FROM HAITI TO CANADA: THE MIGRATION THAT BINDS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Haitian migration to Canada, the networks tying the two countries together, and the statecraft managing this movement during the decade beginning in 2010. The work investigates transnational spaces as a principal feature of contemporary Haitian migration and contends that Haitian cultural identity and solidarity within these spaces become decisive factors around why many Haitians choose to come to Canada. The concept of a *diasporic lakou* is highlighted as a transnational space of collectivist solidarity that provides a new and culturally inflected approach to future Haitian migration and migrant transnationalism research. Ideas of *slow harm* and *ontological security* are also integrated into this relational theoretical framework. Based on interviews in two Canadian provinces with people of Haitian backgrounds, empirical findings point to the intensifying impoverishment and insecurity generated by natural disasters and political instability in Haiti. Changing government provisions, agreements, and regulations on Haitian migration are also traced to deepen the analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FSW   Federal Skilled Worker

H&C   Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds

HHTA   Haitian Hometown Association

INGO   International Non-Governmental Organization

IRB   Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

IRCC   Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

IRPA   Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

STCA   Safe Third Country Agreement

TSR   Temporary Suspension of Removal

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INTRODUCTION

For over a half-century, Haitians' arrival to Canada has provided the hyphenated link for over 165,000 people forming today's Haitian-Canadian community. Since 2001, this community has nearly doubled in size, and such a growing diasporic community provokes questions about what factors continue to induce Haitian migration to Canada, whether as immigrants or as refugees (Statistics Canada, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2017). The 2010 earthquake captivated the mainstream imagination of 21st century Haitian migration, perpetuating a disaster narrative anchored in historical narratives of Haiti as a "failed state" and a place of endless suffering (Fatton Jr., 2014; Glover, 2012). However, to understand contemporary Haitian migration to Canada, we must transcend such linear thinking and consider it a more dynamic issue.

As a preferred destination for millions of Haitians who have migrated abroad over the past 50 years, Canada is home to one of Haiti's largest diasporic communities (Mills, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2017). Haitian migration to Canada has fluctuated, with significant increases following the devastating 2010 earthquake, which killed hundreds of thousands of Haitians and displaced over a million more (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Icart, 2006). By 2014, Canada hosted nearly a quarter of the over 37,000 officially recorded Haitian refugees and asylum seekers globally, making it a top destination second only to the United States (U.S.) (Audebert, 2017). Since 2017, Haitians have represented Canada's second-largest group of asylum seekers, with thousands of claims for refugee status still pending (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada [IRB], 2021). Identifying the reasons behind Haitian arrivals to Canada over the past decade is not straightforward,

and it is the subject of many discussions surrounding a historical manifold of economic, political, social, and environmental factors.

Poverty, political corruption, social inequality, violence, and natural disasters are a few factors shaping Haitian outmigration. Broadly defined as the systemic violence of neoliberal democracy and governance that impedes social reproduction and creates vulnerability, Saida Hodžić's (2016) concept of *slow harm* helps explain the modern precarity producing much of the enduring harm that causes emigration desires in places such as Haiti (Schiller & Fouron, 2009). Historical geopolitical dynamics lead to uneven migration between certain countries and global regions, such as the migratory relationship between Canada and Haiti.

Despite an enduring history of structural, socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities influencing Haitian outmigration, this thesis contends that transnational spaces of Haitian cultural identity and solidarity become decisive factors around why many Haitians choose to come to Canada. Maintaining cross-border ties is a principal feature of contemporary migration, and transnational processes forge and sustain social relations linking societies of origin and settlement (Lundy, 2011b). Accordingly, this work investigates those transnational linkages that sustain a growing Haitian-Canadian diaspora. This case study aims to ascertain why Haitians have come to Canada by exploring the views of Haitian-Canadians themselves, whether as immigrants, visitors, or asylum seekers. Haitian migration to Canada is defined as Haitians who came to Canada during the decade following the 2010 earthquake.

The impact of transnational migration on deterritorializing Haiti breaks down the thought that it is a territorially fixed or bounded space and reterritorializes Haitian society

as a cultural and social space existing across borders (Agnew, 2009). This transcendence of borders draws attention to Haiti as a nation rather than a nation-state. It facilitates analysis of the reterritorialization and transnational continuity of practices and identities and how these shape and influence Haitian decisions to leave Haiti. Through a transnational lens, the Haitian diaspora and Canada as a destination country become focal points of this research.

Often overshadowing the nuances behind migrant decision-making, the Haitian earthquake has perpetuated disaster narratives about Haiti through Western geopolitical governance, humanitarian discourses and across modern media spaces (Glover, 2012; Jolivet, 2017; Bellegarde-Smith, 2011). Cloos, Collins, Ndeye, and St. Louis (2016) explain that migrating to Canada represented the opportunity for a better life for some Haitians, while for others, it was an imposed constraint brought about by natural disasters. Viewing Haitian migration as an opportunity or constraint reflects competing narratives of despair and tragedy, but also hope and possibility that shape 21st century Western imaginations of Haitian identity (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Lundy, 2011a). The apparent dichotomy presented between agency and victimization—people and nature—advances a notion of an ecological relationship between migration and the environment. This relationship risks sensationalizing environmental migration as a primary emigration factor for Haitians.

Along with recurrent hurricanes, Haiti is no stranger to natural disasters, and the power of such events to mobilize sympathy and appeal to human emotions via the immediacy of modern media empowers regard for a shared common humanity that often obscures the everyday lived existence of its victims. While acknowledging that humanity's

collective goodwill towards remediating suffering is valuable, we must not forget the underlying power relationships and vulnerabilities that disenfranchise some and empower others (Fassin, 2012). In a world dominated by a modern nation-state system based on defined borders and sovereignty, exclusionary and inclusionary relationships create a top-down disciplinarian order subjugating people's movement across borders.

Exploring people's sense of safety is another aim of this thesis, rather than focusing on national security issues. A shared history, language, and culture form a Haitian diasporic political identity that acts as a means of geopolitical resistance to conventional forms of state-centred security, power and domination (Shani, 2017; Schiller, 2011). Relative to people's wellbeing, it exposes a tension between human and ontological security concepts, the latter referring to a person's fundamental sense of safety shaped by subjective experience rather than human security's state-centric objectives in managing people's most basic security (Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Shani, 2017). Relative to migration, diasporic identity and ontological security become dynamic factors in mitigating slow harm by ensuring a sense of agency through social relationships, whether cooperative or conflictual. People need to feel secure in who they are as a continuous person in time because it affirms their capacity for agency, empowering personal action and choice. An ontologically secure individual has a reasonably stable sense of self-identity and relative control over their future (Giddens, 1991; Mitzen, 2006). While these are not new ideas or concepts, together they provide a unique framework to understand Canada's continued role in affecting Haitian immigration trends more clearly.

Ontological security is not a unilateral concept engendering only the lived existence of individual people, but a universal characteristic in the lives of all (Shani, 2017). Haitians and Canadians alike share a fundamental sense of safety irrespective of subjective thresholds of security that might perceive the existence of specific individuals or groups as more precarious than others—whether under cultural, socioeconomic, or political conditions. This comparison is by no means an attempt to minimize precarious experiences or reinscribe the autonomous liberal disembodied subject, but instead acknowledges that the ontological security of Canadian citizens also has a part in shaping and influencing Haitian migration to Canada and that transnational networks dismantle the differences that these borders aim to patrol.

Based on research findings, the final chapter explores Charlene Désir's (2011) concept of a *diasporic lakou* as a transnational space of collectivist solidarity providing ontological security. Derived from Haiti's original *lakou* system, a *diasporic lakou* transcends physical boundaries and promotes solidarity among expanded family networks to help ensure the collective wellbeing of its members. It offers a culturally inflective way of exploring Haitian migration to diasporic destinations such as Canada.

The original *lakou* system emerged following the Haitian Revolution and the country's consequent independence in 1804 as a physical space of resistance to the colonial plantation system and its role in the global extractive economy (Merilus, 2015). Plantations restricted Haitians from forming community bonds under colonial enslavement, but following the fall of plantation slavery, the *lakou* would provide the space for Haitians to practice and bond over their shared culture and identity. As an important mode of survival, the *lakou* opposed systemic capitalist structures through a communal

living arrangement where groups of families lived on a rural plot of land, combining their work and social lives as a collective (Merilus, 2015; Schuller, 2016; Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). Over time, the *lakou* transcended physical boundaries into a broader social framework due to the pressures of globalization and urbanization, evolving as an integral part of Haiti's social fabric governing people's behaviours and shaping a national consciousness (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). A *diasporic lakou* is a transnational conceptualization of this process and system.

Why some Haitians choose to make Canada their new home matters because their cultural solidarity, along with the scale of Haitian immigration and tendency to concentrate resettlement in one region of Canada (i.e. Quebec), have and will continue to influence Canadian sociopolitical landscapes (Mills, 2016). Research on the influences shaping Haitian migration to Canada is limited as most research is generalized across a Western perspective focusing predominantly on the U.S. (*See, e.g.,* Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Farmer, 2012; Fatton Jr., 2014; Audebert, 2017). One primary goal of this research is to shift focus towards Canada.

Of the existing Canadian academic research into Haitian migration to Canada, primary attention focuses on resettlement, social integration, nation-building, and cultural or racial differentiation rather than the politics and processes of migration itself (*See, e.g.,* Cloos, Collins, Ndeye, & St. Louis, 2016; Icart, 2006; Jolivet, 2017; Mills, 2016). Qualitative research from a Haitian perspective is also relatively limited. Mills (2016) explains, "little effort has been made to understand Quebec society from the perspectives of [Haitian] migrants themselves and to explore the forms of knowledge that they have produced" (p. 4). This work seeks to fill in some of these gaps while adding to the limited

availability of Canadian anglophone literature on Haiti compared to francophone literature. Although the significant density of Haitian-Canadians living in Quebec, where they share language and cultural ties, may explain such a discrepancy, the lack of ubiquitous French language comprehension outside the province means francophone literature has limited reach across the rest of Canada. As someone fluent in both English and French, I am well positioned to translate some of this literature into the English-speaking domain.

Haitian perspectives are of significant value to this research; qualitative research using semi-structured interviews is a primary data collection method. The research participants from the Montreal and Toronto areas include Haitian-Canadian community leaders, Haitians who received Canadian permanent residency after 2010, and a non-Haitian Canadian journalist with extensive work experience in Haiti. Chapter one provides a more detailed outline of the research design and methodology.

This thesis is organized into five chapters: the first chapter outlines the project background and details, including an original review of existing scholarship contextualizing Haitian migration to Canada, the conceptual framework, research design and methodology. Chapters two to four draw primarily on research findings from the semi-structured interviews. Chapter two conceptually explores slow harm in Haiti and the conditions influencing emigration, followed by chapters three and four, focusing on Canadian factors that include immigration politics and the Haitian-Canadian diaspora's openness and engagement with those fleeing or leaving Haiti and other precarious situations. The latter two chapters theoretically borrow from the concepts of migrant transnationalism and ontological security. Lastly, chapter five discusses the concept of a

diasporic lakou as a culturally inflected approach to future Haitian migration and migrant

transnationalism research.

CHAPTER 1

Contextualizing Haitian Transnationalism and the Insecurity and Instability Shaping Haitian Migration to Canada

Scholarship about Haitian migration focuses on issues of historical dominance, oppression and repression that have negatively impacted the economic, political, social, and ecological existence of both Haiti and Haitians alike (*See, e.g.,* Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Deibert, 2017; Dubois, 2012; Farmer, 2003; Fatton Jr., 2014; Icart, 2006; Trouillot, 2015). Haiti's vulnerability to natural disasters often exacerbates structural insecurities and instabilities that have fostered a history of dispossessing Haitians and undermining the quality of life they aspire and strive towards (Lundy, 2011a). Destabilizing factors creating poor living conditions include poor infrastructure, weak social institutions, political violence and foreign exploitation. High levels of poverty and social inequality, met with political instability and reoccurring havoc from natural disasters, foster narratives of Haitian exceptionalism and victimization that dominate the public domain, often labelling Haiti as the poorest and most unequal country in the Western hemisphere (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Farmer, 2012; Ulysse, 2015). However, Haitian exceptionalism and victim narratives mask the foreign interference in Haitian affairs and its negative contribution to the Haitian situation, as outlined here (Trouillot, 2020; Ulysse, 2015). These same narratives are also employed to ascribe rationale to the nation's modern culture of migration, which has included Canada as a preferred country of destination for over the past 50 years (Audebert, 2012).

For the late Paul Farmer (2004a), whose academic work in Haiti revolved around the concept of structural violence—indirect and systemic violence informs the study of the

social machinery of oppression: "such suffering is 'structured' by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire—whether through routine, ritual, or, as is more commonly the case, the hard surfaces of life—to constrain agency" (Farmer, 2004b, p. 34). Structural violence has led to the historical decay of Haiti's public sector, reinforcing the social structures characterized by high levels of poverty and social inequality responsible for the unending hardships that entice people to leave or flee the country (Farmer, 2004a). Accordingly, Haitian-American academic Bellegarde-Smith (2011) describes post-earthquake Haiti as a "land traumatized by natural and man-made disasters from its beginning as a colony and sovereign nation" (p. 264). His anthropogenic differentiation distinguishes human-made or socially constructed disasters from natural disasters like earthquakes or hurricanes, implying that much of Haiti's vulnerabilities result from a history of systemic violence shaped by foreign and oppressive interventions.

The imperial forces behind Haiti's globalized capitalist system and an emphasis on neoliberal industrialization are primary, if indirect, factors shaping out-migration (Fatton Jr., 2014; Icart, 2006). In the late 1980s, foreign interference by the United States (U.S.) government and International Financial Institutions (e.g. International Monetary Fund) into Haiti's domestic affairs succeeded in further liberalizing the Haitian economy through a series of neoliberal structural adjustment policies. These economic policies kept wages low, removed barriers to free trade by lifting tariffs and restrictions on imports, provided tax incentives on industrial profits and exports, privatized public enterprises, and reduced public-sector employment and social spending to lower fiscal deficits (Dupuy, 2010a). As part of an urban industrial strategy, structural adjustment eroded Haiti's public-sector and domestic agricultural economies to serve Western capital interests that rely on the bodies

of a racialized lower class to form a large and cheap labour force for the export-assembly sector (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Dupuy, 2010a). For example, U.S. subsidization of its agribusinesses in Haiti undermined Haitian rice and sugar production. At one time the world's top exporter of sugar, Haiti is now a net importer of U.S. subsidized sugar (Farmer, 2012). It also went from being self-sufficient in rice production to importing 80% of its rice consumption (Dupuy, 2010a). Conversely, Haitian farmers have seen their livelihoods slip away due to neoliberal industrialization.

Over the last four decades, Haitians have steadily left the subsistence-based countryside for urban areas searching for low-wage factory employment, only to find high levels of joblessness and unemployment (Farmer, 2012; Fatton Jr., 2014). Rural-to-urban migration fuels Haiti's industrialized landscape as an adaption strategy for rural households seeking better economic opportunities. It is also a precursor to international migration because most Haitians migrate to Canada from urban regions (Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016). With growing urban density attributed to rural out-migration and without planning from a robust public sector, cities consistently lack proper municipal infrastructure leading to widespread environmental decline (Gros, 2011).

Often attributed as a factor influencing Haitian migration, Haiti's ecology influences environmental degradation and exacerbates the impacts of routine natural disasters (i.e. earthquakes and hurricanes) (Gros, 2011). Explicitly, deforestation linked to flooding and soil erosion is sensationalized as a constant vulnerability factor in Haitian livelihoods. According to Alscher's (2011) qualitative research on influences on Haitian rural migration, current and former rural research participants identified environmental degradation as an issue. However, most in the study saw economic problems as the most

prominent factor influencing migration: unemployment, low income, and lack of land availability were all considerations. They stated that environmental problems were not a cause to migrate, with three-quarters of rural respondents claiming improvement to environmental conditions in their area (Alscher, 2011). Similar findings arise in Mezdour, Veronis, and McLeman's (2016) more recent research studying the environmental influences on Haitian migration to Canada.

Conducting qualitative research into Haitian environmental migration, Mezdour, Veronis, and McLeman (2016) found that the environment played a subtle role in Haitian migration to Canada before the earthquake. Social inequality for the study's research participants was a more significant factor. The authors' findings reinforce class as a dominant influence behind international migration to Canada, whereby the Haitian urban elites (those with the resources and higher education) were the most likely to have the opportunities to emigrate. "We found that environmental degradation, urban ecological decline, and extreme events interact with social inequalities in Haiti to influence international migration to Canada in subtle yet observable ways," explains Mezdour, Veronis, and McLeman (2016, p. 103). These research findings reinforce the argument that Haitian migration is a multifaceted topic and not merely an outcome stemming solely from particular events or socioeconomic conditions, such as the earthquake or wealth inequality.

Despite various perspectives that include political economy and ecological considerations, increased flooding due to deforestation has had devastating economic impacts (Alscher, 2011; Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016). For example, flooding from the 2008 hurricane season was the costliest disaster in over a century, destroying

nearly three-quarters of Haiti's crops, displacing over 150,000 people, and leading to the loss of $900 million or the equivalent to 15% of Haiti's GDP at the time (Ferris, 2014). This example is a testament to how the natural environment interconnects with Haiti's political economy and prosperity, or damage to it. Environmental issues contribute to a multidimensional process that exacerbates the misfortunes of Haitians, leading to migration for some.

Natural disasters, environmental degradation, political instability and poverty commonly inform the narratives that shape Haiti's image in the public domain. Haitian scholars such as Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (2011), Gina Athena Ulysse (2015) and Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2020) confront dominant Western narratives promoting Haitian exceptionalism that construct representations of Haitians as victims. Ulysse (2015) says:

> The state barely functions, while NGOs rule but fail. Haiti should not be reduced to solely its conditions; yet without violence, gangs, and rapes there is no Haiti story. And without our victim status, we Haitians have no allies. Therein lies our biggest dilemma (p. 85).

Despite competing political metanarratives of unending (neo)colonial control and imperial dispossession, challenging 'victim' narratives does not negate the material challenges these structural factors have in shaping Haitian livelihoods and migration patterns. Instead, critiquing such narratives queries symbolic and metaphorical scripts representing Haitians as mere victims rather than autonomous human beings and communities in control of their aspirations, ideas, and imaginations of leading a good life (Kelley, 2015).

Pertinent to this research, acknowledging the human agency that transcends conventional Western narratives of immigrants or refugees as agents of self-rescue, and beyond that of victims in need of saving is important (Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Kyriakides,

Bajjali, McLuhan, & Anderson, 2018). In exercising agency, migrants as noncitizens interact with varying institutional landscapes and social actors to enact conditionality—"the material and discursive conditions required to exercise formal or substantive rights to presence and access"—learning from these encounters to inform decisions and trajectories shaping pathways to enter and remain present in another country (Landolt & Goldring, 2016, p. 854). Agency also assists in illuminating Haitian identity as existing before or beyond the event(s) that caused them to migrate or flee (Kyriakides, Bajjali, McLuhan, & Anderson, 2018; Hynie, 2018). Transcending linear thinking creates the opportunity to engage more intimate and culturally appropriate spaces, such as community and family solidarity.

