - ✓ Ways of relating to cegep, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (courses content)
  - ✓ Ways of relating to different cegep employees (teachers, principals, guidance counsellors, etc.)
  - ✓ Teachers' attitude toward linguistic, cultural and religious diversity
  - ✓ Ways of relating with peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorisations, etc.)
  - ✓ School integration, social integration, linguistic integration (French, English or Allophone friends, Friends' ethnic origins, process of integration over time)
  - ✓ Ways of relating to the cegep official language: in the courses, with friends, with the administration, etc. (Does your way of relating to the cegep official language has changed over time?)
  - ✓ Sense of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.)
  - ✓ Ways of relating to languages

#### **IV – Linguistic, cultural and territorial identification**

8. If I simply ask you ‘Who you are?’, what would you answer spontaneously?
- ✓ Importance or not of language(s)?
  - ✓ Importance or not of culture(s)?
  - ✓ Attachment to Canada, to the province (or territory), to a town, to a specific place, etc.?
  - ✓ Importance of several characteristics such as age, sex, social class, etc.?

#### **V – Future plans**

9. What do you plan to do once you have graduated from cegep?
- ✓ To start university? Which program? In which language? In which city, province, country?
  - ✓ To start working? In which languages? In which city, province, city?
  - ✓ Geographic mobility

## Annex 4

### Consent Form



Faculté des sciences de l'éducation  
Département d'administration et fondements de l'éducation

#### CONSENT FORM

**Research Title :** School experience and vocational choices within the Montreal linguistic school market: a study on cegep students from immigrant backgrounds

**Researcher :** Marie-Odile Magnan, Assistant Professor, Département d'administration et fondements de l'éducation, Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université de Montréal.

**Co-researchers :** Annie Pilote, Associate Professor, Université Laval; Marie Mc Andrew, Professor, Université de Montréal; Maryse Potvin, Professor, Université du Québec à Montréal

**Funding:** This project is funded by the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council* (SSHRC)

#### A) INFORMATIONS TO PARTICIPANTS

Before accepting to participate in this research project, please take the time to read and understand the following informations. This consent form explains the goals of this research project, its proceedings, advantages, disadvantages and risks. Please feel free to ask all the questions you deem useful to the person who gives you this document.

##### 1. Research Goals

This project aims at better understanding the school experience and the vocational choices of youths from immigrant backgrounds who attended French schools (primary and HS) and who are pursuing postsecondary studies in Montreal.

##### 2. Research Participation

Your participation to this research consists of meeting the researcher, the co-researchers or their assistants for an individual semi-structured interview (open questions) of approximately 90

minutes. The interview will be conducted at a place and a moment of your choice. This interview will pertain to your life story, your family socialisation, your school transitions at the elementary, secondary and cegep levels. The audio of the interview will be recorded and transcribed integrally. The interview will be conducted in French or English, depending on your choice.

### **3. Confidentiality**

The informations you will give us will remain confidential. A number will be assigned to each research participant and only the researchers and/or a delegate will have access to the list of participants with the corresponding numbers. Moreover, the informations will be put in a locked up file-cabinet in the office of the main researcher (Magnan) at Université de Montréal (a lockable, enclosed office). Electronic documents (such as interview recordings) pertaining to this project will be kept in a locked computer (an access code will be known only by the researchers and assistants). By no means we will publish informations that could disclose your identity. The researchers will also make sure that your identity is not disclosed indirectly, by cross reference. Personal informations will be destroyed in seven years (including the back-up copy which contains these personal informations). Only data that do not allow to disclose your identity could be kept after seven years and this, for research purposes.

### **4. Advantages and Disadvantages**

By participating to this research, you do not run specific risks and you will contribute to the advancement of knowledge pertaining to the school experience and to vocational choices of cegep students from immigrant backgrounds. Your research participation will also give you the opportunity to think about your school pathways by explaining it to the researchers; it will allow you to take a reflexive hindsight.

However, it is possible that making an account of your school experience engenders some reflections or memories that are emotional or displeasing. If this is the case, please do not hesitate to inform the researchers or their delegates. If necessary, we will refer you to a resource person.

### **5. Right to withdraw**

You participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this research at any time by simple verbal notice, without prejudice and without justifying your decision. If you decide to withdraw from the research, you can contact the researcher at the phone number appearing at the

end of this consent form. If you withdraw from this research, all the informations we collected concerning you will be deleted at the time of your withdrawal.

## 6. Compensation

You will receive a compensation of 20\$ for your participation to this research.

## 7. Dissemination of results

The participants who want to know the research results are invited to write their email address at the end of this document, in the Consentment section. These personal informations will remain strictly confidential and will only be used to send the research results. Thus, we will inform these participants by email when scientific articles will be published. We will also give them the publications by request.

