

THE CULTIVATION OF HAITIAN WOMEN'S SENSE OF SELVES:  
TOWARDS A FIELD OF ACTION

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE CULTIVATION OF HAITIAN WOMEN'S SENSE OF SELVES: TOWARDS A FIELD OF ACTION**

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This multimodal dissertation makes space for diasporic Haitian women's stories and lived experiences which continue to be under-theorized within rhetorical scholarship but are clearly significant within Haitian communities and rhetorical traditions. To bring awareness to Haitian women's lived experiences, in my dissertation, I present the findings of a study that addresses the ways diasporic Haitian women revisit and navigate memories through reflection to make sense of the ways their lived experiences contribute to different aspects of their identities. The two situations I used as catalysts for memory were—inhabiting and reflecting on practices and conversations of the Haitian kitchen space—and, looking at and revisiting photographs to understand how we, claim, (re)claim, and/or discover identities. To make this inquiry, I explored the act of reflection through in-depth interviews with three diasporic Haitian women. I aim to understand what new knowledge(s) do diasporic Haitian women recognize about their identities through the act of reflection and navigating memories? Further, I work towards understanding how do these new knowledges modify identity performances in the “now”? And, how does a sense of identity consciousness contribute to diasporic Haitian womens' experiences and practices moving forward? Overall, using modes, such as documentary and photography in my dissertation, I make space for diasporic Haitian women's voices in rhetoric and composition to disrupt colonial images, visions, myths, stereotypes, and/or fantasies, replacing them with the complexity of our cultural identities from our own lens.

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## Central Sections and Layout of Dissertation

In the section, “Situating a Haitian Rhetorical Research Design: **Frameworks, Methodologies, and Methods**,” I describe my research design. To approach my research questions, I constellated frameworks, such as cultural rhetorics, Caribbean rhetorics, and Caribbean feminist thought to design *Caribbean Rhetorics Reflective Methodology*. Further, I discuss theories and digital composing practices behind the modes within my dissertation. To conclude, I discuss how I recruited participants, collected data, and the myriad practices I employed to analyze the data I collected.

In the **first data section**, “Kizin Ayisyen: Examining Haitian Women’s Knowledges through (Re)Situating Identity and Cultural Practices,” I theorize how interactions and practices in the Haitian kitchen space contribute to identity construction. As the cinematographer and editor, in this section, I include my documentary video *Kizin Ayisyen: A Familiar Space Enacting Haitian Women’s Identities*. In the **second data section**, “Assembling and Embodying Identities Through Photographs,” participants revisited photographs to recognize moments of identity (re)construction.

In the **conclusion**, “Konklizyon: Proceeding Towards a Field of Action,” wherein I chose the form of a reflective narrative, I discuss my overall findings and implications.

**Link to the multimodal dissertation:** <https://sleger.wixsite.com/field-of-action>

*This link will be continuously monitored to ensure it is active and available.*

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