Haitians choose Canada because they have found the means to take control of their futures and follow the transnational networks of interconnected Haitian communities and families (Audebert, 2011; Audebert, 2017; Kyriakides, Bajjali, McLuhan, & Anderson, 2018). "[Transnationalism is] the possibility of relating integrally to the whole of human community in a way that deemphasizes nation-state boundaries and so speaks in a certain kind of cosmopolitan way," explains Glover (2012, p. 204). Haitian diasporas remain engaged with their homeland through various means such as visiting, telecommunication technology, purchasing Haitian foodstuffs, investing in hometown associations (e.g., grassroots charitable institutions) and remittances (Orozco & Burgess, 2011; Jolivet, 2017). Within a transnational representation of Haiti emerges a multidimensional reality that transcends territorial boundaries.

The transcending of nation-state borders shifts emphasis on the people and communities who cross them. According to research conducted in Montreal, Cloos,

Collins, Ndeye, and St. Louis (2016) discuss a transnational symbolism between the Haitian diaspora and Haiti as bound by an inherent *Haïtianité*, meaning a link, an attachment, or a belonging transmitted through the earth, the body, the blood, and the language. A Haitian participant in their study, Anna, says, "l'Haïtien reste Haïtien partout où il passe. J'ai changé de pays, mais le sang haïtien coule toujours dans mes veines" [A Haitian remains Haitian everywhere they go. I changed countries, but Haitian blood will always run through my veins] (Cloos, Collins, Ndeye, & St. Louis, 2016, p. 42). As French geographer, Cédric Audebert (2012) adds:

> Emigration has become increasingly important in Haiti's history for more than a century, to the point that diasporization—spatial dispersion of a part of the population beyond the borders generating networking to which a growing part of the original society is integrated—is now emerging as a structural dynamic of this society. (p. 159)

The embodiment of Haïtianité provides an intimate glimpse into Haitian mobility and the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Haiti as a transnational nation not concerned with borders but with people.

While the notion of Haïtianité embodies a certain sense of homogeneity, Haitian society and communities both in Haiti and its diaspora are far from unified, remaining stratified into segments influenced by social class, politics, religion, rural/urban location, sexuality and gender (Dupuy, Fatton Jr, Trouillot, & Wah, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Schiller & Fouron, 2009). However, many Haitians have long been committed to building Haiti as a transnational nation despite their geographical locations and varying differences and divisions. Research by Schiller and Fouron (2009) found that the concept of Haiti as a transnational nation was held together by Haitians of all classes believing that Haitian

blood and strong family ties formed a revitalized concept of homeland (i.e. Haïtianité). They state: "the ties of blood provide them with a living bridge that can connect them to a space of greater opportunity" (Schiller & Fouron, 1999, p. 356). These perspectives bind Haitian migration to values that link family to culture and nation.

In Canada, over 90% of Haitian-Canadians reside in Montreal. According to Violaine Jolivet (2017), the Haitian diaspora admires Montreal because of its robust social systems and convergence between anglophone and francophone cultures. Sean Mills (2016) iterates that a tradition of Haitian migration to Canada persists through a blurring of nation-state boundaries premised on the notions that Haiti and Quebec, as two primary French cultural centres in the Americas, share a familial relationship. The Haitian diaspora has long since inserted themselves into the Francophone imagination and played an integral role in transforming Quebec's intellectual, political, and cultural life.

French language and kinship are an integral part of Quebec's nation-building project, and because family connections are an integral part of Haitian existence, a mutually beneficial relationship forms between elite French-speaking Haitians and the province (Icart, 2006; Mills, 2016). Sharing the same language and the fact that a robust Haitian community has long established itself in Canada, many Haitians share the perspective of Montreal as a sanctuary city[1] (Jolivet, 2017). Furthermore, Canada's emphasis on family reunification and a renewed prioritization of economic migration over the last 20 years means that Haitians with the desired social and human capital have a better chance of emigrating to Canada (Icart, 2006; Omeziri & Gore, 2014; Todoroki,

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[1] A "sanctuary city" is an ambiguous concept that generally refers to urban communities seeking to protect irregular migrants. It involves a general commitment to welcome asylum seekers and refugees through urban policies and practices (Bauder, 2017).

Vaccani, & Noor, 2009). As a result of the *brain drain*—the reduction of a nation's human capital through the outmigration of skilled labour (Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009)— Quebec and Canada have economically benefited from Haitian immigration.

Over the past decade, Haiti has been a leading exporter of skilled labour, and as of 2012, more than three-quarters of Haiti's college graduates were living outside its borders (Jadotte, 2012). In Canada, the economic class prioritizes and selects migrants through a skills-based system that allots points for their language ability, education, skills, and experience—provinces can also nominate immigrants they desire based on their own needs criteria (Government of Canada, 2018). Considering the propensity for most Haitians arriving in Canada to make Quebec their destination, skills-based prioritization favours middle and upper-class urban Haitians who are more likely to have better education and speak French (Drotbohm, 2008). Since Canada opened its borders to non-European migration, skills-based and family reunification immigration measures

Figure 1

Admissions of Permanent Residents by Immigration Category, January 2015 - June 2020
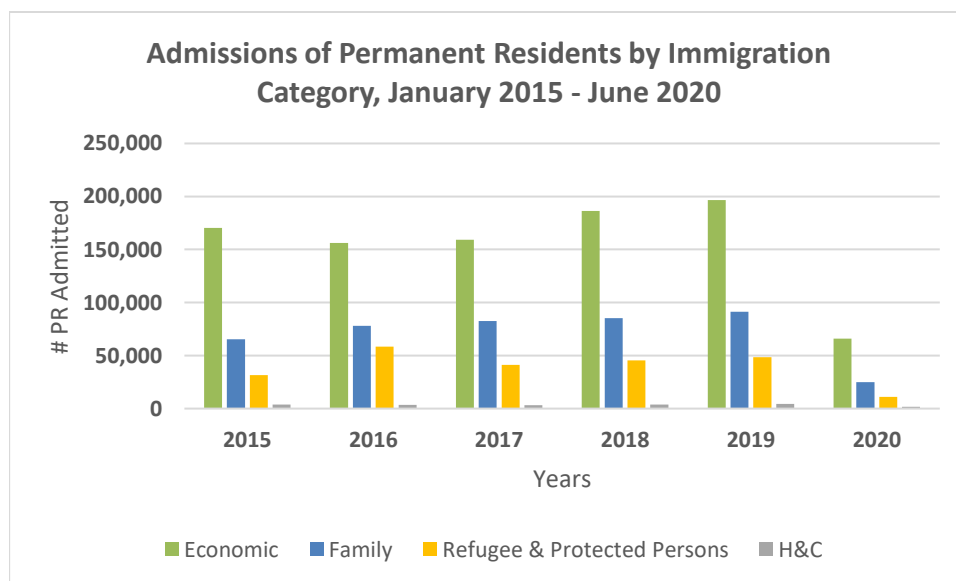
Source: (IRCC, 2020a)

simultaneously address Canada's labour supply issues and declining birth rate (Geislerova, 2007; Hiebert, 2016). Accordingly, economic and family class migration became the dominant Canadian immigration categories for Haitian migrants leading into the 21st century (Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009). These two immigration categories still dominate today to manage migrant desirability in Canada (see figure 1). However, Haitian immigration trends would begin shifting from the norm shortly into the new century.

Before the 2010 earthquake struck, heavy political violence swept Haiti following the 2004 overthrow of the Aristide government during its second term in power, killing thousands (Engler & Fenton, 2005). While United Nations peacekeepers significantly reduced violence levels by 2008, political instability and insecurity remained a feature for a country already dealing with precarious socioeconomic conditions, such as rising food prices leading to riots the same year. Such conditions exacerbated by several devastating storms between 2004 and 2008 influenced a steady increase in refugee class immigration in Canada (Farmer, 2012; Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009). In 2008, 174 Haitian refugee claimants entered Canada, but this number began sharply increasing annually before reaching nearly 5,000 claimants by 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Despite the dramatic increase in Haitian refugee claims, the refugee class remained a small percentage of total immigration numbers from Haiti until the 2010 decade.

In 2011, Haitians admitted under the family class dipped below both the economic and refugee classes, which almost evenly represented two-thirds of the roughly 6,500 Haitians gaining permanent residency that year (Chagnon, 2013). While the family class would quickly regain predominance, Haitians admitted under the economic class would

Figure 2

Admissions of Haitian Permanent Residents by Economic, Family and Refugee Classes, January 2015 - June 2020
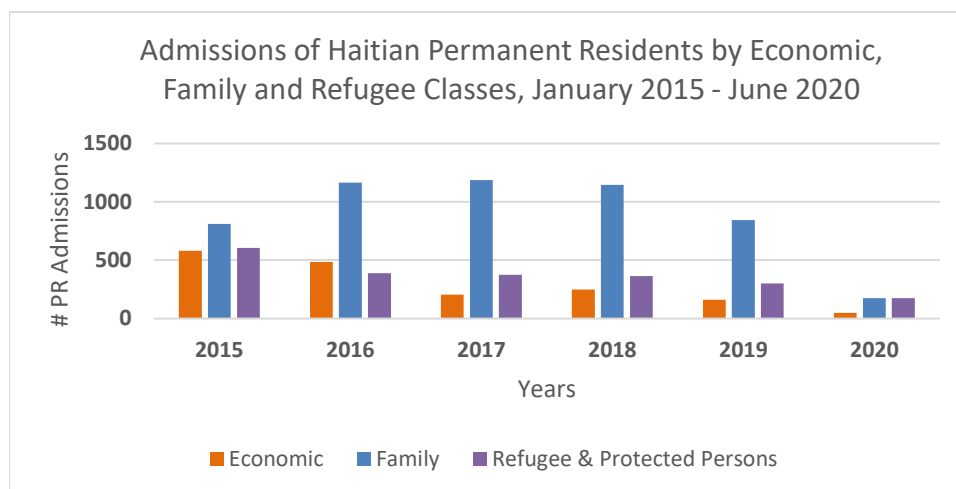
Source: (IRCC, 2020a)

not follow Canada's overall immigration trends, as illustrated in figure 1. Instead, the refugee class would begin representing a higher proportion of Haitian permanent residents than the economic class in the latter half of the decade (see figure 2). Due mainly to the Trump administration's anti-immigration stance, the sharp increase of Haitian asylum seekers entering Canada from the U.S. in 2017 would help sustain this momentum (Blanchfield, 2017; Diverlus, 2017; "Globe Editorial," 2017).

While the devastating 2010 earthquake undoubtedly shaped Haitian immigration patterns in Canada, Haiti's political and socioeconomic insecurity remains prevalent. For example, in October of 2012, the Brandt affair exposed a kidnapping ring where members of Haiti's political and economic elite employed members of the lower and middle classes to kidnap their own to maintain power and wealth (Fatton Jr., 2014). Fatton Jr. (2014) coins them the "bourgeois bandits" and highlights that "criminality has become another means of consolidating fortunes, sustaining class status, and moving out of the slums" (p. 6). Essentializing conflict in Haiti is not the aim of this work, but this example provides

insight into how Haitian migration patterns are shaped by class conflict and inequality, especially considering that urban elites are more likely to emigrate (Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016). They might have the resources and means; however, the fear of violence or persecution can ultimately influence them to seek asylum.

Over the last two decades, Canadian immigration policies and humanitarian practices have contributed to Haitian migration. Between 2004 and 2014, the Temporary Suspension of Removal (TSR) program—based on Canadian humanitarian principles— suspended deportation for thousands of Haitians who otherwise would be ineligible to stay in Canada (Wrzesnewskyj, 2016). However, Haitians under the TSR program cannot apply for permanent residency or sponsor family members and often hold low-wage jobs. They have minimal upward social mobility with limited access to health and education services (Omeziri & Gore, 2014). Some avoided precarious circumstances in Haiti only to find themselves living in precarity in Canada.

At the end of 2014, the Harper Conservative government cited improved conditions in Haiti to justify removing TSR protection for over three thousand Haitians. Fortunately, two subsequent special measures supporting regularization enabled the majority of these now non-status Haitians (except criminals and those with severe medical conditions) to apply and obtain permanent residency on humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H&C) (Wrzesnewskyj, 2016). Between 2015 and 2016, 91.5% of Haitian H&C applications were approved, covering nearly 5,000 Haitian applicants[2] aged 18 and over (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2018b). While not directly

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[2] This figure also includes H&C applicants not covered by the special measures implemented for the Haitians who lost TSR protection in 2014.

influencing Haitians choosing Canada as a destination country, the TSR program and subsequent special measures illustrate how Canada's immigration system can sometimes provide less conventional means for Haitians to obtain Canadian permanent residency.

This brief literature review shows that much of the academic research and literature about Haitian migration remains generalized, often focusing on the Haitian people's enduring hardships and suffering relative to structural processes and notions of Haiti as a failed state. While ample literature explores Haitian immigration in destination countries like Canada, social integration, nation-building, and cultural or racial differentiation remain common themes when it does (Icart, 2006; Mills, 2016; Mooney, 2009; Cloos, Collins, Ndeye, & St. Louis, 2016; Jolivet, 2017). Haitian exceptionalism directs attention towards Haiti's history and the accompanying victim narratives that proliferate the public domain through media or humanitarian discourses (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Ulysse, 2015). As a more recent transnational approach to Haiti's culture of migration, Audebert's (2012) book, *La Diaspora Haitienne: Territoires migratoires et reseaux [The Haitian Diaspora: Migration Territories and Networks]*, recognizes Haitian emigration as a unique phenomenon influenced by the diaspora and the complex dynamics that arise within, outside and in-between Haiti and destination countries like Canada, the U.S. and France. It adds to the growing literature that seeks to dismantle more linear migration discourses. Similarly, this thesis seeks to contribute to more dynamic representations of Haitian migration to Canada by also navigating attention to factors outside Haiti and away from conventional scripts of victimization.

Conceptual Framework

  A primary literature informing this thesis, migrant transnationalism research, represents the overarching framework. Motivated by the concept of *noncitizenship as assemblage*, this thesis' framework embraces the notion that migration is a complex, dynamic and relational spatial process. As Landolt and Goldring (2016) explain:

> [Assemblage] challenges understandings of social life as rooted in fixed, stable, and predictable ontologies and relationships, proposing instead a vision of social life constituted dynamically and contingently by complex configurations … it offers an alternative way of seeing and understanding, one that captures multi-scalar, dynamic, contingent, institutional arrangements involving configurations of disparate elements … [and] intentionally moves away from a focus on precarity or a narrow concern with specific categories of noncitizenship … and how they are dynamically constituted and assembled (pp. 856-857).

The concepts of slow harm and ontological security complement scholarship on transnationalism to provide a more dynamic understanding of the factors that impact people's decisions to leave Haiti for Canada. Together, these concepts contribute to a less state-centric approach to Haitian migration to Canada, emphasizing the migratory influences from existing transnational networks between Haiti and its diaspora. The following three sections will outline the interconnected and relational roles that migrant transnationalism, slow harm and ontological security provide.

Migrant Transnationalism

  In a linear sense, it is easy to comprehend transnationalism's foundational bond with migration as a cross-border practice in an increasingly globalized world. However, explaining the migrant formation of dynamic social realities across multiple borders is no linear task. In one of the most widely recognized works on transnationalism, Basch,

Schiller, and Blanc (1994) used the Haitian experience of immigration to help outline a transnational perspective around the construction of Haitian identity. They defined transnationalism relative to migration as:

> The processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders we call "transmigrants" (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc, 1994, p. 8).

Over a decade later, following the 2010 Haitian earthquake, research by Haitian-American professor Garvey Lundy (2011) explains:

> If transnationalism is defined as the process by which immigrants fashion a multi-layered relationship that actively binds them to their country of origin while they are simultaneously fully involved in the social activities of their country of settlement, the Haitian Diaspora response to the earthquake exemplifies that description (p. 204).

As evidenced by the time interval between these two perspectives, Haitian society and its diaspora have had an influential role in the conceptual development of transnationalism well into the 21st century. This body of work continues such a trend seeking to expand and offer a more contemporary spotlight on Haitian transmigration.

Of specific interest to this research is how transnationalism forges what is known as long-distance or diasporic nationalism, identity claims and practices that connect people across various geographical locations to a specific territory viewed as their ancestral home (Schiller, 2005, Lundy, 2011). Beyond conventional ties to a nation-state lies the impact of long-distance relationships on Haitian migration factors. Accordingly, research by Hyndman, Amarasingam, and Naganathan (2020) examining the Tamil

diasporas' expressions of nationalism and belonging in Canada introduces the term "diaspora geopolitics" to shift attention away from a state-centric security discourse of migration toward everyday geopolitics of nationalism, violence and displacement. *Diaspora geopolitics* examines the everyday transnational politics of protest and survival relative to configurations of power that produce displacement or migration, such as war, violence or human rights abuses. It also prioritizes the transnational lived experiences of diasporic members in negotiating processes of statecraft (Hyndman, Amarasingam, & Naganathan, 2020). Applicable to this framework, diaspora geopolitics not only incorporates diasporic nationalism but explores a sense of belonging to two places at once (i.e. Canada and Haiti) and how it engages or influences conditions and processes that foster migration.

Researching the transnational dimensions of family and community explores modifications to these vital social groups and their dispersed structures in everyday life (Vertovec, 2009). These dimensions situate immigrant families and communities in a globalized context, which leads to the breaking down of the modern nation-state as the principal organizing structure of political, social, and economic life—it emphasizes a deterritorialization of Haiti as a nation-state (Lundy, 2011). Such a perspective is critical in understanding the role of the Haitian diaspora in shaping and influencing Haitian migration because its ties stretch beyond the systemic ordering and securing of territorial boundaries.

Given transnationalism's critical engagement with the notion of nation-states singularly dictating one's identity or conception of belonging, this research explores Haiti's deterritorialization, where the blurring of borders around the idea of a transnational polity

arose as an active political strategy by Haitian leaders in the 1990s (Schiller and Fouron, 2009; Audebert, 2011). "La migration [haïtienne] semble être désormais moins perçue comme une rupture – ou une parenthèse – et davantage comme le moyen de prolonger ses réseaux sociaux et d'élargir son espace de vie [Haitian migration now seems to be seen less as a rupture—or parenthesis—and more as a way to extend social networks and expand living space], explains Audebert (2011, p. 3). However, a sedentarist bias and the idea of a nation-state as a fixed entity with sharp or impermeable legal status boundaries characterize Western state-centric systems of managing and ordering the movement of people (Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Landolt & Goldring, 2016). A transnational analysis of Haitian migration inherently explores the contradictory tensions between the notions of Canada as a fixed or territorialized entity and Haiti as deterritorialized.

While geographical scholarship exists to disrupt sendentarist assumptions that view human mobility as the exception to human settlement, mobility as choice or the possibility of mobility remains shaped by the intersection of power relationships along such lines as race, class and ability (Hyndman, Amarasingam, & Naganathan, 2020). These relationships help to understand better how Haitians navigate migration-inducing conditions, including immigration politics and policies, when seeking to make Canada their new home. For example, Haitians with not only the human and social capital to emigrate to Canada but also the ability to afford the journey. Since conditions of immobility such as poverty have the power to restrict agency, careful consideration ought to be taken not to essentialize immobility as voiding the possibility of future mobility. Some may find it more challenging to emigrate than others but, in time, are afforded new opportunities or find less conventional means to migrate to Canada.

Slow Harm

This research also demonstrates that Saida Hodžić's (2016) *slow harm* concept is relevant and applicable to this project and migration studies overall. It will show that slow harm has the flexibility to respect the diversity among similar concepts because of the opportunity for expansion through a multidisciplinary approach. Being relatively novel, I understand that slow harm will not necessarily convey all the nuances of Haitian migration; however, its flexibility allows researchers to identify key influences, across space and over time, thus providing the potential to expand the scope of analysis. Some notable concepts that inform slow harm are structural violence and its emphasis on institutional or systemic violence and slow death's focus on the physical deterioration of marginalized populations.