## 8. Use of the data collected for other studies

The data collected could be used to make secondary analyzes in other researches.

## 9. Appreciation of your participation

Your collaboration is precious in order to realize this study and we are grateful for your participation.

## B) CONSENTMENT

I assert that I have read all the informations on this consent form, that I have obtained all the answers to my questions pertaining to my research participation and that I understand the goal, content, advantages, risks and disadvantages of this research.

After reflection and a reasonable delay, I consent freely to participate to this research. I know that I can withdraw at any moment without prejudice, by simple verbal notice and without having to justify my decision.

Signature :

Date :

Name :

First  
name :

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

I assert that I have explained the goal, content, advantages, risks and disadvantages of this research and that I have answered questions to the best of my knowledge

Researcher's signature  
(or of her delegate) :

Date :

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ First name : \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any question pertaining to this research or to withdraw from this project, please communicate with Marie-Odile Magnan, Assistant Professor and project director, at the following number: 514-343-6111 ext. 6158 or at this email address:

Any complaint concerning your participation to this research can be directed, in strict confidence, to the University of Montreal's Ombudsman at the following number (514) 343-2100 or at this email address: **(the Ombudsman accepts collect calls)**.

**A copy of this signed consent form must be handed to the participant.**

**Comité plurifacultaire en éthique de la recherche, Université de Montréal, 3744 Jean-Brillant, 4<sup>e</sup> étage, bureau 430.8, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-Ville, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3J7**

**Pour plus d'information sur vos droits comme participants, vous pouvez consulter le portail des participants de l'Université de Montréal à l'adresse suivante : <http://recherche.umontreal.ca/participants>**

## Annex 5

### Ethics Approval Certificate



N° de certificat  
CPER-15-126-D

Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche

#### CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE

Le Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche (CPER), selon les procédures en vigueur, en vertu des documents qui lui ont été fournis, a examiné le projet de recherche suivant et conclu qu'il respecte les règles d'éthique énoncées dans la Politique sur la recherche avec des êtres humains de l'Université de Montréal.


Projet	
Titre du projet	Postsecondary Pathways among second generation immigrants of Haitian origin: A Montreal Cegep case study.
Étudiante requérant	Tya Collins Candidate à la maîtrise, Psychopédagogie et andragogie - Faculté des sciences de l'éducation Université de Montréal
Financement	
Organisme	Non financé
Programme	--
Titre de l'octroi si différent	--
Numéro d'octroi	--
Chercheur principal	--
No de compte	--
Approbation reconnue	
Approbation émise par	non
Certificat:	s.o.

#### MODALITÉS D'APPLICATION

Tout changement anticipé au protocole de recherche doit être communiqué au CPER qui en évaluera l'impact au chapitre de l'éthique.

Toute interruption prématurée du projet ou tout incident grave doit être immédiatement signalé au CPER.

Selon les règles universitaires en vigueur, un suivi annuel est minimalement exigé pour maintenir la validité de la présente approbation éthique, et ce, jusqu'à la fin du projet. Le questionnaire de suivi est disponible sur la page web du CPER.

  
Tiiu Poldma, Présidente  
Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche  
Université de Montréal

26 janvier 2016  
Date de délivrance

1er février 2017  
Date de fin de validité

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Téléphone : 514-343-6111 poste 1896  
cper@umontreal.ca



## Annex 6

### Pathway Matrix Example

**Global quote :** Depuis que j’suis toute petite, comme faut que tu travailles fort pour trouver un bon métier... parce que t’sais y’a des emplois que ça va être plus dur pour toi de rentrer dedans à cause que t’es Noire, t’es immigrante

**General Description of PSE Pathway:** Generally continuous, with many changes in schools throughout primary (5) and HS (3). Some difficulties concerning CEGEP admission due to missing credits. Three changes in programs at CEGEP, technical program. Aspirations toward university studies as well as entering the job market as soon as possible

#### Pathway Axes

##### 1. Transactions between individual and institutions

- Application process: Negative advice from orientation counselor, missing courses
- Dispositions toward school: Positive attitude, motivated, independent, enjoys school, takes initiative concerning her studies
- School performance and achievement: Improving R score is important, wants to apply to the University that is the easiest to get into
- Participation in campus life: Very little interest, does her work and leaves
- What levels to pursue in PSE: Wants a technical degree to enter the work force as soon as possible, wants to go to university
- Academic & social integration experiences: Generally does work projects with peers but does not socialize beyond.