As presented in the introduction, slow harm is a concept that draws attention to processes of bodily attrition (physical or psychological) caused by the often invisible and subtle violence of neoliberalism. It also focuses on how marginalized people inhabit and critique neoliberal democracy and governance (Hodžić, 2016). According to Hodžić (2016), slow harm is "the effect of longstanding practices that produce and materialize bodies as vulnerable … [and] results from scarcity and [neoliberal] governance that both invests in life and extracts vital force" (p. 639). Although Hodžić (2016) is an anthropologist, the term is highly geographical, given its attention to space and time and related transnational networks of capital and people. It brings attention to a Western-dominated international development industry that includes the likes of International Financial Institutions (IFI) and International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGO), which seek to address but arguably reinforces the inequality and wealth disparity between

the Global North and South or between developed and developing countries (Kane, 2013; Hodžić, 2016; Schuller, 2017). Specifically, slow harm draws attention to precarity and the outcome of precariousness which, according to Butler (2010), designates a particular vulnerability where marginalized or disenfranchised populations suffer disproportionately from a politically induced failing of socioeconomic support that exposes them to forms of injury, violence, and death.

To help distinguish slow harm from other concepts or theories, Hodžić (2016) pays special attention to the notion of death found across a range of popular and scholarly conceptualizations such as Mbembe's (1992) necropolitics, Agamben's (1998) camp and Berlant's (2007) slow death. She emphasizes the latter because of its anthropological origins and contribution to both the consequences of harm and suffering. Even its definition parallels slow harm; Berlant (2007) explains that slow death refers to physical attenuation and deterioration as a defining condition of marginalized people's experiences and historical existence. However, Hodžić (2016) identifies a fundamental difference in that although slow harm can bring death, it does not define the lives of those enduring it, and criticizes slow death because it does not provide justice to such endurance and is too final to be helpful—"slow harm does not kill them but gradually reduces their vitality" (p. 639). This research embraces this perspective because death also does not define migration. Instead, the continuity or the endurance of those seeking a better life is an innate condition of the process.

Slow harm includes forms of structural violence aimed at the invisible, subtle, and systemic violence that produces disturbances in the reproduction of life (i.e. ordinary crises) and makes bodies vulnerable (Hodžić, 2016; Berlant, 2011). Other than structural

violence, Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence more accurately details the temporal or attritional dimension of systemic violence that obscures the precarity produced by slow harm. A slowness rendering violence invisible or banal in ordinary everyday lives "through inattention to calamities that are slow and long lasting … patiently dispens[ing] their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans" (Leeuw, 2016; Nixon, 2011, p. 6). Despite describing systemic violence as often invisible and indirect, Hodžić's (2016) research into female genital cutting and its consequences (i.e. blood loss) is an intimate and visible form of harm not entirely defined by governance.

Slow harm helps illustrate the importance of agency across space and time, and whether Hodžić (2016) intends direct or indirect forms of violence as producing vulnerability, there is no indication that slow harm should be limited to either. This difference is significant to note when engaging with both the systemic processes and agency that differentiate decisions behind migration, because as Cahill and Pain (2019) question, "is violence really slow and 'unseen'? What does 'slow' mean—slow to whom? Whose gaze is privileged? Who is seeing, who is hiding, and who is being obscured?" (p. 1058). Slow harm can help unpack these questions by bridging the range of conceptual distinctions outlined in this section while recognizing neoliberal governance's systemic oppression and people's existential realities in living within its paradigm.

Ontological Security

Introducing ontological security as part of this framework rather than typical state-led conventions of human security offers an alternate geographical perspective of the factors influencing Haitians' decisions to emigrate to Canada—whether through asylum or non-asylum means. I am not suggesting that human security does not have a role, but

focusing solely on a conventional Eurocentric understanding of people's most basic security is limiting (e.g. economic security, food security, health security) (Shani, 2017). As Jennifer Mitzen (2006) explains:

> Ontological insecurity refers to the deep, incapacitating state of not knowing which dangers to confront and which to ignore, i.e. how to get by in the world. When there is ontological insecurity, the individual's energy is consumed meeting immediate needs. She cannot relate ends systematically to means in the present, much less plan ahead (p. 345).

At its most basic, ontological security refers to an individual's fundamental sense of safety through subjective experience. More specifically, it is a basic need that requires social bonds (trust of other people) to maintain a sense of psychological well-being, and it enables and motivates agency through the subjective sense of who one is (Giddens, 1991; Mitzen, 2006; Shani, 2017). According to Giddens (1991), an ontological secure person maintains a continuous sense of self-control rather than a constantly changing or uncertain existence. They maintain a sense of personal continuity. Feelings of uncertainty or existential anxiety—whether in the present or future—lead to ontological insecurity.

Haitian ontological insecurity arises from historically enduring cycles of political, economic and social instabilities that have longstanding harmful effects on many Haitians. In researching Haitian insecurity following the Haitian earthquake, anthropologist Erica Caple James (2011) refers to Haiti's history of economic, political and social instability as "routines of rupture [that] have created conditions in which trauma has become an ongoing existential reality for many citizens, rather than a finite, contained experience for which there can be a 'post'" (p. 357). This statement exemplifies the sustained and long-term manifestations of sociopolitical and psychosocial conditions (i.e. trauma) that

generate ontological insecurity and the desire for many Haitians to migrate or seek asylum within or across borders (Giddens, 1991; James, 2010). It emphasizes Haitian agency in coping with insecurities that lead to emigration, whether to increase one's life chances or through a fear of persecution or harm.

Slow harm draws attention to the exacerbation of protracted harmful conditions that foster physical and ontological insecurities. Simultaneously, it considers the emotional harm they entail and the Haitian people's responses to such duress. People living what they perceive as an uncertain existence can seek migration to achieve or maintain personal continuity. Along with transnationalism, slow harm facilitates the space to explore ontological security as an integral concept behind Haitian migration decisions and influences.

Research Design & Methodology

My general research objectives were to understand the contemporary influences on Haitian migration to Canada and explore relatable narratives. They also include exploring the structural processes behind Haiti's economic, social, and political factors that have historically determined out-migration. Due to the salience of the disaster narrative since 2010, I also probe to what extent, if any, environmental factors in Haiti influence Haitians' migration decisions. The main research question is **what issues or factors have influenced recent Haitian migration to Canada following the 2010 earthquake?** Several sub-questions also helped to inform the objectives and the conceptual framework:

- What role does the Haitian diaspora play in influencing Haitian migration to Canada?

- How do Canadian immigration policies and/or processes shape the migration experiences of Haitians coming to Canada?

- How do geopolitical factors influence Haitian migration?

Qualitative Research: Semi-structured Interviews

Cresswell and Poth (2018) highlight that a case study is a methodology used to explore a real-life and contemporary bounded system or systems over time, which involves in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information to garner detailed descriptions, insights, and themes. As a case study analysis, this research explores a specific community (Haitian-Canadian) and a spatialized decision process (migration) within a specific period (post-2010). As primary researcher, I facilitated data collection, soliciting responses and perspectives of Haitians in both Ontario and Quebec. The original intent was to use qualitative methods through interviews and focus group discussions, to canvass Haitians' motivations and pathways in their journeys to Canada. However, due to unforeseen delays in the ethics approval process that caused tighter time constraints and ethics limitations, focus group discussions were omitted as a research method.

Given the nature of this case study, multiple sampling strategies were employed because migration research is dynamic and studies relationships between people, actions, events, and processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Accordingly, a criterion sampling approach was used to help ensure that participants were Haitian migrants who had come to Canada following 2010. Snowball and opportunistic sampling were also used, given the limited research time in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A challenge arose in finding Haitian participants for my study who obtained their permanent residency after arriving in

Canada during the 2010 decade. Due to this challenge, research participants included a mix of local Haitian community leaders and Haitians who migrated to Canada after 2010. The decision to limit the scope of participant selection criteria to those with permanent status is due to ethical considerations of harm that might arise from interviewing individuals in precarious positions, such as refugee claimants, asylum seekers, or visa overstayers (Hay, 2010).

By focusing mainly on Haitians living in Montreal, finding shared experiences and themes was easier than broadly diversifying or multiplying the research sites. Since most of Canada's Haitian community lives in Montreal, Quebec, this became the primary study site. Proportionally speaking, Montreal's Haitian population density makes it strongly representative of the Haitian-Canadian community. However, three interviews were conducted with Haitian-Canadians living in the Toronto area.

Data Collection & Analysis

As an interpretative methodology with the ability to probe for more profound meaning and emotions, interviews were selected as a data collection method to gather an in-depth and detailed understanding of Haitian migration processes (McDowell, 2010). As the researcher, I conducted 13 semi-structured interviews. Despite dropping the focus groups to discuss questions and identify salient issues across Haitians in Canada more broadly, interviews still provided ample data due to the more personal and in-depth interaction. Furthermore, interview experiences with the interviewed participants left the impression that Haitian-Canadians are very open to knowledge sharing.

All qualitative data collected from the interviews was digitally recorded and then transcribed manually before coding with NVivo software to help with inductive data

analysis. Using coding and categorization also helped build a database to keep the data collection easily retrievable and accessible, an essential time-management tool for locating specific data during the analysis and writing phases (Merriam, 2009). All qualitative data was securely stored and digital data encrypted while not in use.

Validation Techniques, Challenges & Limitations

Triangulation of methods strengthens data analysis and ensures the validity and reliability of the data collected and analyzed. Examining all data collection methods relative to each other by cross-checking findings is integral not only to validate the research, but different forms of data might complement each other or even produce new insights (Elwood, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Data validation through member checking and peer review will be considered wherever and whenever necessary to ensure that possible collected data or subsequent analysis is not misinterpreted (Merriam, 2009).

Several methodological **challenges and limitations** were encountered. Due to my status as an "outsider" of the Haitian community, as well as not being a Montreal resident, building rapport proved a nuanced task; obtaining research participants was not always easy or straightforward. My field research timeframe was initially bound to 3 months from June to August 2019; however, the ethics application did not receive approval until mid-July. Considering the importance of building rapport with the participants, the shortened timeframe impacted the momentum I had built in the early stages of my fieldwork and created challenges in securing the desired 15 to 20 interviews. August is also a time of year when many individuals and organizations take two to three-week holidays in Montreal, further limiting my ability to secure interviews and network

within the community. Given the outlined challenges and limitations, I extended the research period for an additional two months.

Ethical Considerations

As an outsider to the Haitian community and a white researcher born in Canada who has never visited Haiti, I remain reflexive of the racialized and political power structures between the Global North and South, including the inherent power dynamics that result as a part of the research and researched relationship. I am aware that historically asymmetrical power relationships could have initially made some of the Haitian participants hesitant to participate in the project and that they might remain skeptical of my research intentions (Hay, 2010). Furthermore, as a researcher, I was often a guest in the participants' private spaces. Respecting participant confidentiality and privacy during and after the writing process is essential in building and maintaining credibility and integrity (Merriam, 2009).

To help alleviate participant concerns, foster rapport, and promote research integrity, **informed consent** was obtained through signatory authorization of a consent form that outlined the research context, the issues to be explored, and participant expectations (Hay, 2010). Research participants' right to discontinue their participation in the study was honoured; however, I am happy to report that there were no instances of such a situation occurring during the interview processes. The **privacy and confidentiality** of the research participants are of the utmost importance, and all participants were informed that their identifying information would be protected and remain confidential. For anonymity purposes, pseudonyms rather than real names are used, including the masking of identifying characteristics (Hay, 2010). Whether physical

(transcripts, field notes) or digital, all collected data is stored in a secure location accessible only by me as the primary researcher—all digital data are also encrypted. As a researcher, I remain reflexive and vigilant about the participants' privacy and personal details so as not to reveal them in my research to avoid any situations of potential psychological harm to a participant that could arise during and after the writing process.

Research Significance

Along with adding to existing yet limited scholarship emphasizing factors and influences shaping Haitian migration to Canada, this research provides a dynamic analysis of the topic through a migrant transnationalism framework supplemented by the concepts of slow harm and ontological security. Together, these contribute to a less state-centric approach to Haitian migration to Canada than has been taken before. It explores a transnational politics of migration that views Haiti as a deterritorialized and reterritorialized nation, moving beyond Haiti's borders to include examining the roles of the Haitian-Canadian diaspora and Canadian immigration practices as a dynamic process. Migrant transnationalism and ontological security interact as conceptual aspects of Haitian migration, which for some Haitians becomes a means to address slow harm and the vulnerability it produces. Embracing ontological security emphasizes Haitian's subjective sense of safety as an essential element of the migration process. An element that values Haitians as agents of self-rescue, along with the social bonds and capital ensuring the psychological wellbeing necessary to motivate agency and migrant decision-making.

In the wake of the Duvalier dictatorship that ended in 1986, the slow harm era has evolved over the last five decades as an influential factor shaping contemporary Haitian

migration (Dupuy, 2013; Sutton & Quinn, 2013). Applying slow harm to this research and exploring its effect on Haitian livelihoods demonstrates that it possesses the conceptual capacity to augment contemporary migration research and scholarship. Slow harm reveals how marginalized people inhabit and critique the subtle and slow violence of neoliberal democracy and governance that gradually extracts their vitality. Unlike the overt and sensationalized violence of war or natural disasters often leading to forced displacement or migration, slow harm focuses on routine and unspectacular violence better suited to understanding steady migration patterns over time (Hodžić, 2016). For many Haitians, the everyday suffering caused by systemic violence fosters the vulnerability influencing some to leave Haiti.

CHAPTER 2

Haitian Migration during the Slow Harm Era

Haitian migration to Canada has remained relatively steady since the beginning of the Duvalier regime in Haiti, which ruled from 1957 to 1986. This dictatorship that spanned nearly three decades of governance rife with political oppression, corruption and violence influenced many Haitians to flee their country (Sutton & Quinn, 2013). After years of protests, a growing popular democratic movement frustrated with Haiti's poor living conditions succeeded in overthrowing the Duvalier's grip on power. The ensuing shift to democratic governance brought hope for a populace seeking a more just and equal society (Dupuy, 2013). However, the rise of the neoliberal era and its unfettered intrusion into Haiti's domestic affairs since 1986 has led to the current period of slow harm within Haitian society. Unlike the acute and overt violence of the Duvalier regime's dictatorial rule, *slow harm* reveals the subtle and systemic violence of neoliberal governance and democracy that gradually produces widespread suffering over time, wearing down Haitian bodies and making them vulnerable. "Contemporary governance that simultaneously invests in their lives and causes bodily attrition," says Hodžić (2016, p. 1). This temporal erosion of living conditions for many Haitians has influenced steady outmigration from Haiti since it transitioned to neoliberal democracy.

When discussing Haitian migration with research participants, three overarching topics arise as primary factors influencing contemporary outmigration from Haiti during the 2010 decade: poor governance, foreign interference and the 2010 earthquake. These three topics are intersectional and have historical implications that encapsulate Haitian conditions of instability and insecurity, influencing quality of life and shaping Haitian

migration. Accordingly, this chapter focuses primarily on the evolution of neoliberal democracy and governance as slow harm in Haiti, fostering the living conditions that shape and influence outmigration from the country during the 2010 decade.

Without security, stability is difficult to guarantee. In the absence of stability, it is hard to ensure the self-security necessary to realize a sense of agency (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017). Maintaining a stable sense of self or ontological security influences people's decision to migrate, and the research participants view systemic insecurities as significant influences. As the director of a local community organization in Montreal, Philipe states:

> *What does a population demand of its government? Security, to eat, and work … They want to have peace … it is all these factors here, that means the economic, political, and social conditions of the country that, in such a way, encourages migration* (interview 07, 2019).

Insecurity extends beyond threats in material space as it also resides in the perception of unseen malevolence, inducing a psychological fear of impending harm that may or may not materialize (James, 2010). The uncertainty or anxiety produced by even the likelihood of potential harm attaches itself to the tenets of slow harm aimed at the invisible or subtle harmful consequences produced by political governance. As Mirlande exclaims: *"the insecurity scares us"* (interview 12, 2019).

Political Insecurity & Instability

In Haiti, the political space is a key source of insecurity and instability. Participants speak of political embezzlement, poor living conditions, gang violence, and weak social institutions as having a cumulative effect on the current climate of insecurity. They point to a history of political corruption and injustices primarily responsible for the country's poor economic and social conditions over the past decade. As Samentha explains:

It's a very systemic thing … [and] if we look at the social and political instability in Haiti … For example, if you speak against [a politician] ... you don't know what is going to happen to you. Maybe some gang can come and kill you … it's like a mafia (interview 04, 2019).

Referencing the mafia alludes to the politically motivated evolution of organized crime in Haiti, where the strategic collusion between the country's political elite and local neighbourhood gangs has flourished in recent years (Schuberth, 2015). "*The security right now, what is aggravating the situation it is that the politics mixes ... with the bandits [or gangs] to terrorize the population,*" explains Philipe (interview 07, 2019). This terrorization has become a lived everyday experience for many Haitians.

Politically sustained gang culture throughout Haitian communities makes daily life precarious. Many Haitians and their families experience a lingering threat to their psychological and physical safety. A life of constant fear and uncertainty can foster anxieties leading to rational emigrating desires or decisions. *Some political parties they operate like gang in Haiti now … people are not really safe and … that force people to leave in Haiti and then to look for asylum in a country like Canada*," attests Samentha (interview 04, 2019). As a foreign journalist who lives and works in Haiti, Alain further validates the fear and anxiety that Haitians face: "*gangs [are] like political gangsters in some ways, which means some politicians are known to enforce their own laws … there's even some subject matter that I won't cover as a journalist because I'm too afraid for my own security*" (interview 01, 2019). He highlights the enduring precarity that political insecurity and instability impose on Haitian society and, consequently, average citizens' daily lives and bodies.

Two participants go as far as expanding upon political insecurity and likening it to civil war in the following manner:

> *Migration is mainly because there is a lot of unrest. I would even qualify that as being a **civil war** where gangs are being armed as much by the government than by the opposition. It is what I call a war by proxy where people are being killed.* (Emmanuel, interview 02, 2019)

> *The country has not been a safe place to be for the last year or so. They [sic] have been a lot of social unrest. If you want to use a superlative, you can say that Haiti is in a state of war, of **civil war**.* (Yves, interview 05, 2019)

Referring to politico-gang unrest as a civil war alludes to a history of clientelist networks in Haitian politics, where politicians hire local gangs to serve as intermediaries between communities and politicians (Schuberth, 2015). This clientelism connects an organized scale of intimate relationships ranging from locally embedded community members and gangs to the state and their quasi-authoritative control.

As a precursor to social unrest, discussion of gangs or mafia segues into political injustices and corruption. *"Haiti where there is unrest for the past decades but [it] has … increased even more … because of corruption,"* claims Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019). Over the past two decades, Transparency International's (2022) Corruption Perceptions Index tool has consistently ranked Haiti's public sector as highly corrupt and among the 20 most corrupt countries worldwide.[3] According to participants, corruption is common among politicians benefiting from positions of power and immunity to enrich themselves

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[3] As an INGO tracking public sector corruption worldwide, *Transparency International* tracks state corruption using 13 different data sources from a variety of international institutions, such as the World Bank and World Economic Forum, to score a country's perceived level of corruption and rank their position among the approximately 180 countries in the index.

at the state's expense and responsibility to its citizens. Philipe shares this metaphorical anecdote:

> *In Haitian politics, a deputy, a senator, is a king, an untouchable; no one can touch a deputy in Haiti. They have what we call "immunity." Immunity exceeds all … the Haitian Senate Chamber, the Haitian Deputy Chamber it is Ali Baba's cave, a thief's cave of thieves, gangsters, and wrongdoers.* (interview 07, 2019)

This quotation profoundly illustrates political corruption from a history of deep-rooted political elitism and the increasing normality of an institutionalized relationship between Haiti's political-business leaders and gangs.