##### 2. Dynamics between objective & subjective experiences

- Individual agency: very autonomous and independent, takes responsibility for educational pathway
- Identity formation: Does not see ethnic/racial differences until she reaches high school, considers herself Black/Haitian beyond
- Development of resilience: In spite of some hiccups in the beginning of the CEGEP path, remains persistent, sets goals
- Reactions to their success or failure: General success through the career path has led to more success
- Reactions to discrimination: No direct discrimination experiences
- Reactions to perceptions of peers and school staff: Sticks to her plans to pursue CEGEP studies in spite of bad advice from academic counselor

##### 3. Transactions between CEGEP and extracurricular experiences

- Family situation: Parent’s divorced caused change of school in HS
- Work/study conciliation: Prefers to work and pay for studies than to take student loans
- Influence of SES: Parents were able to afford private school
- Human and social capital: School was always a high priority for the family. Ability to access CEGEP in spite of difficulties with grades and advice from guidance counselor
- Migratory experiences: The family was reunited in Quebec, the process was straight forward
- Social relationships: Generally makes friends easily, conflict in HS caused her to have to change schools, social activities with peers were generally not permitted

##### 4. Time

- Past: General positive experiences in primary and high school. Good grades and positive peer and teacher relationships.
- Present dimension: Does not like social sciences program, plans to apply to technical program in social work
- Future: Wants to secure a job immediately after CEGEP to pay for studies, plans to pursue social work program at the university level

#### **Pivotal Moments in the PSE pathway construction:**

- 1) Primary: Several changes in schools due to family situation and perceptions of the public school system.
- 2) Secondary: Changes in schools due parental divorce and conflict with peer, private schools are still the preference of her parents
- 3) CEGEP: Chose the CEGEP that was closest in location to her home, disliked social science program, decided to apply to a technical program in Social Work