The political corruption and the subsequent *"banditization"*—a term referring to Haiti's organized crime—have lowered trust in Haiti's justice system and its ability to keep civil order. *"People don't trust the politicians … they don't trust the structures … there is no real justice [system] in some ways,"* explains Alain (interview 01, 2019). Such an unwavering sentiment led Haitian author Évelyne Trouillot to proclaim in a 2013 interview, "the people in Haiti, the majority of the people, have lost trust in the politicians" (Dupuy, Fatton Jr, Trouillot, & Wah, 2013, p. 244). Wavering public trust also extends to the police because, according to Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019) and Philipe (2019, interview 07, 2019), some police officers get involved in criminal activity or are gang members themselves. Even Haiti's business class uses police officers as intermediaries when subcontracting gangs for legal or illegal activities (Schuberth, 2015). These relationships demonstrate the pervasiveness of corruption at various scales of Haitian society's social and political structures.

The Haitian population has grown weary and frustrated with the impact of political corruption on everyday life. As Emmanuel states:

From Preval, Mr. Martelly, to Jovenel Moise[4] … the population is now very aggressively asking where did that money went [sic], and at the same time you have those gangs fighting, at the same time, there is not enough food, [re]sources to manage the crisis, [such as] the police [and] the justice institutions … this is the motive right now for the exude where people are leaving quickly because I mean they can be killed at any given time. (interview 02, 2019)

The insinuation of missing money alludes to the 2018 PetroCaribe controversy, where the political embezzlement of $2 billion in earmarked development funds led to widespread unrest in protest of corruption within the Haitian government (Dougé-Prosper & Schuller, 2020). Participants distinguish a history of poor governance as the primary culprit behind Haiti's current predicaments.

A dynamic social structure has taken hold in Haiti with a lack of robust governance, where the state remains largely absent. Philipe recounts, *"now the [Haitian] government can not do anything for the people. Sometimes you need the government … [to] give you hope … [but it] is not able to do that!"* (Interview 07, 2019). Instead, many communities are self-reliant or rely on civil society organizations (e.g. churches) and even their local gangs as a substitute for a state, often perceived as a negative element (Lundy, 2011b; Schuberth, 2015). According to Moritz Schuberth's (2015) research into Haiti's gang culture, the ambivalent relationship between gangs and their communities offers a "complex mixture of racketeering and protectionism" where residents will protect gangs from the police because of either the benefits they provide or the fear they instill (p. 16). Despite this precarious relationship, they share a mutually reinforcing paradox borne out

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[4] As a cumulative timeline, these three presidents served terms from 2006 to 2020 (http://www.travelinghaiti.com/list-of-haitian-presidents/).

of a necessity to increase one's life chances against the systemic consequences of poor and corrupt governance.

In varying facets, research participants share their perspectives on the impact of Haitian governance on people's livelihood and how it shapes their (in)security and (in)stability. For example, Alain broadly encapsulates why Haitians emigrate from their country:

> *I would say one of the biggest incentives to leave the country is the economic situation that is dire … Then you can look at the [other] causes; you can look at the political situation, you can look at the foreign country's involvement in it, you can look at the education system that doesn't work, you can look at the hospitals that don't work well … the justice system that is really crappy and corrupt.* (interview 01, 2019)

Although not of Haitian descent, Alain's vast experience of living and reporting from Haiti reflects similar perspectives of Haitian participants regarding the country's political-economic outcomes as a paramount migration factor.

A Political Economy of Poverty

The sensationalism encapsulating Haitian poverty in the global imaginary fails to address the everyday economic aspects fuelling poverty-induced migration. Participants did not overly emphasize poverty; however, they discussed the everyday economic realities for many Haitians and how the political economy connects to those realities. As Philipe states, *"motivat[ing] Haitian immigration to Canada … [is] much more the economic factors, and as we can't disassociate the economy from the political, well, everything is linked. All is linked"* (interview 07, 2019). Haiti's economic and political conditions do not exist in isolation from each other. From the conduct of Haitian political

leaders to outside intervening forces, the country's political integrity has suffered immensely under a modern history of economic slow harm rife with democratic deficits endemic to a perpetuated cycle of poor governance.

In the late 1970s, Haiti relinquished the development of the country's economic policies to International Financial Institutions (IFI), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in exchange for military and economic aid. While the Duvalier government embraced developing its export-assembly industries through economic structural reforms, it resisted pressure to remove barriers protecting its agricultural sector. Nonetheless, policies promoting deregulation, privatization, foreign tax exemptions and cuts to social spending swelled unemployment numbers, promoted rapid urbanization and exacerbated inequality (Dupuy, 2010a). By 1986, the demise of the Duvalier regime and the momentum of neoliberal economics enabled the IFIs to pressure the subsequent Haitian government into a new series of structural adjustment programs (SAP), which included "liberalizing" the agricultural sector by slashing import tariffs and subsidies (Dupuy, 2010a). Foreign intrusion into Haiti's agricultural sector only intensifies poor living conditions as the government cannot protect domestic food production.

To lower government deficits and 'balance the books,' SAPs have had continual and drastic consequences on Haitian livelihoods. Haitian bodies suffer for the 'economic good' of the state as structural adjustments have not improved the economy, making everyday life worse for most Haitians (Dupuy, 2010a; Hodžić, 2016). Extreme inequality characterizes Haitian society. Based on the most recent figures, nearly 60% of Haitians live below the national poverty line (USD 2.41 per day), while the richest 10% control 31.2% of the national income against 15.8% controlled by the poorest 40% (World Bank

and Observatoire National de la Pauvreté et de L'Exusion Sociale [ONPES], 2014; UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2022b). In addition, 79% of Haitians live on less than USD 5.50 per day compared to Latin America and the Caribbean's regional average of 26% (World Bank, 2018; World Bank, 2022a).

The most common economic issue discussed by participants was the lack of job opportunities (i.e. work) coupled with a high cost of living, both factors driving Haitian emigration. Ronaldo mentions how Haiti has always lived with *"chronic unemployment … that was always high at more than 50% of the population"* (interview 11, 2019). By comparison, Patricia quipped, *"because, in Haiti, there is no work"* (interview 09, 2019). In 2013, this reality prompted the editor of Haiti's leading newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, to dub the country "the Republic of Unemployment" (The Economist, 2013, par. 3). Considering Haiti's 13.8% unemployment rate as estimated by the International Labour Organization (ILO), a more favourable condition arises that raises doubt about chronic unemployment (World Bank, 2022a). However, further analysis of these competing statistics uncovers an unemployment reality akin to the participants' more acute and unofficial position.

Haiti's chronic unemployment revolves around a more dynamic representation of the country's employment reality that the ILO's solitary rate fails to capture. Based on the most recent survey data available, a World Bank and ONPES (2014) report on Haiti's socioeconomic condition lists the country's unemployment rate higher at 31.2% (see table 1) because the ILO definition of jobless working-age individuals looking for work includes those ready to work but not actively searching due to circumstantial barriers. Furthermore, the report acknowledges that nearly three-quarters of the population is underemployed

and earns less than minimum wage, with approximately half relying on an informal job market (see table 1) reflective of day-to-day survival rather than long-term stability and security (World Bank and ONPES, 2014). In its 2020 Human Development Report, just over 70% of Haiti's working-age population engaged in vulnerable employment—persons employed under precarious circumstances (UNDP, 2020). Vulnerable employment has fewer social protections and safety nets and is characterized by informality, low pay, poor working conditions and a lack of basic workers' rights (Otobe, 2011). In keeping the lack of a robust formal job market and the precarity of informal or vulnerable work in perspective, the ILO and World Bank's relatively low unemployment rates are hard to justify.

The socioeconomic reality provides the incentive to migrate based on the desire for better economic opportunities. For example, the earthquake and subsequent emigration to Canada presented an opportunity to alleviate unemployment burdens in one participant's family. "*My father was not working; my mother was not working; we sold*

Table 1

Labour Market Indicators Geographically Disaggregated

Location	Participa-tion rate	Employ-ment rate	Unemploy-ment rate, extended	Informal employ-ment	Invisible unde-remployment, minimum wage	Urban/ru-ral popula-tion ratio
Nationwide	64.7	44.5	31.2	49.6	70.0	0.9
Urban	66.0	39.8	39.6	68.6	57.3	n.a.
Rural	63.3	49.2	22.3	34.1	80.3	n.a.
Regions						
North	63.7	42.6	33.2	46.8	76.4	0.6
South	66.0	50.5	23.5	37.2	78.6	0.2
Transversale	63.0	47.4	24.8	40.4	76.0	0.5
West	64.3	44.4	31.0	53.7	68.3	0.6
Metropolitan Area	66.4	39.9	39.9	68.0	52.5	All urban

Source: (World Bank and ONPES, 2014)

everything we had ... so if the earthquake had not happened, what were we going to do? You see … it permitted us also to escape from the inevitable," explained Junior (interview 13, 2019), who came to Canada under family sponsorship. Such an experience exemplifies Alain's observation regarding family solidarity and the economic reality in Haiti: *"I know lots of people … who have proper jobs … that pay correctly, but they still live as a poor families [sic] because they [need] to support their brothers, their sisters, their everybody … so they have to live in the poverty level way of life"* (interview 01, 2019). These views demonstrate that even the formal job market does little to offset Haitian poverty, acting as an often inadequate mechanism struggling to provide stability and security to a population burdened by chronic unemployment.

Despite economic hardship stemming from unemployment and informal work in Haiti, living costs produce a cumulative effect that exacerbates many living conditions. Following the Haitian earthquake, several participants noted skyrocketing inflation and currency devaluation as factors contributing to a high cost of living. Often a strategy central to structural adjustment aimed at lowering fiscal deficits and repaying debt, currency devaluation will make a country's exports cheaper and more attractive in international markets while making imports more expensive to curb government spending. However, it has the adverse effect of making local goods more expensive, reducing citizens' purchasing power (Gros, 2011). An example of how structural adjustment concerns itself with the 'survival of the state' rather than the economic wellbeing of its citizens.

Multiple participants spoke of both inflation and devaluation as having a significant impact on Haitian livelihoods:

There is a higher level of cost of living ... The devaluation of the money, le gourde … so your buying power is less than before. (Emmanuel, interview 02, 2019)

The cost of life for people is exasperating. It is five times more expensive to live in Haiti than to live here in Canada. Five times more expensive! (Philipe, interview 07, 2019)

According to the Bank of the Republic of Haiti (2020), the devaluation of the Haitian gourde (HTG) between January 2010 and December 2019 resulted in a nearly 240% decrease in exchange value from 38.7 to 91.98 HTGs per U.S. dollar. Accordingly, Haiti's average annual inflation rate also dramatically rose from 4.14% to 17.58% during the same period (see figure 3). Yves remarks, "*life is just not sustainable as it is*" (interview 05, 2019). Furthermore, Philipe notes a growing rift between Haiti's private and public sectors as responsible for further economic destabilization: "*they wanted to evade the government, so they created the black market … [for] the foodstuff, a basic necessity, and resell them two to three times more expensive than market cost*" (interview 07, 2019).

Figure 3

Haiti's Annual Inflation Rate 2009-2019

Source: (International Monetary Fund, 2019)

This statement demonstrates that the country's business sector also plays a significant role in Haiti's high living costs.

One participant explains that Haiti's business class stifles economic development by importing goods and enriching themselves rather than reinvesting into developing domestic industries and infrastructure. Consistent with Philipe's prior statement, Samentha discusses how *"trade it is a scandal"* and that the *"bourgeois,"* the owners of Haiti's wealth and production means, carry much responsibility for the country's economic condition. Critical of the country's bourgeois elite, she adds:

> *What we call the bourgeois in Haiti they don't create riches for the country … they are merchant[s], and then they [only] buy things, and they resell it … But, when you have an industry, and then you have got so many people work with you, we create, we can make a distribution [network] all over the country. They don't do that.* (interview 04, 2019)

As the most liberalized market in the Western hemisphere, these contentious practices stem from neoliberal structural adjustments that have turned Haiti into an export-orientated economy and a basin for foreign profits. For example, Haiti's business class can take advantage of reduced tariffs to import cheaper goods that undermine local prices and stifle domestic production. Structural adjustment remains part of Haiti's post-earthquake reconstruction plan (Dupuy, 2010a; Schuller, 2017). The status quo for its economic development.

Haitian everyday life has become more expensive because Haiti's agricultural and industrial sectors suffer under structural adjustment. Liberalization policies have created unequal terms of trade favouring foreign capital interests, such as import tariff exemptions and subsidy reductions on domestic production. For example, by the early 1990s, Haiti's

assembly sector stifled industrial expansion by importing cheaper raw materials and industrial inputs rather than relying on domestic supplies, resulting in imported consumer and producer goods surpassing industrial exports. Then in 1995, tariffs on rice (a critical food staple in Haiti) were reduced from 50% to just 3%, and they have remained at that level since. Once self-sufficient in rice production, structural adjustment has transformed Haiti into a net importer of rice (Dupuy, 2010a; International Trade Administration, 2021). In 2020, Haiti was importing most of its rice needs, with the cost of imports ($292 million) far exceeding that of exports ($113 thousand) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2020). For an export-orientated economy like Haiti, such examples as a net importer are alarming.

When the earthquake struck in 2010, 80% of Haiti's export revenues imported more than half of its food needs (Dupuy, 2010b). For example, by 2012, 90% of eggs came from the Dominican Republic and the United States (U.S.) because a historical incursion of subsidized poultry from the same two countries drastically undermined Haiti's local poultry production (Diaz, Schneider, & Powgwam Santé Mantal, 2012). Samentha explains:

> It's like Haiti is a province of the Dominican Republic [D.R.]. They build everything in the D.R., and then they ship them to Haiti … you need to buy lemon, you need to buy plantain, you need to buy banana in the D.R., you need to buy tomato there, even the eggs, you need to buy the chicken there. (interview 04, 2019)

As reliance on imported foodstuff drives domestic production down, migration to urban areas intensifies because of the associated decline in rural economic opportunities (Farmer, 2012). It becomes a perpetual escalation of rural-urban migration because

Figure 4

Haiti's Urban to Rural Population with Projections (2000-2050)
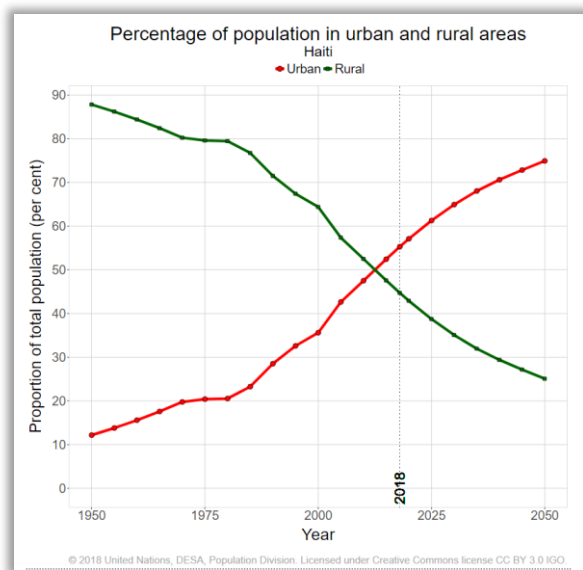
Source. (United Nations, 2018)

importing more goods to meet increasing urban demand maintains the cycle of declining

domestic production and rural economic opportunities.

Over the last 20 years, Haiti's rural-urban migration significantly increased to the

point that the urban population now outpaces what was once a significant rural majority

(see figure 4)—with nearly a quarter of the total population now living in the capital city of

Port-au-Prince (United Nations, 2019). As a livelihood coping strategy, rural-to-urban

migration carries hope for better socioeconomic opportunities and, if and when possible,

commonly precedes emigration to more distant places, such as the U.S. and Canada[5]

(Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016; Alscher, 2011; World Bank and ONPES, 2014).

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[5] Urbanites are more likely to emigrate to urban centres outside the Caribbean, while rural emigration remains predominantly within the Caribbean, such as the Dominican Republic (Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016).

However, many Haitians face unequal opportunities to emigrate from Haiti. For example, the urban elite disproportionately emigrates to Canada because they have the necessary financial resources and social status (e.g. transferable skills and higher education) (Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016). For rural-urban migration, financial resources are the primary capability factor.

Several participants speak about Haiti's rural areas as more affordable but having minimal employment opportunities than urban areas that ironically struggle to meet labour demands. *"It's probably a little bit cheaper to be out of Port-Au-Prince, transports, goods, but it's really … people don't feel that there's job opportunities enough,"* says Alain (interview 01, 2019). When asked about urban and rural areas, Philipe explains:

> *In Port-au-Prince, you have to buy everything, even electricity … Water, you have to buy everything in Port-au-Prince! ... someone who is in a rural region, can find something, can find fruits, etcetera … They can feed themselves; they can find things like that; they can eat a lot easier.* (interview 07, 2019)

In comparison, when asked about the cost of living between urban and rural areas, Mirlande answered, *"yes, it was higher in Port-au-Prince because you have to buy everything"* (interview 12, 2019). She also explains that for people with higher education, the rural areas offer minimal livelihood opportunities: *"We can no longer stay in the village because there is no work for those [with degrees] … because even for teaching the salary is minimal so we cannot stay because in the village there are no other employment except for teaching"* (interview 12, 2019). The average Haitian citizen deems rural opportunities insufficient for a decent livelihood (World Bank and ONPES, 2014).

Participants acknowledge that Haiti's terrain and insufficient agricultural development leave little room for economic growth and prosperity, even for those working

in the agricultural sector. Not surprising, considering no more than 10% of Haiti's national budget has ever gone to agricultural development (Gros, 2011). Haiti's mountainous terrain and sparse distribution networks make it challenging for equipment to reach farmers' fields and yields to reach markets due to poor road accessibility. *"The roads aren't built to go there … I've seen farmers, mostly women, that walk for an entire day and then sleep somewhere and then walk again the next day to get … to the market,"* explains Alain (interview 01, 2019). With a more robust transportation infrastructure (i.e. roads), agricultural development also requires an institutional capacity to facilitate access to credit, good seeds, fertilizer, or relative trade tools, which most Haitian farmers lack (Farmer, 2012). As Philipe adds, *"to cultivate land it takes means [but] people don't have the means to cultivate"* (interview 07, 2019). They merely do not have the means to improve their livelihoods without expanding beyond small-scale farming.

Beyond state institutional capacity, rapid urbanization emanates from international actors (i.e. IFIs, foreign governments, and international corporations) promoting economic policies that favour industrial strategies at Haitian farmers' expense. They advocate liberalizing the Haitian economy, such as reducing import tariffs on foodstuffs and removing agricultural subsidies, threatening food sovereignty, and exacerbating agricultural decline and land dispossession (Dupuy, 2010a). Ronaldo discusses how economic liberalization fosters rural outmigration to the benefit of foreign corporations, as follows:

In Haiti, it is a country with great agricultural importance … [and liberalization] ensure[s] that the agricultural sector … won't be able to reproduce, and then people are going to have to leave the [rural] country to come to the city to come work in

[factories]. So, this what they call the liberalization of the economy … because people are always available to work and accept low wages. (interview 11, 2019)

Liberalization describes an unfair political-economic reality where international forces destabilize Haiti's agricultural sector to place economic pressure on expanding its low-wage industrial labour force. After all, "Haitian agriculture must be destroyed so that corporations can enjoy a cheap labour force," quips Bellegarde-Smith (2011, p. 271). Low-wage labour is merely another consequence of foreign capital interests.