Family & Origins	Primary	High School	CEGEP	Future Plans
<p>Mother's sister the first one to arrive, made arrangements for mom &amp; dad</p> <p>Parents were a couple in Haiti, came to Quebec, had a child (older sister) and got married in Quebec</p> <p>Immigrated for work and better opportunities</p> <p>Family was not poverty stricken in Haiti</p> <p>Mother – arrived at age 16 after completing sec 5. Went to CEGEP after obtaining equivalencies: double DEC social sciences or dietetic technician and early childhood education. B.A in psychology. Runs her own daycare, also works as an educator and a hairdresser</p> <p>Father – University in Quebec, works for a gas company. Had an accident at work and now works from home</p> <p>Social Network – many Haitian friends from Haiti, some Quebecois and “Spanish” friends</p> <p>Youngest of 3 sisters, born in Quebec</p>	<p>Neighborhood: ██████████</p> <p>Went to many schools (5): ██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████: first school,</p> <p>██████████: father wanted her to go to a private school but it was too far, returned to previous school, went on to ██████████ because it was closer to mother's work who could pick her up after her shift. All schools were in the same neighborhood</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with teachers:</b> n/a</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with peers:</b> many cultures together, no conflicts.</p> <p>- <b>Identity:</b> unawareness of differences, no racial identity, feels like everyone else. Small differences such as food, the way she was raised, stricter upbringing.</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with institution:</b> All were multiethnic schools, no conflicts</p> <p>- <b>Attitude/behavior toward studies :</b> Was sometimes disruptive in class, good grades, no problems</p> <p>- <b>Extracurricular experiences:</b> parents did not allow unsupervised activities with peers such as going to the movies, sleeping over at friend's houses. Obligated to come straight home after school, do homework, no t.v.</p> <p>- <b>Parental attitude:</b> high importance of education, hard work is necessary when you're an immigrant. Life is hard. Prefer private sector which has stricter rules, uniforms. «Pour l'éducation, c'est plus encadrée l'école privée que l'école publique ».</p> <p>- <b>Parental involvement:</b> studied and did homework together regularly, questioned what they wanted to do when they got older but did not suggest what type of career they should pursue</p>	<p>3 high schools : ██████████ (all girls private school) – a boarding school in Trois-Rivières (all girls boarding school but mixed private school) – ██████████ (not private but had uniform &amp; all girls, very “private-like”). Changes because parents got divorced.</p> <p>██████████ (2 years) – parents preferred all girls, private school, sister went there, prefer private over public, did not want her and her sisters to be distracted by boys</p> <p>Boarding school in Trois-Rivières – parents divorced, decided to place her in a boarding school so she could better concentrate on her studies and to avoid thinking about personal problems. She sought out the school herself, parents accepted</p> <p>██████████ – Became fed up with the distance, not seeing her sisters, returned to Montreal to ██████████. conflict with a girl at the beginning led to change to ██████████ where she finished her HS</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with teachers:</b> did not enjoy history course because of teacher who was always complaining, very unhappy, did not explain properly, the whole class was lost. The class made a petition against her.</p> <p>She had teachers from different cultural backgrounds. Feels secure in the fact that the teachers would not discriminate because of previous issues that have been since resolved.</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with peers:</b> Enjoyed time with peers at boarding School, would do it over again, doesn't usually have problems making friends. Had conversations about which CEGEP they would attend.</p> <p>- <b>Identity:</b> The feeling of <i>being Haitian</i> happened more in High School. She now identifies herself as being Haitian, she does not consider herself Quebecoise. Her parents are Haitian and she considers herself Haitian. “Québécois c'est quelqu'un... sont Blancs”</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with institution:</b> All were multiethnic schools, except for the boarding school, there was only one other Haitian girl and a few Asians. She like it because it was different, the farm aspect. It was 97% Quebecois. Other 2 were very mixed. No issues.</p> <p>School guidance counselor was unhelpful, suggested a DEP as a nursing assistant, did not recommend she go to CEGEP, suggested her grades weren't good enough. “Il me disait ah non t'as pas les notes pour rentrer au cégep, tu vas pas pouvoir rentrer au cégep. Tu vas jamais pouvoir entrer au cégep, là j'étais comme ça pas de sens...pis j'avais dis que je voulais faire travail social et il m'avait dit ah t'as pas les notes pour faire travail social, tu vas jamais pouvoir entrer pour ça, des affaires comme ça ». She decided not to take his advice</p> <p>- <b>Attitude/behavior toward studies:</b> Sec 4 unmotivated but passed. Good academic record, cared about her grades</p> <p>- <b>Extracurricular experiences:</b> sports, soccer</p> <p>- <b>Parental attitude:</b> private schools are seen as better than public schools</p> <p>- <b>Parental involvement:</b> Discussed plans with mother (becoming a social worker, going to ██████████). Mother was ok with all of her decision, she doesn't generally oppose, she's easy going, doesn't complain.</p>	<p>██████████ – 3<sup>rd</sup> semester in total, first semester in social sciences</p> <p>Chose ██████████ Cégep because it was close by. Social Science program</p> <p>« moi, personnellement, je disais que j'allais à ██████████ parce que c'est à côté de chez nous, c'était plus ça, pi les autres ils expliquaient moi j'avais aller dans tel cégep parce que c'est la qu'ya mon programme ou sinon c'est un bon cégep, j'en ai entendu parler, pi y'en a que c'était plus ah ce cégep là est cool, y'a plus de fun, plus de jeux, plus d'activités, plus d'affaires comme ça »</p> <p>Started in “Tremplin DEC” – a welcoming program. She needed to finish a history course that didn't go well in HS. Switched to Social Sciences to improve her grades, to take courses that made more sense to her in addition to the base courses and to improve her R-score in order to get into the technical program. Plan to apply to social work tech during the winter session (a 3 year program) she will have some basic courses that will be credited to the new program.</p> <p>Wants to do a technical program in social work and then go on to university in the same field</p> <p>Dislikes social sciences. Wants to do the technical program to have a job as soon as she graduates. Wants to gain experience and pay for her studies. She does not want to take out loans and bursaries</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with teachers:</b> n/a</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with peers:</b> doesn't really have close friends, you do work together but you don't stay in contact after the semester is over.</p> <p>- <b>Identity:</b> identifies with being black “mois j'suis noire, je me tiens avec des Noirs, j'ai des amis Espagnols, j'ai des amis Québécois ». Her identity is Haitian, that won't change. She is aware of the difference between her and others, the rules are not the same. She believes it's harder for immigrants to have access to the same job opportunities as non-immigrants. This idea has been inculcated in her since she was little that she would have more difficulty because she was Black</p> <p>- <b>Relationship with institution:</b> doesn't stay on campus too much, does her work and leaves</p> <p>- <b>Attitude/behavior toward studies:</b> enjoys the autonomy, likes doing things on her own, prefers CEGEP over HS. More serious, more concentrated, more autonomous. She wants to finish her studies and start her life</p> <p>- <b>Extracurricular experiences:</b> n/a</p> <p>- <b>Parental attitude/involvement:</b> Discussed plans with mother (becoming a social worker). « Ben ma mère m'a demandé qu'est-ce que je voulais faire, j'ai dis travailleuse sociale, elle a dit ah c'est bon, c'est un bon métier! Et elle m'a demandé si j'allais à l'université, j'ai dis oui, c'est mon but, j'veux aller jusqu'à l'université. Elle a dit ah ok c'est bon, pi elle a dit tu veux aller à quel cégep, là j'ai dit Marie-Victorin, elle a dit c'est là que tu veux aller, j'ai dis oui et là après elle a dit ok, pas de problème, elle a dit ok y'a pas de problème. Ma mère est pas quelqu'un de compliqué, elle accepte tout ce que tu lui dit, elle va pas chialer, ah moi j'veux que... »</p>	<p>-wants to go to UdeM to continue her studies in social work at the university level</p> <p>- She heard more positive feedback from her sister and boyfriend about UdeM, she also is under the impression that it would be easier to gain admission to this university</p> <p>- She would like to stay in Montreal to work</p>