Foreign Intervention and Domination: The Politics of Aid

Many participants speak of unrelenting foreign political interventions as responsible for sustaining a political economy that fosters socioeconomic instability for many Haitians. They view interventions by the international community as a root cause of the persistent issues that affect contemporary Haiti's political and economic conditions. Several participants expressed that the *"core group,"* a coalition of representatives from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union, United States, the United Nations and the Organization of American States operating in Haiti, yields political and economic domination in the country (Dougé-Prosper & Schuller, 2020). For example*, "[the core group] need to also control Haiti in a manner that Haiti can align with their positions … [therefore] it is necessary that the government in place has no legitimacy … that it is very dependent,"* says Ronaldo (interview 11, 2019). Neoliberal governance and its dependency on international aid play a historical role in undermining the Haitian government and involves interference by the Core Group and INGOs.

Discussing the role of non-governmental actors in Haiti is inevitable, and a couple of participants even invoke an oft-cited moniker for the country, *"the Republic of NGOs"*—

an ironic or derisive reference to NGOs superseding the Haitian state in governing the welfare of the Haitian population while contributing to the state weaknesses they were supposed to solve (Schuller, 2017, p. 68). For many within Haiti's political sphere, INGOs have become known to function as a "parallel state" driven by foreign dominance and imperialism (Schuller, 2017). During Haiti's shift to a neoliberal democracy, the structural adjustment period led to cuts in government spending that weakened Haiti's public sector, leaving an institutional void for a growing INGO presence to fill (Kane, 2013; Schuller, 2017). According to Ramachandran and Walz (2015), such a phenomenon has led to "the rise of a quasi-private state in Haiti," where INGOs operate like private subcontractors or intermediaries that bypass the state in delivering aid and services (p. 39). As a frequently cited example, NGOs privately run over 80% of schools and health clinics (Schuller, 2017). This drastic usurping of state responsibilities highlights the acute impact of neoliberal restructuring on Haiti's public sector.

Research participants Alain (interview 01, 2009) and Samentha (interview 04, 2019) spoke at length about INGOs' involvement in Haiti, discussing how financially and structurally they compete with the state and its developmental affairs. *"In Haiti, there is that constant fight between the NGO and the government … it's like the government lose control in terms of what to do,"* states Samentha (interview 04, 2019). Throughout Haiti's history of dependency on conditional aid, INGOs have proliferated through the neoliberal restructuring of Haitian society and remain more accountable to their donor's political aims and operate with no structural accountability to not only the Haitian government but

the people they serve (Schuller, 2007; Pierre-Louis, 2011; Schuller, 2017). Defined as "private organizations" by the World Bank,[6] they operate like *for-profit* entities.

Since INGOs are not bound by formal democratic accountability that serves the public interest like states, their quasi-role as a parallel state usurps Haiti's government as the autonomously functioning "democracy." Viewed as more accountable and transparent, INGOs prosper from Haiti's history of poor governance and corruption because foreign donors trust the accountability of INGOs over that of the Haitian government (Schuller, 2017; Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). Nothing epitomized a lack of trust in the Haitian government more than the aid dispersal following the 2010 earthquake. Less than one percent of foreign aid dollars earmarked for the humanitarian response went to the Haitian government—the lion's share allocated to foreign militaries, INGOs, and private contractors (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). Humanitarian aid in Haiti acts as a proxy for foreign interests, with private entities and civil society often serving as beneficiaries of humanitarian funding. A long history of dependency on international aid that excludes the Haitian state from its affairs sustains these relationships.

Like participants in this research, many Haitians are disillusioned by their government's corruption and poor governance and the overall lack of progress, accountability, and transparency on behalf of INGOs and other private interests. Comments regarding foreign control and dependency were common among the participants who spoke of domination and exploitation within a postcolonial context; topics

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[6] The World Bank defines NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (Operational Directive 14.70, as cited in Duke University, 2020).

such as conditional funding, economic liberalization, and (neo)colonialism were named. Ronaldo explains the impacts of such domination as follows:

> *It is this international community that imposes what economic policies to apply, and such politics have nothing to do with the social situation for the majority of the population … it's like a strategy to keep the situation in place, the status quo, in a manner in that the people find themselves obligated to leave.* (interview 11, 2019)

Evans compares this arrangement to modern-day colonialism and says, "*it's the colonial system that continues [today] in another form because when we lived when it was the colonial period. But it is for profit. At the profit for who? The [neo]colonial countries!*" (interview 10, 2019). Even the management of humanitarian aid in the 2010 earthquake's aftermath provides a glimpse into the normalization of foreign profiteering in Haiti.

Both Canada and the U.S. received criticism for bolstering their economies rather than entrusting the Haitian government with managing relief funds. Estimates claim that around 75% of relief aid contributed by Canada and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) went towards goods and services from their respective countries rather than supporting Haitian firms (Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). Despite its perceived benevolence, the skewed distribution of the earthquake's relief funds is a glaring example of how partial humanitarian aid has become. Not only was the 2010 Haitian earthquake catastrophic, causing billions in damage and costing hundreds of thousands of lives, but it also marked a new chapter in perpetuating Haiti's foreign domination—resulting in one of Canada's most significant triggers of Haitian immigration.

The "Event"—The 2010 Earthquake

Most participants expressed that the 2010 earthquake remained a significant concern over the following decade, but other natural disasters affecting Haiti also drew consideration. *"We have natural catastrophes… it is a country exposed each year to natural catastrophes … we have the earthquakes; we have the hurricanes, the cyclones, etcetera … natural disasters are part of the reasons to ask for asylum,"* says Philipe (interview 07, 2019). Nevertheless, the earthquake predominated as a destructive natural disaster and a symbolic representation of poor governance. According to Joseph, a Haitian permanent resident here in Canada, *"the earthquake for the last ten years has been one of the core factors why young Haitians [are] leaving Haiti."* However, he adds, *"at the same time, a lack of political governance. I mean, every country has catastrophic event happen to them… But, in Haiti, it's different because the insecurity, the lack of governance"* (interview 06, 2019). Highlighting Haiti's history of insecurity and weak governance as preconditions exacerbating the earthquake's outcomes emphasizes that the ensuing humanitarian crisis did not materialize in isolation but as an outcome shaped by society's pre-existing vulnerabilities.

The notion that political governance played a role in the earthquake's devastation is part of a broader discourse concerning natural disasters and their societal impacts. A natural disaster is not merely a *natural* event but an outcome bound and forged by human civilization's political and socioeconomic realities (Lundy, 2011a; Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Kulstad-González, 2019). Haiti's insecurity and poor governance remained primary concerns among the participants as historically persistent issues merely compounded by natural disasters. They illuminate the divergence between the startling immediacy of the

earthquake and the slow harm that fuelled its devastation. Often the earthquake was treated as a proxy segueing into discussing the systemic causes behind Haitian migration, such as Ronaldo (2019), who said the earthquake *"resulted in a veritable social catastrophe—a human catastrophe … it is the earthquake and also the subsequent management [of the aftermath]"* (interview 11, 2019). References to humanity and governance indicate shifting perspectives between intimate and global scales.

The earthquake threatened or destroyed social support mechanisms, further threatening personal security and safety. It exposed the fragility of political power in the country and laid bare the socioeconomic vulnerabilities embedded in Haitian society. According to Désir (2011), death and separation fractured and disrupted the country's modern *lakou* system—a social milieu of relational spaces that serve as the backbone of Haitian communities—making life even riskier with the weakening of this integral social fabric. Samentha discussed the earthquake's impact on those who already lacked a strong base of social support:

> *After the Haitian earthquake … so many [had] nowhere to go, and then they lost everything they have because sometime in Haiti they don't have the social support. For example, if I have a home and then I lose that home and then all these thing[s]. So, there is nowhere to go to get support and then so many people are then looking … to make a new life.* (interview 04, 2019)

She even explains how in 2017, *"[Haitian] people came into Canada because of that too … they are afraid to go back to Haiti because they lost everything after the earthquake"* (interview 04, 2019). This sense of immense loss gave people few options but to leave.

As previously noted, participants demonstrate that (in)security is a multi-faceted issue beyond merely an earthquake's physical devastation. *"In Haiti, it's different because*

the insecurity [and] the lack of governance … it includes many things, and it's all of these things pushing the young generation to leave Haiti," explains Joseph (interview 06, 2019). Referencing power relations as catalyzing migration suggests that emigration provides the opportunity for a future that insecurity obviously cannot provide. When asked during the interview about the pertinent issues that influence Haitian migration to Canada, Yves responded:

> *There is a whole set of factors, but they boil down to do you have security? And I would broaden security, and I would say safety, or then you can expand to security in terms of access to the basic necessities [and the] ability to sustain yourself.* (interview 05, 2019)

The notion of broadening security to encapsulate the ability to sustain one's life resembles the people-centred approach to human security and its governmental objectives of managing people's basic security. Food security, for example, is essential for people to stay in place. However, security as safety assumes a more subjective sense because a person's sense of stability is vital for staying in place. An interdependency emerges between divergent notions of material and subjective safety—security as survival and security as being—the latter promoting self-agency (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017). It demonstrates that human security provides a means for safety while ontological security provides a sense of safety. Both are integral elements of a secure life and livelihood.

Most study participants speak about the quality of life relative to basic needs: food, water, housing, education, healthcare, and paid work. In modern capitalist society, employment may not be a basic need, but paid labour facilitates access to the necessities above (Sprague-Silgado, 2018). *"In all societies … there are five basic necessities: eat, drink, sleep, piss, and shit,"* explains Philipe with an amusing chuckle before continuing,

"when those necessities are not satisfied, all the others are secondary. The person who … actually leaves Haiti, they leave people behind; their first need is work" (interview 07, 2019). A couple of other participants further discuss basic needs relative to family and the search for a secure livelihood:

> *But, if you talk about economic security, [its the] ability to sustain yourself, sustain your family, [it's] access to basic healthcare, access to hope and education, not only for yourself but for your children and your family.* (Yves, interview 05, 2019)

> *It's finding a future for the children, find[ing] a solution for their life because in Haiti there is no work, in Haiti, there is insecurity, in Haiti, there is violence.* (Patricia, interview 09, 2019)

The discussion surrounding children among participants seemed to segue into the importance of education in providing a future for their families.

Ensuring children receive the best possible education was a common topic among participants who highlighted Haiti's educational deficiencies. Demonstrating education's social value in Haitian society, Estherson describes attending private school as *"practically a tradition"* (interview 08, 2019). However, participants were eager to point to Haiti's weak and deteriorating education system as a migration influence. This reality led Patricia to stress that for many Haitians, migration to Canada is *"always [about] the future for the kids"* and the economic opportunity and security to provide them with the best education possible to achieve a brighter future (interview 09, 2019). It provides a perceived answer to disparity and despair; as Junior says, "*the Haitian family believe[s] in each other a lot [and] when you are not the better off, your only way out is education"* (interview 13, 2019). Because in Haiti, higher education levels correlate with escaping

poverty through attaining better jobs and higher earnings (World Bank and ONPES, 2014). The higher educated are frankly better off.

The importance of education also extends beyond the primary and secondary years, and the participants who migrated after 2010 spoke of the importance of accessing higher education in Canada. Mirlande, who entered Canada as a Federal Skilled Worker (FSW), states, *"the only positive thing for people who enter the qualified workers' program is that they can study … [it] is easy if you want to go to university"* (interview 12, 2019). Others spoke of furthering their education as a motivational factor for coming to Canada. *"Returning to my studies to deepen a little more my research … also motivated me a little to come to Canada,"* said Ronaldo (interview 11, 2019). Junior demonstrated excitement of attending a large Canadian university and *"to realize [his] dreams in becoming a great Haitian intellectual"* (interview 13, 2019). Regardless of the motivations behind coming to Canada, it is clear that education plays a vital role, whether directly or indirectly.

Research participants generally regarded people's basic needs and the hope of securing a better livelihood as major influences behind migration to Canada. They stress that Haitian society has reached a 'tipping point' with living conditions deteriorating further in recent years. Beyond the disenfranchised and marginalized, Yves explains how people who do not usually get involved in political affairs are now getting involved:

> *They were demonstrating yesterday [in Haiti], and the police had a huge demonstration on Sunday asking for better living conditions. So never mind [just] teachers [but] everybody, the private sector, the business people, the church … This is the first in all my years I see priests taking to the streets!* (interview 05, 2019)

For many Haitians, the goal is finding a place that provides a quality of life that Haiti cannot, and as outlined by participants so far, Haitians perceive Canada as a place providing hope, opportunity and security.

Canada as the El Dorado

Perceived as a place of opportunity in the Haitian imagination, participants discussed impressions of Canada as a land of hope—a solution to insecurity and instability. Evans exclaims, *"[Haitians] arriving here, they said, well it's [the] El Dorado!"* (interview 10, 2019). Branding Canada as the El Dorado insinuates that it exists as a place of great abundance and wealth (Soanes & Stevenson, 2008). It harbours hope and opportunity for people to increase their life chances. Samentha says:

> *People who got aspiration for a better life, to build a family to have a better tomorrow, they don't have that hope in Haiti … the opportunity is not there, that force people to leave … Canada, you know it is the El Dorado, okay so everybody want[s] to come here* (interview 04, 2019).

Perceived as a land of riches, Canada provides people with aspirations of security and stability for themselves and others.

Some participants explained how the accompanying hope when migrating to Canada becomes a transnational aspiration between migrants and people who remain in Haiti. An ideology of obligation has developed for many living in Haiti (Schiller & Fouron, 2009). *"People here have obligations. When they enter [Canada], there are some that have families and kids [back home] … it's hope for everyone who remains back there [in Haiti],"* explains Philipe (interview 07, 2019). Mirlande reminisces over similar aspirations before coming to Canada: "*maybe it will be an opportunity to further pursue my studies and also work and, maybe at the economic level, help other members of my family that*

lives in Haiti" (interview 07, 2019). They view Canada as a place of opportunity to succeed beyond the means available to them in Haiti. A place to fulfill their premigration aspirations for a future of improving social mobility and stability, including the economic advantage of providing financial support to their families back home.

One participant evoked a profound and metaphorical reflection about snowfall and Christmas and the mutually reinforcing racialized imaginaries it creates between the North and the South. It paints an image encapsulating the Haitian desire for hope and opportunity, contrasting Canada as the El Dorado against Haiti's insecurity and instability. A week away from receiving his Canadian citizenship, Junior eloquently illustrates this passage:

> *When the snow falls, it's beautiful; it's all white … It's like the white symbolizes purity, wellness, all that is virtuous, and then you have the black ... I think it has an effect on all the immigrants that come from Haiti. Either way, they don't know that reality because it is also devised in our imaginary [that] there is this dichotomy of black and white, prosperous country and [developing country]. You see, there was this envy, this really strong envy for the snowfalls. I waited for it to fall, and of course, you had to touch it, it came from the sky, there is ... All this sort of imaginary that [is] constructed around this, Santa Claus, the white sky, presents, developed country, well-off country.* (interview 13, 2019)

This anecdote draws parallels to the idea of a "global geography of imagination," where the late Haitian author and academic Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003) describes "the West" not as a place but as a fictional project that seeks continuous universal legitimacy and global spatial expansion (p. 1). The idea of the West as a project rather than a place provides a helpful context for Western imperialism in Haiti.

The creation and imperial perpetuation of the West inherently require the ideological existence of the "uncivilized" Other in opposition to the "civilized" Westerner, and respectively, creates the racialized duality between black and white—developing and developed countries—Haiti and Canada (Trouillot, 2003; Shani, 2017). Devising the beauty of white Canadian snow as symbolizing purity, wellness, and virtuosity promotes a contrasting imaginary against Haiti's Blackness. This dichotomy cultivates aspirations for a better life in a developed and well-off country. A desire to migrate to a place like Canada produces "aspiration experiences" from ideological and cultural imperialism that promotes economic growth as a moral value of universal beneficence to humankind (Trouillot, 2003). For example, someone aspiring to migrate and achieve the globally pervasive U.S. ideal of capitalistic freedom and opportunity to prosper and succeed, known as the American Dream (American, 2020). Or, in this case, Canada as the El Dorado.

Conclusion

Subject to much historical scrutiny and revelation, fascination with Haiti's genealogy since its 19th century independence has garnered a great deal of attention. Many of the issues raised and discussed in this chapter are not novel (e.g. poor governance and poverty), but they are vital in understanding modern-day Haiti's challenges and the slow harm prompting Haitians to leave for places like Canada. Decades of political instability and insecurity suggest that Haiti's existing problems are not driven by destiny but by historical conditions.

While much of Haiti's history remains beyond the scope of this research, Haiti has experienced and endured geopolitical marginalization by colonial powers, crippling debt,

U.S. imperial occupation, an authoritarian dictatorship, foreign-imposed economic liberalization, political coups, and one of the 21st century's most devastating natural disasters (Icart, 2006; Hyndman, 2011; Farmer, 2012). While slow harm applies primarily over the last four decades in this analysis, the Duvalier era's preceding political and economic structures would segue its transition from authoritarianism to imposed neoliberal governance and democracy (Dupuy, 2010b). Today, it remains an era of Haitian history that it has not entirely freed itself from as it continues to struggle with the ensuing democratic deficits.

The devastation left in the wake of the 2010 earthquake influenced some Haitians to seek a new life abroad. However, they were not merely escaping a natural disaster but the political, socioeconomic and structural conditions that existed long before the ground shook. Rapid urbanization, poor infrastructure, lack of employment opportunities, high living costs and a weak public sector resulting in inadequate social services are a few conditions that shaped Haitian society and its citizens' acute vulnerabilities to the earthquake (Gros, 2011). Many research participants were adamant in discussing Haiti's history of poor governance and foreign interventions that compounded the earthquake's outcomes. In a sense, the aftermath was a deadly and exacerbated reality of prior Haitian life. There is nothing *natural* about it.

Contemporary Haiti's politically corrupt and clientelist network persists as an institutionalized yet decentralized representation of the Duvalier regime's oppressive and violent political patronage system. With a continued dependency on foreign aid and a lack of a central figure as an authoritative power, a perpetual power vacuum has existed in this non-pluralistic state for almost four decades (Sylvain, 2013). Today, the international

community and Haitians continue to vie for power and control over Haiti's governance and economy. This relentless struggle for political and economic stability has dispossessed Haitians of their autonomy in governing their own country.

Distrust in their government and foreign "humanitarianism" meant to ameliorate their living conditions has become the norm for a country that remains one of the world's most impoverished and unequal countries. "Poor governance and 'remote control' by [foreign] governments and INGOs 'aiding' Haiti generate conditions that make more people leave," says Hyndman (personal communication, August 17, 2020; Hyndman, 2011). Functioning as a parallel state, they bear considerable responsibility for the growing exploitation and weak institutional capacity that significantly fosters a lack of economic growth and development.

A political economy of underdevelopment has created increasing political and socioeconomic problems for most Haitians. As discussed, Haiti's formal job market is hardly adequate; without informal work, over half the country would be unemployed. With ballooning inflation, even basic necessities are hardly affordable for many, and social unrest against the country's corrupt political elite has increased. Furthermore, as a symptom of high poverty and inequality, the threat of violence and harm perpetrated by a politico-gang culture intensifies the resolve to migrate abroad for many Haitians.

The concerns and issues raised in this chapter demonstrate that Haiti's problems are not linear and have evolved gradually over generations into a multi-dimensional reality of instability and insecurity for many, both in a systemic and intimate capacity. Befittingly, James (2010) views Haitian insecurity "as the embodied uncertainty generated by political, criminal, economic, and also spiritual ruptures" (p. 8). Uncertainty can destabilize

society and its members, leading to fear and anxiety and threatening their ontological security (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017). If poor governance, criminal violence, and socioeconomic instability are current features of everyday Haitian life, then the anxiety and uncertainty induced by its insecurity define the subjective desires of many who wish to leave their country. For many Haitians, the opportunity to start anew in Canada represents the hope of mitigating slow harm and maintaining a sense of personal continuity.

CHAPTER 3

From Haitian Emigration to Canadian Immigration

The evidence of slow harm and Haiti's security challenges introduced in Chapter 2 draws more scrutiny than potential factors emanating from destination countries like Canada in relation to migration. The primary goal of this thesis is to focus on Haitian migration from a Canadian standpoint. The intention is not to imply that immigration practices and other pertinent factors do not endure rigorous study. Instead, this thesis intends to shift focus away from treating migrants as mere victims of circumstances often steeped in human and national security narratives based on simple dichotomies, such as livelihood differences between developed and developing countries.

Since refugees or immigrants are often defined by circumstances, not as people in their own right with existing identities before or beyond the situation (Hynie, 2018), this research asks what motivated Haitians to migrate to Canada in the last decade? While some reasons may appear relatively transparent or commonplace, understanding legal, political, and transnational processes surrounding Canadian immigration helps explain why, as a country, it continues to be an attractive destination for many Haitians. It becomes especially poignant when considering that the size of the Haitian diaspora in the neighbouring United States (U.S.) far exceeds that of Canada (Audebert, 2017).

As guided by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), Canadian immigration policies and regulations help cast the legal framework for immigration or asylum claims. Simultaneously, Canadian statecraft and the Haitian diaspora shape unique circumstances that influence Haitians' individual and familial "life-cycle" choices relative to migration (Giddens, 1991; Shani, 2017). Whether it be the economic

opportunity to support family back home or escaping uncertainty in Haiti or elsewhere, Canada provides the social, economic, and political conditions to suggest an ontologically secure destination for many Haitians. However, Canada's geographical location and immigration laws and policies do not make it an easily accessible destination for most Haitians. Furthermore, Canadian immigration law and policy are buttressed by less formal agreements and other regulations, procedures and protocols. For example, in January 2015, the points-based "Express Entry" system designed to vet and fast-track prospective economic migrants seeking permanent residency in Canada was introduced with no changes to law or policy (Hiebert, 2019). Having the means to migrate to Canada demonstrates a certain level of privilege and autonomy that many Haitians do not have, given Haiti's socioeconomic problems.

In this chapter, participants helped foreground pertinent immigration laws, policies and agreements such as the family reunification program and the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA). Along with changes to U.S. immigration policies in 2017, bilateral agreements such as the STCA significantly influenced Haitians into becoming the largest group of asylum seekers fleeing to Canada that year. While the STCA is a policy of sorts, its salience in facilitating Haitian asylum claims over the past few years deserves a more dedicated and detailed analysis.

#WelcomeToCanada: Fleeing a Safe Third Country

On January 28, 2017, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau's now-infamous tweet (see figure 5) welcoming asylum seekers projected Canada's refugee-friendly image to the world. Widely regarded as a comment on the Trump administration's anti-immigrant stance and blamed by some for encouraging irregular migration into Canada,

Figure 5

it galvanized political controversy at federal and provincial levels (Cressman, 2019). "*Justin Trudeau in his wisdom tweeted that you're welcome to Canada if you been persecute[d] … the first group of people that heard the message was the Haitian community … so they started to flow up here,*" attested Emmanuel, a refugee advocate in Montreal (interview 02, 2019). Critics expressed concern over Canada's capacity to manage high volumes of asylum seekers, while advocates further exposed bureaucratic realities contradicting Canada's humanitarian identity. The 2004 STCA has faced renewed scrutiny by immigration advocates who have long challenged its legal and constitutional validity in barring asylum seekers in the U.S. from seeking refuge in Canada (Rehaag & Aiken, 2020). Ironically, as will be explained shortly, it would be a key piece of the process of facilitating asylum claims for Haitians.

As a bilateral agreement between the Canadian and U.S. governments, the STCA allows both countries to work together managing refugee claims by requiring the submission of asylum claims in the first of the two countries in which they arrive (IRCC, 2018a). Despite such a deterrent, thousands of Haitians who came via the U.S. in 2017 had their claims officially recognized by Canada. That year, Haiti represented the top principal source country of citizenship for asylum claimants in Canada, the most exceptional Haitian migration event since the earthquake as Haitian asylum claims

sharply increased from 620 claimants the year before to 7,785—a 1,226% increase (IRCC, 2020b). Irrespective of nationality, overall claims significantly increased from approximately 24,000 claimants in 2016 to over 50,000 (IRCC, 2020b). To solely attribute such a dramatic rise in asylum claims to a single tweet would be disingenuous; however, interpreting its brevity and ambiguous tone as a welcoming sign is easily understandable for people seeking the opportunity for stability in another country not of their own.

A few other participants directly mentioned the welcoming influence of Trudeau's tweet in motivating Haitians to gravitate towards Canada. Once a Haitian Creole translator for Haitian newcomers to Canada, Samentha noted: *"there was [the] tweet… [saying] Canada is a welcoming country. It's like [Haitians] was taking advantage of that [tweet], and then they come to Canada. So, they were thinking that they were gonna be accepted"* (interview 04, 2019). Even Jasmine, a Haitian activist in New York City, makes an implicit reference to the tweet by saying, *"that is one of the reasons why after January 2017, and word went out, that Canada might be a little bit more welcoming to Haitian immigrants"* (interview 03, 2019). That so many people found inspiration and a window of opportunity in a 140-character tweet was a testament to many Haitians' despair inside and outside Haiti. While the living standards in Haiti still warranted the emigration desires of many, all eyes were on U.S. President Donald Trump's early days in office.

In 2017, the U.S. garnered unprecedented global attention as the Trump administration's anti-immigration mandate created further instability and uncertainty for over 50 thousand Haitian asylum seekers (Cervantes, 2017; Stevenson, 2017). Its influence on deterring and chasing away asylum seekers from settling in the U.S. is evident, considering that over 3,000 Haitians seeking asylum in Canada that year were

U.S. residents while thousands more used the U.S. as transit (Smith C. D., 2019). All participants were quick to reference President Trump or his xenophobic immigration policies as stoking Haitian deportation fears. When asked about pertinent reasons for Haitians coming to Canada in 2017, Patricia was quick to remark, *"the first thing was the fear of Trump because they understood that Trump could chase them and they didn't want to return to Haiti … Always Trump! Yes, always, Trump"* (interview 09, 2019). Other remarks targeted President Trump's propaganda for instilling deportation fears within the Haitian-American community—describing it as the campaigning of a racist and anti-immigration president who came to power on an immigration zero platform (Emmanuel, interview 02, 2019; Jasmine, interview 03, 2019; Evans, interview 10, 2019). However, participants reference the Trump administration's policy actions (e.g. ending temporary protection status, or TPS) as the primary factor.

Under certain extraordinary conditions, such as armed conflict or environmental disasters, the U.S. TPS program provides temporary protection from deportation if people cannot return safely to their designated country of origin (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2020). The Trump administration's decision to terminate TPS for Haitians left approximately 46,000 facing deportation, and despite a federal judge later blocking its termination in 2018, the anti-immigration rhetoric had already instilled concrete fears of repatriation (Gonzales, 2018). As Jasmine explains:

The Trump administration, as soon as it came in [to power] … suddenly created a huge amount of panic … With respect to immigration policy … it has taken several steps to reduce significantly means by which people would be able to stay in the United States while pursuing residencies either temporary or permanent residency. (interview 03, 2019)

Casually speaking, Evans was blunt in his assessment and said, *"[Trump] declared that he is going to kick all these people out. There was a lot of people that got scared; they said, well, I'll take my chance here [in Canada], and they found a little loophole"* (interview 10, 2019). The alleged "loophole" became a worthwhile risk for thousands of people by increasing their capacity to claim asylum in Canada.

Using the term "loophole" refers to asylum seekers who circumvent the STCA by entering Canada from the U.S. through an unofficial border crossing (i.e. irregularly) rather than a designated land port of entry to avoid being returned across the border (Cressman, 2019). However, as a Canadian scholar of immigration law, Audrey Macklin (2008) critiques the STCA as a loophole in and of itself, not for asylum seekers but for "the exercise of [Canadian] state power beyond the bounds of its lawful authority" (Macklin, 2018, p. 29). Instead, it empowers state border control by undermining Canada's obligations to international refugee law seeking to ensure asylum seekers due process and protection from *refoulement*—deportation back to their country of origin. According to Canadian immigration law, it is not illegal to enter Canada irregularly to claim asylum. Irregular migration is not an oversight but the realization of a deliberate decision by the Canadian government not to apply the STCA across the length of Canada's land border (Macklin, 2018). Otherwise, there is nothing irregular about crossing into Canada to claim asylum as Canadian and international immigration law functions unobstructed.

Given the frequency of irregular border crossings in recent years, participants who work closely with Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers demonstrated an intimate knowledge of the STCA agreement. *"Let's not forget there was a treaty between Canada and United States called the third safe country … where coming to Canada through the*

regular border … they will be rejected, and that's why they have to go through that little Roxham Road—the irregular border," explains Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019). As a clarification, the STCA is not a legally binding treaty recognized by international law, but a bilateral agreement that was also recently ruled unconstitutional and suspended by Canada's Federal Court in the summer of 2020 (Rehaag & Aiken, 2020; IRCC, 2018c). However, on April 15, 2021, Canada's Federal Court of Appeal reinstated the STCA after granting the Government of Canada's appeal (IRB, 2021b). Nonetheless, it remains a salient point of contention.

In a more critical tone, Philipe says about the STCA, *"you cannot make two asylum claims in two different countries at the same time from a southern third [world] country"* (interview 07, 2019). However, the STCAs limitation of only covering official border crossings presented an opportunity to do just that. Haitians in the U.S. perceived Canada as an opportunity because they realized entering Canada irregularly to claim asylum was permissible. "*They had no [other] choice but to return to Haiti or go live essentially [underground] in the United States … So, you had basically a sort of a rush to the border to Canada,"* explains Jasmine (interview 03, 2019). Furthermore, under article 4 of the agreement, asylum seekers with family in Canada benefit from the "family member exception" rule, which officially circumvents the third-country rule in enabling asylum claims made at official border crossings to proceed (IRCC, 2018a). It provides flexibility for those fortunate enough to have a pre-existing family in Canada as it does offer a certain level of certainty that a claim, at the very least, will receive due process.

The family member exception rule becomes more salient, considering that family members residing in Canada need not only be citizens or permanent residents for an

individual to qualify. For example, a family member might be a protected person, hold a valid Canadian work or study permit, or be a refugee claimant themselves (IRCC, 2018a). Furthermore, the STCA's family definition only falls short of including cousins and in-laws by recognizing extended family members. It extends beyond the family-class definition as nephews or nieces receive recognition under the family exception rule.

While no research participant referenced the STCA's family exception rule, its relatively liberal approach to qualification criteria makes it a viable opportunity for many Haitians with families already in Canada. However, Arbel and Brenner's (2013) report examining Canada's refugee system indicates that the family member exception rule relies on the discretionary power of Canadian border officers and lacks uniform procedures leading to inconsistent, inflexible, and often arbitrary evaluation standards contradicting the generous and liberal approach touted by Canadian officials. One practitioner cited in the report said, "as far as I can tell, it's entirely subjective" (Arbel & Brenner, 2013, p. 94). In that case, the family member exception rule might prove riskier than expected.

Under such unpredictable circumstances, qualifying Haitians might choose to forgo the STCA's family member exception rule and instead cross irregularly at an unofficial border crossing. However, making such an assertion remains speculative because of the lack of available statistics regarding STCA exceptions. While overall asylum claims at the Canadian border decreased significantly nearly ten years after the agreement took effect in 2004 (Arbel & Brenner, 2013), the U.S. political landscape, along with the loophole that is the STCA, influenced thousands of Haitian asylum seekers to take a chance on Canada in 2017.

Several participants pointed out that Canada's welcoming image fostered a series

of predatory or disinformation campaigns to influence Haitians to seek asylum in Canada.

"Sometimes people take their own information, and they mislead the information in their

own interest," says Samentha (interview 04, 2019). She later adds:

> *Another thing that forced them to come here, there was like a tip that was spread in*
> *WhatsApp. It's like it was a fake news, and then they were saying [it's] because of*
> *Trudeau [sic] father … [because] he was very close to the Haitian community* (see
> figure 6). (Samentha, interview 04, 2019)

While elaborating on their previous quote, Jasmine outlines a deceptive campaign used

to solicit business from Haitians fearing deportation from the U.S., as follows:

> *You had essentially 3 or 4 people coming down from Canada saying come on up,*
> *you are going to be welcome … they were going to Haitian communities and saying*
> *that **there was a whole campaign around Canada being more open** [emphasis*
> *added] … not regular community members, they were people essentially preying on*
> *their fear … they were soliciting; they were soliciting business … they were all over*

Figure 6

Example of "Disinformation" that Circulated via WhatsApp Social Media Platform

Le Samedi 17 Juin 2017, le Consul du Canada 🇨🇦 aux USA 🇺🇸 a tenue séance à New Jersey pour plus de 2 heures. Il a invité et même encouragé tous les Haïtiens 🇭🇹 (avec ou sans TPS) à appliquer pour une résidence canadienne... voici le numéro de contact: Tel. 212-954-3434 Max L. Jean-Louis 1) L'avocat sus-mentionné parle créole couramment 2) Les frais seront couverts par le gouvernement Canadien. Informez-vous et bonne chance 👍🍀 3:01 PM	On Saturday, June 17, the Consul of Canada in the USA held a meeting in New Jersey for more than 2 hours. They invited and encouraged Haitians (with or without TPS) to apply for Canadian residency… here is the contact number: 212-954-3434 Max L. Jean-Louis 1) The aforementioned lawyer speaks creole 2) Costs will be covered by the Canadian government. Inform yourselves and good luck

This message circulated manipulated and misleading information: it was not an
organized consular meeting, it provided an incorrect contact number, and alluded
that the Canadian government would cover all fees (Stevenson, 2017a).

the airwaves and WhatsApp and social media … these guys were essentially exploiting the panic to their advantage. (interview 03, 2019)

This type of manipulative and misleading information proved enticing for many Haitians desperately seeking the stability they lacked living in the U.S. at the time.

A couple of participants attributed the effectiveness of disinformation to the power of word-of-mouth in the Haitian community. As the director of a local community organization, Philipe says, *"the problem at the level of the Haitian community is… that people think they know everything and so they listen [to] what others say"* (interview 07, 2019). While Jasmine rhetorically asks: *"They are relying on word-of-mouth, and if somebody says you can do that and the first few Haitians that showed up at the border did not encounter that much resistance from Canadian authorities … what you gonna do?"* (interview 03, 2019). Because, when adding hope to the equation, deceptive behaviours prove potent, as Jasmine further explains: *"part of the problem is when people rely on a sliver of hope as a key to salvation, it's hard for rationality to set in"* (interview 03, 2019). Even if the STCA facilitates possible entry for some, Canadian immigration laws and policies present yet another obstacle to overcome. Getting into Canada is only part of the battle to gain recognition and status.

Canadian Statecraft: Regulating Haitian Immigration in Canada

Whether they had direct or indirect experiences with Canada's immigration system, research participants identified multiple forms of Canadian immigration practices that helped Haitians gain permanent residency. This section introduces how pertinent immigration laws, procedures, and practices shaped contemporary Haitian immigration for asylum seekers and other migrants over the last decade. Although participants shared

perspectives of Haiti's problems, they were equally, if not more, keen to share their perspectives on the Canadian immigration system.

Governed by IRPA and Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR), Canada's immigration system is structured around three fundamental pillars or classes: family reunification, economic immigration, and refugees (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act [IRPA], 2001), or as once ideologically expressed by the Government of Canada (2012):

> …to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions in Canada; to see that families are reunited; and to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and affirm Canada's commitment to global efforts to provide assistance to those in need of resettlement (para. 3).

As the foundation of Canadian immigration, the three pillars undoubtedly permeate Canada's immigration affairs—often rendering many of the policy and regulation practices intersectional by nature.

Focusing on pertinent laws and policies regulating Haitian immigration can shift attention away from Haiti, especially considering that policies or related practices can materialize or rapidly change. Participants spoke at length about past and existing immigration practices influencing contemporary Haitian immigration protocols, such as Temporary Suspension of Removal (TSR). Other topics discussed include special measures and Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (H&C). In some cases, Haitians obtain immigration status in Canada through unforeseeable circumstances.

Referred to as the "guardian angels," asylum seekers employed to provide healthcare assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic in Quebec eventually benefited from

a new provincial immigration program offering a humanitarian pathway to permanent residency (El-Assal & Miekus, 2020). This ad hoc program is a recent example of Canadian immigration dealing with the circumstantial and unforeseeable, including how gaining status can vary spatially based on provincial politics. According to Omeziri and Gore (2014), "special measures" exist as legitimate policy instruments to juggle economic, political, security, and humanitarian responsibilities. However, they are often impromptu due to their unpredictability.

Special measures are temporary ad hoc policy tools that allow the Canadian government to adapt and balance humanitarian obligations with immigration legislation (Omeziri & Gore, 2014). They respond to current conditions when the Canadian immigration system would otherwise be slow to act, especially in dealing with temporary residents. Under exceptional circumstances, the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) can implement special measures, often using operational bulletins (OB) "for one-time-only instructions or to provide urgent instructions to staff for a brief period" (IRCC, 2020d, n.p.; Omeziri & Gore, 2014). Although participants did not explicitly address OBs, they discussed policy prescriptions implemented by special measures such as family reunification efforts. As a priority of Canada's immigration system, family reunification played an essential role in Canada's domestic response to the Haitian earthquake and beyond.

Special Measures and the Centrality of Family Reunification

With millions of Haitians displaced both within Haiti and beyond, Canadian immigration policies played a prominent role in addressing some of the earthquake's devastation and humanitarian impact. For example, the Canadian government was quick

to implement special measures under the general operational directives of OB 83, "Guidelines for Priority Processing in the Event of Disaster Situations," which expedites Canadian permanent or temporary residency for people impacted by natural disasters (Omeziri & Gore, 2014). Shortly following OB 83 was OB 179, "Special Measures in Response to the Earthquake in Haiti," which further streamlined the process for new and existing Haitian applications under family reunification principles (Omeziri & Gore, 2014; IRCC, 2010a). Participants made no direct reference to OB 179; however, as stated, attention to family reunification did not get overlooked: *"First of all, the initial factor is family reunification … [it] is a primary factor of [Haitian] immigration,"* explained Philipe (interview 07, 2019). As a pillar of Canadian immigration law, the family reunification requirements under OB 179 meant that family trumped individual considerations during the selection process. The emphasis on family reunification established an advantage for Haitians with family members in Canada who were willing and able to sponsor relatives impacted by the earthquake. However, Canadian immigration policy limits Haitian society's broader familial perspectives.

Under Canadian immigration law, the definition of family is quite limited compared to the lived experience of family among Haitians. Under IRPA (2001), the definition of family constitutes a spouse (including common-law or conjugal partners), children under 22 years of age, parents, or grandparents of the sponsoring relative (Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, 2002). By contrast, the extended or expanded family is an intimate and integral aspect of Haitian culture. *"The family, so it's everyone, it's the cousins, it's the uncles. So, it's all this that guides what you'd say is our [way of] life,"* stresses Ronaldo (interview 11, 2019). Discussing the sociocultural importance between

family and community in Haiti, Ronaldo further reflects on how it transcends the nuclear

family model in Canada:

> *In Haiti, the family is not just reduced to the father, mother, and children. The family is bigger so it's cousins, and sometimes it's your neighbours too … it's like [an expanded] family, so family in Haiti we say that in Creole, 'fanmi sa dra,' so the family is like a precious object. For example, you know the 'dra' … [the sheet] we use to cover a bed? … The family is like that object.... It's important! … The neighbours are the same thing, someone that is important in your daily life with who we develop relationships just like family relationships.* (interview 11, 2019)

The term "fanmi sa dra" translates to "the family sheets" in English and presents the

concept of family as an inherently precious and sacred bond by metaphorically comparing

it to the intimacy and warmth of bedsheets. It accentuates a familial belonging beyond the

immediate family to include friends and neighbours, not just blood and conjugal

relationships.

The legal limitations imposed by IRPA led Haitian-Canadians and immigration

advocates to plea for the federal government to relax family class policies in the wake of

the earthquake (*See, e.g.,* Banerjee, 2010; Bourgault-Côté, 2010; The Canadian Press,

2010; O'Neill, 2010). Instead, the Quebec government took unprecedented action as a

provincial authority to address this call for humanitarian leniency. In the month following

the Haitian earthquake, Quebec's provincial government temporarily used its unique

immigration selection powers to expand the federal government's family class definition

and announced its intention to accept 3,000 extended family members under a special

humanitarian sponsorship program (Quebec, 2016; Ministry of Immigration, Francisation

and Integration, 2014). These Quebec Special Measures (QSM), as outlined under OB

179B, enabled members of Quebec's Haitian-Canadian community to sponsor "children

over the age of 22 as well as brothers and sisters and their accompanying spouses and children" (IRCC, 2010b, n.p.). Despite its temporary implementation, this policy measure provided a more culturally appropriate representation of Haiti's more intimate expanded family structure. However, family reunification in Canada also considers financial situations, making social class disparity an innate feature of the program.

In Canada, the family reunification program is based upon a sponsorship model subject to a *low income cut-off* policy or a minimum income threshold.[7] While this threshold fluctuates depending on the number of sponsored relatives, including existing family dependents, the minimum annual income requirements disproportionately marginalize lower-income citizens and permanent residents from sponsoring relatives under the program (Neborak, 2013; IRCC, 2022). Such an income-driven policy measure becomes even more prevalent when considering the intersections of race and class that put racialized groups such as Haitians at a disadvantage in the Canadian labour market, where they are more likely to obtain insecure, temporary and low-paying work (Neborak, 2013). Furthermore, minimum income requirements for sponsoring relatives can fail to target the most vulnerable in humanitarian situations or enhance rather than reduce vulnerability by discriminating against lower-income families. Interviewed by CBC news following the Haitian earthquake, Haitian Montrealer Neil Armand complained that the Quebec government was only considering humanitarian family reunification applications from Haitian-Canadians with middle-class incomes. He adds: "they were saying if your family has enough money, you can bring them here … Does it mean that the people over there — the families with more money — were in more necessity than others? What kind

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[7] For Quebec residents, the low income cut-off threshold is independently determined under the authority of the Quebec provincial government (IRCC, 2022).

of priority is that?" ("Montreal draws 3,000 Haitian", 2011, para. 6). The impact of the low income cut-off policy demonstrates that social class as a migration determinant is not exclusive to Haiti. Income inequality drives class divisions in Canadian society with transnational implications within the Haitian diaspora that can reinforce, if not deepen, inequalities in Haiti.

Fortunate to have a family member in Canada with the will and financial means to sponsor relatives, one research participant describes a shared experience among family members where QSM provided significant leverage behind their decision to migrate to Canada. While Junior had no desire to leave Haiti following the earthquake, he shares a short anecdote about his uncle persuading him to accept his aunt's offer for a Canadian sponsorship opportunity, as follows:

> *I wanted to stay I really wanted to stay [in Haiti] … my uncle who was settling the file for me to go, called to say, 'listen you're going to make a grave mistake [and] it could be that you will never get this chance again,' and then it made me think of my dad and how he wanted to also leave at some point … anyway he's still in the country. Well, so I thought to myself, 'there's that risk that is waiting for me too.' That's why I said, 'okay well, I'm taking my chance.* (interview 13, 2019)

However, family reunification was not viewed as a sole or primary migration influence. In this case, a convergence between special measures, family reunification and provincial politics created a set of temporary conditions that provided an opportunity that would have otherwise rendered Junior ineligible for permanent residency in Canada. Unfortunately, many other Haitians' path to permanent residency was filled with extended uncertainty.

Uncertain Paths to Permanent Residency: TSRs and H&C

Temporary residency has enabled thousands of Haitians to live or remain in

Canada as temporary foreign workers, students, or under removal protections (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014; Canada, 2016b). Several participants mentioned how moratoriums (i.e. TSRs) protected Haitians already living in Canada before the earthquake, whether as current TSR recipients or those visiting or awaiting deportation. For example, Montreal immigration rights activists Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019) and Evans (interview 10, 2019) shared extended details concerning how a prolonged succession of TSRs and dedicated community advocacy eventually led to permanent residency for thousands of Haitians.

Resulting from persistent political instability and violence, the most recent chain of TSRs began following the 2004 Haitian coup d'état and remained in place by the time the earthquake struck (Canada, 2016b). As an interim blanket policy protecting people from deportation, a TSR applies not to individual risk but a generalized risk to an entire population, such as armed conflict or environmental disasters (Canada, 2014). Since TSR holders are restricted from applying for permanent residency, sponsoring family members, and have limited access to stable employment opportunities and social services, concerns over their liminal status can help explain the heightened interest noted by research participants (Omeziri & Gore, 2014; Canada, 2016b). Effectively, TSR holders live within a marginal and unsettled space with limited rights and an uncertain existence as part of their everyday life.

In December 2014, the Canadian government cited improved conditions in Haiti as grounds for lifting Haitian TSR protections, exposing thousands of Haitians to deportation (Canada, 2016b; IRCC, 2018b). This decision ended nearly 12 years of successive TSRs that had impacted thousands of Haitian lives throughout its duration,

many of whom had spent years establishing themselves in Canada both before and after the earthquake. Fear of living without status under the imminent threat of deportation exposed those affected to further precarity. Fortunately, two special measures implemented from December 2014 to June 2015 and February to August 2016 provided Haitians who lost TSR protection the opportunity to apply for permanent residency under H&C, which included a temporary administrative deferral of removal while awaiting a decision (Canada, 2016b; IRCC, 2016). These special measures became an exceptional opportunity to obtain permanent residency in Canada for many.

In exceptional cases or for compelling humanitarian reasons, H&C enables people who would otherwise lack eligibility to apply for permanent residence on a case-by-case basis. Decisions are discretionary based on factors that include: how established they are in Canada, family ties, the best interests of any children involved, and any undeserved or disproportionate hardship if rejected (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011; IRCC, 2020c). While H&C does not directly influence migration as it follows the exhaustion of more formal means, participants indicate that Haitian asylum seekers are quick to understand this option once in Canada:

> *"Sometimes [when] they don't succeed as refugees; they try to get the government to consider the humanitarian aspect … [and] try to demonstrate their potential to make a positive impact on Canadian society in general."* (Yves, interview 05, 2019)

> *"We had the interest for these people to be able to stay … at least live here for a year … because these people have a much better chance for humanitarian reasons than for asylum because the law is really strict about this."* (Evans, interview 10, 2019)

Philipe even shared what he called *"a little trick"* embedded under the best interests of the child policy where parents with children are exempt from the "one year bar" (interview

07, 2019). In Canada, asylum seekers must wait a year following the failed appeal of a rejected asylum claim to gain eligibility under H&C (Canada, 2017). However, such insights point to the Haitian diaspora's advisory role as an influential factor rather than specific immigration law criteria because intimate knowledge of immigration practices falls under the purview of Haitian-Canadian community leaders and activists.

Guidance by members of the Haitian diaspora illustrates the social interactions between noncitizen and citizen that assists Haitians in exercising their institutional rights and entitlements to access or remain present in Canada. According to Landolt and Goldring (2016), the conditional (formal or substantive) right to remain in Canada is a dynamic and fluid process consisting of laws, policies and procedures implemented at various scales that can fluctuate or change over time. Noncitizens negotiate and establish legitimacy to remain in the country by navigating an assemblage of institutional landscapes that interact with a range of differently situated relationships, such as with friends, family and institutional actors. For Haitian migrants, the diaspora is a vital social milieu that interconnects institutional and social domains.

Emmanuel and Evans provided personal anecdotes that supported the Haitian diaspora's influence regarding the termination of the TSR program. Recounting the story of an information session for temporary residents attended in January 2015, Evans advised the attendees: *"if you want to obtain your residency, you need to fight! You have to form a committee; you have to organize yourselves. Otherwise, if you let it go, … [Canada] will deport you one after the other"* (interview 10, 2019). The meeting served as the impetus for founding an action committee, and as members, Emmanuel and Evans advocated on behalf of Haitians impacted by the lifting of TSR protections that year.

Coincidentally, the Canadian government also released Operational Bulletin 600 that same month, which outlined the regulations for former temporary residents applying for H&C (IRCC, 2015). *"We actually put a lot of pressure on the Conservative government where they actually renewed the moratorium … and [when] the liberals got elected, we started again to put pressure on the liberals and [they] renewed the moratorium [again],"* mentioned Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019). As a clarification, in this case, moratoriums refer to the special measures that applied administrative deferrals of removal; nonetheless, it is demonstrative of the diaspora's influence and willingness to assist.

While assessing community assistance and its impact are difficult to quantify, reviewing immigration statistics helps provide a baseline measure. Following the 2014 lifting of TSR protections, approximately 3,200 Haitians were subject to removal from Canada (Canada, 2016a). Nearly 2,200 of them applied for Canadian permanent residency under H&C between December 2014 and June 2015, while the remaining failed to submit applications during this special measures period (Canada, 2016a; IRCC, 2018b). In May 2016, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration released a report based in part on witness testimony from representatives of the Haitian community, which acknowledged that administrative burdens and fear of coming forward were the primary reasons that nearly a thousand Haitians remained hesitant to apply (Canada, 2016b). Despite a 93% approval rate under special measures (Canada, 2016a), the report showed that many in the Haitian-Canadian community still did not trust the process and feared deportation as inevitable.

The lack of trust in the Canadian federal government's special measures demonstrates how an individual's ontological insecurity nurtures fear around an immigration system that fosters the anxiety of an uncertain future from the outset. Like individuals seeking asylum, temporary residents can develop insecurities about 'fitting in' because they straddle spaces of belonging connected to the immigration system's structural and discursive barriers to inclusion and wellbeing, such as racism and social inequality (Botterill, Hopkins, & Sanghera, 2019). Fortunately, community and government advocacy regarding misconceptions surrounding these special measures proved effective during the second set of measures. According to Emmanuel, *"out of the 3200 people, we think 2700 were then actually accepted"* (interview 02, 2019). Between 2015 and 2016, overall Haitian H&C applications for permanent residency experienced a combined approval rate of 91%, with 4,823 Haitians receiving permanent residency (see table 2). Despite these statistics only accounting for applicants aged 18 or older, they provide a realistic statistical baseline to infer from. Both approval rates provide valid

Table 2

Haitian Applications for Permanent Residency Received and Processed under Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds 2015-2017

	Approved	Total Processed	Approval Rate
2015	2032	2167	94%
2016	2791	3152	89%
2017 Jan-July	1093	1274	86%

Source: (IRCC, 2018b)

statistical measures to corroborate the reliability of Emmanuel's estimate and even suggest the possibility of a higher outcome. Considering the Haitian community's involvement at both the community and state levels, the statistics shown here are an encouraging reflection of the diaspora's impact on Haitian immigration issues.

While the family and refugee pillars of Canada's IRPA are most responsible for Haitian immigration in Canada over the past decade, economic immigration still represents an opportunity for a minority of Haitians. Over the past five years, approximately 15% of the 12,000 Haitians who have received permanent residency did so under the economic class, with the vast majority admitted under the Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) program (see table 3). Since two research participants entered Canada as FSWs, I draw on their insights below.

The Haitian Skilled Worker in Canada

As a top priority for Canada, economic immigration represents roughly two-thirds of Canada's annual immigration totals, outpacing the combined totals from both family and refugee classes (IRCC, 2017b; IRCC, 2020a). By contrast, Haitians migrating to Canada under the economic class represent the minority among the three pillars (see table 3). The *brain drain* phenomenon sheds some perspective, as some estimate that nearly 70% of Haiti's skilled human resources already reside in the diaspora (Wah, 2013). Nonetheless, a couple of participants acknowledged that the economic opportunity as an FSW in Canada was not the sole reason for the decision to migrate.

Participants Mirlande and Ronaldo shared multiple reasons for migrating to Canada to gain permanent residency through the FSW program. Although employment

Table 3

Canada - Admissions of Haitian Permanent Residents by Immigration Class and Category, January 2015 - June 2020

Economic Class	
Atlantic Pilot program	**10**
Canadian Experience	**5**
Caregiver	**70**
Total Skilled Worker (FSW)	**1545**
Total Worker Program	**1640**
Provincial nominee	**85**
Economic Class - Total	**1730**
Family Class	
Sponsored Children	**710**
Sponsored Extended Family Member	**95**
Sponsored Parent or Grandparent	**300**
Sponsored Spouse or Partner	**4215**
Family Class - Total	**5325**
Refuge Class	
Government Assisted	**0**
Resettled Refugee	**0**
Protected Persons	**2210**
Refugee Class - Total	**2210**
Other Immigration Totals	**2735**
Haiti -Total	**12000**

Source: (IRCC, 2020a)

opportunity was an underlying factor, they expressed their decisions as multi-dimensional:

> *[I was] a teacher … [and] also an activist at the level of the teacher's union. Therefore, I was very active in relation to social justice [and] in social movements, so at some point, there was a bit more risk [to my safety]* … all this led me to come to Canada … *I also told myself it would be good to do other things, might it be returning to my studies to deepen a little more my research. So that also motivated me a little to come to Canada … [and] my big brother … He encouraged me to also do it, so I did it.* (Ronaldo, interview 11, 2019)

I was made aware of the [Federal] Skilled Worker program ... [and] I said, I will try maybe it will be an opportunity to further pursue my studies and also work and maybe at the economic level help other members of my family that lives in Haiti. (Mirlande, interview 12, 2019)

Although technically considered economic immigrants, these two statements attest to additional reasons for applying as skilled workers and reveal that economic opportunity is not the sole objective guiding their decisions.

Academic opportunities, personal safety and freedom, are other cumulative factors demonstrating the agency behind migration decisions. It illustrates the FSW program as a pathway to achieve supplementary goals, including helping the family remit income back home. Overall, the FSW program is viewed as a means to increase one's social mobility, and along with the other laws and policies discussed, the family remains an integral influence in the decision process. Despite their minimal direct impact on migration decisions, participants acknowledge that the FSW program and the policies addressing family reunification, temporary suspension of removals, and humanitarian and compassionate grounds remain both influences and factors facilitating the migration process. Additionally, the Haitian diaspora is an intermediary factor between Haitian migration and the Canadian laws and policies (whether federal or provincial) regulating Canada's immigration affairs.

Conclusion

This chapter began by shifting attention away from Haiti toward the Canadian political and systemic factors influencing Haitian migration to Canada. As a foreign policy instrument born of a Western-dominated development paradigm, human security does not serve much of an analytical purpose when shifting the lens onto Canada as a

destination country (Martin & Owen, 2014). The geopolitical assumption is that human security is an innate feature of living in the developed Western world. In Haiti, slow harm is seen as a condition that human security seeks to remedy, while migration becomes an opportunity for personal continuity away from physical or psychological threats. Human insecurity is indeed a precondition for why Haitians migrate (either voluntarily or forced); however, it is an individual or family's subjective sense of safety that ultimately decides. The same applies to choosing a destination country. Therefore, immigration laws and policies shaping Canadian statecraft and its geopolitics have an influential role in shaping Haitian migration patterns.

Three major immigration events during the 2010 decade—the Haitian earthquake, the lifting of TSR protections and the dramatic increase of asylum claims—brought Haitian migration to the forefront of Canadian immigration discourse. They drew attention to the centrality of family reunification as a pillar of Canadian immigration law under IRPA and its pervasive role in dealing with Haitian immigration matters, whether through asylum or other pathways. For example, expediting family reunification applications was Canada's primary domestic response to Haitian earthquake victims (including Quebec's temporary expansion of IRPA's family definition). Reunifying families was also a key determinant behind H&C claims following the lifting of TSRs, and having family residing in Canada provides an exemption to the STCA. Accordingly, Haitians admitted to Canada under the family class immigration program far outpaced those who received permanent residency under the economic and refugee classes. From 2015 and 2019, approximately 5,300 Haitians gained permanent residency in Canada under the family class, compared to only 3,900 between the economic and refugee classes (IRCC, 2020a). Such a significant

discrepancy reflects not merely the saliency of family within Canadian immigration affairs but also highlights its prominence in Haitian culture.

All the research participants expressed that family carried considerable cultural relevance in Haitian day-to-day life to the extent that looking out for family was essentially a tradition. While caring for family is relatively universal and not unique to Haitian culture, the distinction between the Haitian norm of the expanded family and Canada's possibly ethnocentric nuclear family is notable (IRPA, 2001; Schuller, Haiti's 'Republic of NGOs', 2017). The cultural acceptance of distant relatives, even neighbours and friends, as belonging to one's Haitian family contradicts Canadian norms and immigration laws that focus primarily on the immediate family. Compared to Canadian society, the expanded family adds a different dimension where cultural obligations or commitments to assist a fellow Haitian can cross various social networks, including transcending territorial boundaries into a transnational process encompassing the Haitian diaspora.

Beyond the systemic influence of Canadian immigration laws and practices, the Haitian diaspora in Canada has an integral role in shaping Haitian migration. While the cultural connection with the diaspora cannot automatically provide security, the expanded family's cultural tradition becomes a relevant form of ontological security by acting as an essential resource in times of rapid social and economic change brought about by migration factors (Shani, 2017). Coupled with a willingness to assist, the Haitian-Canadian community's familiarity with Canadian society and its leaders and activists' knowledge of immigration practices point to its advisory role on specific immigration law and policy criteria. The following chapter will explore the Haitian diaspora's transnational

commitments and examine how community solidarity and belonging form a transmigratory bond influencing Haitian migration to Canada.

CHAPTER 4

The Transnational Commitments of Canada's Haitian Diaspora

Transnationalism has become a quintessential aspect of modern migration and as a constant subject of its research, so has Haiti and its diaspora. Haitian immigration to Canada cannot be analyzed without overlaying transnational understandings of diaspora and family. As early and prominent scholars of transnational migration, Schiller, Basch, and Blanc (1995) asserted, "contemporary immigrants can not be characterized as the 'uprooted.' Many are transmigrants, becoming firmly embedded in their new country but maintaining multiple linkages to their homeland" (p. 48). Their perspective challenges the assumption that people's identities are bound to a nation-state or rooted in territorial boundaries as a natural order of things, rather than viewing identity as a fluid notion (Levitt, 2012). This chapter will outline the salient features of Haitian transmigration that influence asylum and non-asylum Haitian migration to Canada. It will demonstrate that belonging to the Haitian diaspora is part of a larger transnational commitment to community and family solidarity. Community and family are not mutually exclusive from each other.

This chapter explores the transmigratory patterns that further blur the borders between Canada and Haiti and facilitate migration decisions among Haitians and their diasporas. As chapter one discussed, this research seeks to provide a more recent and evolved contribution to the economic, political, and cultural processes defining Haitian immigration and transmigration. As Lundy (2011) states, "the earthquake of 2010, and the public display of national turmoil, was a defining moment in the exercise of transnationalism and a test of what it means to be Haitian" (p. 205). Accordingly, this

section will foreground participants' transmigrant and transnational perspectives, including other areas of significant interest surrounding Haitians' sense of community and belonging and how this translates within the Haitian diaspora.

Belonging to the Haitian Diaspora

Coinciding with its continued growth in Canada, the Haitian diaspora's role in shaping and supporting the migratory corridor between Haiti and Canada has become more pronounced in the 21st century. At its most basic, belonging is the emotional need for acceptance as a group member (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). However, Wood and Waite (2011) explain that "belonging is a dynamic emotional attachment that relates individuals to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience…. It is about feeling 'at home' and 'secure,' but it is equally about being recognized and understood" (p. 201). It is essential to differentiate *home* as an attachment to a personal and private place from imaginings where we envision ourselves belonging to groups or political spaces that organize our lives, such as nation-states or communities (Mitzen, 2018). The latter representation is of particular interest because a diaspora engages in a political reality of belonging to more than one nation-state or having more than one homeland.

An individual's ontological security when experiencing migration relies on projecting onto a nation-state the feelings associated with attachment to a home, especially considering that first-generation Haitians do not have a primordial attachment to Canada (Mitzen, 2018). For Haitians choosing to come to Canada, a sense of belonging to the Haitian diasporic community provides a familiar cultural and political space to facilitate recognition and understanding of their circumstances. It can mutually reinforce feelings of home with those of safe haven—a territorial space offering protection

from harm. According to Alison Mountz (2016), "a safe haven … operates simultaneously across a number of scales, connecting the intimate space of the body to household, local, domestic, and global economies and politics" (p. 1). As Joseph shared, *"for many people around the world, Canada is a safe haven"* (interview 06, 2019). Beyond territorial physical boundaries, a safe haven carries metaphysical properties that can spatially and temporally shift based on people's subjective experiences across these scales. Haitians may perceive Canada as existentially safe compared to the insecurity or slow harm they might experience in Haiti.

Exploring the relationship between transnational mobility and belonging further accentuates the fluidity of belonging in and across places and scales, ranging from citizenship to the home (Gilmartin, 2008). For example, a transnational community can conceptually serve as an inclusive or exclusive force that can transcend the various scales of belonging that shape migrant identity. Yves took a moment to share his perspective on the Haitian diasporic identity and said:

> *It is really hard to first define who is Haitian … it becomes some kind of emotional [and] ethnic whole package of criteria to define who is Haitian. I'm going to define, as our constitution initially said, somebody who is born of one Haitian parent is entitled to take Haitian nationality.* (interview 05, 2019)

Juxtaposing emotions or ethnicity to principles of governance (i.e. a state's constitution) makes the Haitian diaspora an exercise in the politics of belonging, highlighting the emotional and subjective relationship between identity, place, and mobility. It simultaneously reinforces existing Haitian identities while creating or spurring a new diasporic identity that can challenge one's sense of personal continuity or ontological being by splitting their identity between two places.

By referencing Haiti's constitution relative to nationality, Haitian identity becomes defined by law and territory rather than emotional, ethnic, or cultural terms. In 2012, an amendment to Haiti's constitution abrogated article 13, which had previously set naturalization in another country as a condition for losing citizenship (IRB, 2013). Before that time, Haitians could not obtain dual citizenship, illustrating a legal recognition of belonging on a national political scale (see Appendix A). Since immigration is a bureaucratic and political process, Yves keenly juxtaposes pragmatic and theoretical conceptualizations of Haitian identity and belonging but concludes his above statement: *"it depends on the social scientist who is going to say this is how I want to define the Haitian"* (interview 05, 2019)—creating a bureaucratic versus cultural or ethnic distinction that demonstrates the subjectivity innate of belonging. However, other participants commonly focused on the latter distinction and viewed belonging as a cultural foundation to a Haitian global community that transcends borders, citizenship, and the nuclear family's precedence in Canadian society. They describe community and family solidarity as fundamentally inherent to Haitian culture.

The Haitian perspective of a family exceeds the immediate family and includes cousins and close friends, creating a universal sense of solidarity or belonging. When asked about Haitian solidarity in Montreal, Philipe elaborates and says, *"it is strong because ... in our country the style of life it was what we call the expanded family … that means when someone comes, that has a problem; we take care of it"* (interview 07, 2019). Speaking on the same topic, Ronaldo adds, *"yes, it's a strong relationship, because well overall, we live in a communal way"* (interview 11, 2019). Expressing solidarity as a "style of life" (or way of life) likely alludes to the *lakou* system's communal nature, briefly

discussed in chapter two. The *expanded family,* as expressed, remains a central foundation of community life and interaction within Haitian culture.

The notion of the expanded family contrasts with nuclear family values that predominate in Canadian society and inform the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act's (IRPA) narrow definition of family that does not include siblings, cousins, or nieces and nephews. It focuses more on cultural belonging to the Haitian community than solely on blood relations and physical geographical limitations. As an essential feature of the *lakou* system, the expanded family transcends spatial boundaries as a culturally relevant and extraterritorial space where transnational networks can be maintained (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018; Désir, 2011). This space has become a globalized phenomenon where many Haitians live their lives stretched across borders, reterritorializing their practices and identities.

Haitian Solidarity: The Role of Social Networks

Participants were likelier to speak of community and solidarity than address belonging directly through their narratives, primarily identifying family, language, and diasporic networks as relatable migration influences. For example, belonging to a family with members already residing in Canada influences the decision-making process because it provides security and support for integration by facilitating access to existing social networks and acting as a pseudo-social safety net. Ronaldo describes how family alleviated the stresses of arriving in a new and foreign country: "When *I entered [Canada], I didn't know the horrors [or] torments of immigration because at least I had someone already in the country who was my sister and integration was, in particular, a little easier for me*" (interview 11, 2019). Facilitating integration through family reunification is

reflected in Canada's IRPA as exemplified in section 3(2)(f): "to support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada" (IRPA, 2001, pp. 2, 4). Labman (2019) states that IRPA's enactment in 2001 favours the reality that immigration through family reunification improves integration among newcomers.

Promoting family reunification for integration purposes meant that the emphasis on newcomer integration shifted from personal to familial accountability, with the burden falling heavier on Canadian residents who sponsor their family members. As Junior explains, *"my aunt sponsored my mother, and then my mother included us in that … It was my aunt that was responsible for everyone"* (interview 13, 2019). While Mirlande, who did not arrive through family sponsorship, also exemplified improved integration when speaking of friendship as providing her with housing: *"I said, I had a visa, and I'm going to come here so can you help me to find an apartment, and he said, well you can stay with me in the meantime until you find an apartment … I didn't ask for it"* (interview 12, 2019). Nonetheless, while it is unconventional to recognize friendship as family compared to Canadian norms and laws, the communal nature embodied by the Haitian family increases the likelihood of a broader social network for newcomers. This broader network simultaneously reinforces the Canadian government's aspiration to improve integration through family reunification.

Discussing the role of social networks in assisting Haitian newcomers to Canada was a familiar topic throughout participant interviews. Yves ascribes the power of transnational networking as vital to Haitian resourcefulness, noting:

It appears that the people who migrate mostly from the States, or even from Haiti, they do know some networks they can utilize to get established here … It's almost some kind of underground railroad … they are resourceful, and they know people who can assist them. (interview 05, 2019)

As noted, Haitian society's family networks describe a relatively broader and supportive community that tends to look out for other members. This solidarity has been channelled over to Canadian society through Haitian-Canadians who continue to identify simultaneously with the two societies by maintaining transnational ties with Haiti while permanently residing in Canada.

As a cosmopolitan country with multicultural law, cultural diversity is a part of Canada's national identity that embraces simultaneous linkages to multiple nation-states as part of the country's nation-building project (Hiebert, 2016). The nationalistic duality inherent in belonging to the Haitian diaspora also contributes to belonging to Canadian society. Although, for one participant, this led to accusations of betraying Haiti or being a traitor. By sharing their story about posting a video on social media, Junior recounted a comment from a friend back in Haiti saying, *"yesterday's little Canadian"*—a coming of age insult meant to challenge his Haitian identity for leaving. His short anecdote quickly segued into an elaborate response to such narratives:

I remain Haitian; the proof is that I am connected to everything that happens in Haiti … You think because I am here because I don't return, you think I am not connected? … I stay connected to my country … but for me, I contribute to a bigger to a much more interesting level by being here [in Canada]. I also think that it's not building up [Haiti] that I can best help with … [but] even at a distance I believe I am still useful for the country … [and] I don't see myself in 5 years returning to Haiti because … I am much more integrated, I'm into a lot of things Quebecois. (interview 13, 2019)

The emotional response to criticism for leaving Haiti demonstrates that regardless of ethnicity or nationality, being part of the diaspora in Canada can bridge differences and foster an identity that concurrently belongs to Canada and Haiti. Another element that appears to have a similar effect is religion, and some participants point to its cultural importance as beneficial in supporting a Haitian diasporic identity.

Approximately 85 percent of the population practices Catholicism and Protestantism in Haiti, while 11 percent claim no religion. Among the remaining smaller denominations is the Haitian Vodou religion, which societal leaders claim is underestimated due to social stigmatization. According to observers like the Haitian Vodou Federation, more than half the population practices Vodou secretly, often blended with the Christian faith—mainly Catholicism (U.S. Department of State, 2021; U.S. Department of State, 2022). This often veiled religious parallelism extends transnationally, where many diasporic Haitians continue to practice both Vodou and Catholicism. Anthropologist Hieke Drotbohm (2008) explains that migrants rarely strengthen or neglect their former religious belonging in multicultural urban contexts but simultaneously integrate into diverse religious settings. Her Montreal-based research reveals that Haitian Vodou's main elements, for example, are obscured and most often performed in secrecy, belonging to the private and intimate sphere of personal life rather than public spaces like churches that Christian religions commonly occupy. Nonetheless, Christianity's relationship with the Haitian diaspora runs deep into the religious history between Canada and Haiti. The Christian religion was an initiating force to the transnational ties that would eventually develop between the two countries.

In the early and mid-20th century, French-Canadian missionaries were integral in the forging of Christian prominence, proliferating throughout nearly all aspects of Haitian social life, becoming critical contributors to education and social services, and fostering a migration corridor between Quebec and Haiti (Mills, 2016). A glimpse into Quebec's historical prominence as home to the majority of the Haitian-Canadian diaspora today. Religion remains essential to everyday life in Haiti and its diaspora (Audebert, 2012). "Religiosity is part and parcel of Haitian transnationalism," says Drotbohm (2008, p. 38). Multiple research participants acknowledged the centrality of religion in the daily lives of many diasporic Haitians and, subsequently, churches become places of network, assistance and hope. Using the Haitian earthquake and circumstances surrounding 2017 as reference points, Philipe (interview 07, 2019) and Patricia (interview 09, 2019) both noted that the church plays *"an important role"* in assisting Haitian newcomers to Quebec as facilitators of basic needs and integrational support. As a comparison, Samentha explains church benevolence in Canada as an extension of its role in Haiti. *"The church is the hope [in Haiti] ... the government is supposed to give them hope [but] the church is the hope … and then coming here … they get hope from church, not from the government,"* she says (interview 04, 2019). The notion that the church, not the government, represents hope in Canada's secular society carries a multidimensional element between history and faith.

As chapter two outlined, Haitians have little trust in a Haitian government fraught with weak institutions and a history of corruption, oppression, and violence. Hope becomes elusive when the government consistently struggles to meet even the most basic needs of everyday Haitians. On the contrary, the church has historically perceived

itself as an essential member of Haitian civil society and a mediator between the state and the people, responsible for Haitians' spiritual and social welfare in and out of Haiti (Mooney, 2009; Audebert, 2012). Yves explained, *"to some extent, the churches play that role. That role of socialization… they come to those milieus, and they feel that they belong there"* (interview 05, 2019). Such a relationship is unlikely to change even after Haitians arrive in Canada. Unlike a trusted place like a church, a secular Canadian government cannot operate within spiritual spaces that may assist with integration and adaptation challenges faced by immigrants or refugees.

In the diaspora, religious spaces can have multiple meanings: they can act as places of orientation and support (e.g. financial, logistical, psychological and spiritual), unite transnational networks connecting Haiti with other localities in the diaspora, and facilitate intergenerational dialogue for the transmission and negotiation of cultural values (Drotbohm, 2008). For Haitian newcomers to Canada, research has shown that attending church helps to promote self-worth and a sense of belonging in their new home. According to theologist Margarita Mooney's (2009) Montreal-based study, the church acts as a refuge from everyday difficulties where Haitians can find close human relations and share common beliefs and practices as a form of cultural mediation while "mentally, psychologically, and spiritually weaving their way through a new neighbourhood, a new city, and a new country" (p. 121). Furthermore, the church provides a way of self-transformation towards perspectives as societal contributors rather than merely beneficiaries of assistance (Mooney, 2009). It offers a medium to help cope with everyday struggles and a platform to strengthen solidarity within the Haitian-Canadian community.

Concerning the asylum events of 2017, Evans describes transnational solidarity among churches as an influential migration element:

The Haitian pastors are in contact with other Haitian pastors in the United States, and these pastors here know the problem of their fidelity [or congregation] … These people there don't want to return to Haiti … [therefore] pastors here in Canada had arranged to have them go to Canada. (interview 10, 2019)

These transnational church-to-church networks are not uncommon as they maintain a symbolic and concrete link to Haiti and the diasporic communities (Audebert, 2012). For example, church networks became routes for sharing resources and information between the Canadian and U.S. diasporas following the earthquake and became meeting points to facilitate faith-based and material efforts back home in Haiti (Lundy, 2011). As discussed, the church fosters hope where the government does not.

Despite the benevolence of churches, Evans (interview 10, 2019) and Philipe (interview 07, 2019) found it significant to point out that they also have a financial incentive to increase and maintain their congregation sizes. However, these perspectives were based primarily on Montreal congregations, where the Haitian-Canadian population's size and density play a factor. According to Haiti Christianity (2020), a religious non-profit organization, Montreal hosts nearly 170 churches with Haitian congregations compared to a mere 12 split evenly between the Ottawa and Toronto areas. For the Toronto-based research participants, this discrepancy and the differences between these two cities offered some salient perspectives concerning the importance of community networks and solidarity.

The Difference in Place: Montreal vs. Toronto

As most Haitian-Canadians and Haitian newcomers live in Montreal, participants residing in Toronto reinforced the benefits stemming from the more robust community networks and solidarity in Montreal. Joseph explains, *"when it comes to the Haitians, especially those who come illegally, there's no community structure [in Toronto]; it is everyone for themselves. So, that's a challenge for them"* (interview 06, 2019). While Yves commended Haitian resourcefulness in meeting their own basic needs (e.g. adequate housing), he spoke about his experiences in Toronto with a disappointing tone:

> *I feel it's regrettable that our community is not organized to respond to those [basic] needs because we could be responding in a more culturally sensitive way … and try[ing] to assist those people as a community … [since] you [also] have communication issues, you have knowledge of the system issues … and of course, you have as well social issues, social interactions, isolation, a sense of isolation of not belonging anywhere.* (interview 05, 2019)

Communication is the one topic that seemingly intersected with the other challenges, and participants were eager to share their insights regarding the role of language in fostering adaptation to a Canadian lifestyle.

Community support and language emerge as mutually inclusive factors relative to social networking benefits, whether a Haitian individual speaks Haitian Creole, French, and in some cases, English. Philipe admirably intertwines how community, family, social networking, and language are primary influences on Haitian migration to both Quebec and Canada in the following excerpt:

> *The language and also the relatives, so, family and language because ... they know that people speak French [in Quebec] and also there is a very strong Haitian community here so at least … if they come to Canada, they know that there are a*

lot of Haitians in Canada … who are able to help them even if they don't speak French, but still speak Creole, at least they are able to help them in their language. (interview 07, 2019)

Philipe's cultural ideal of a shared common language among other participants is pivotal for Haitians choosing Quebec as a destination. For example, Estherson says:

For Haitians in general, when we talk about Quebec theoretically, language is not a veritable problem … even if they don't speak French very well … [because] Haitians are Francophiles … [who] understand and like [French] because we have a Creole culture, but also a French culture. (interview 08, 2019)

Others also noted the importance of everyday language in facilitating the asylum determination process and finding work in general.

When comparing Montreal to Toronto regarding access to employment or navigating the determination process, common language again arose as a critical difference between the two cities. Since Haitian Creole lacks ubiquity outside Haiti and its diasporas, the potential struggles awaiting Haitians who do not speak French or English can have serious consequences when navigating Canadian society. For example, *"Creole has a lot of imageries in it … you really need people who are aware of all those aspects. Especially if you are trying to tell your story to claim* [refugee] *status, I can see how there is a lot of misinterpretation,"* explains Yves when speaking on language comprehension in Toronto (interview 05, 2019). However, Joseph adds, "*Montreal Nord, it's Little Haiti, so someone move [sic] to Montreal Nord who doesn't speak French or English can find [a] job by speaking solely Creole. But in Toronto, it's technically impossible"* (interview 06, 2019). Unlike its diasporic counterpart in Miami, "Little Haiti" is not an official moniker for Montréal-Nord but referentially characterizes the neighbourhood as the communal milieu of the Haitian diaspora in Canada.

In contrast to a shared common language, Patricia expressed that even when lacking comprehension of an official language native to Haiti or Quebec, Haitian anglophones from the U.S. showed resolve in learning French in Montreal. "*Will they be able to find work? We were telling them, yes, it was possible because … [even if] they were anglophone … what struck me is this willingness to integrate … They were trying harder than many to learn French," s*he expressed (interview 09, 2019). Despite potential deficiencies in speaking an official Canadian language, the pervasiveness of Haitian culture and community support in Montreal compared to Toronto remained essential in making the city the coveted destination for most Haitians.

Along with a robust diasporic community, immigrants and asylum seekers tend to prefer settling in urban rather than rural areas because of other factors such as the concentration of community enclaves and better access to goods and services (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994). However, this does not help explain why some Haitians might choose Toronto over Montreal. According to Samentha, personal experience, language, culture, and sponsorship are most likely responsible for some Haitians recently choosing Toronto because some Haitians had become accustomed to an anglophone culture after spending years residing in the U.S. before coming to Canada (interview 04, 2019). From experience, Joseph noted that many Haitians also end up in Ottawa, a good destination for Haitians due to its proximity to Quebec and its penchant for bilingualism (interview 06, 2019). This experience was the case for Mirlande, who, upon failing a French test, did not initially receive a Quebec Selection Certificate required for residence in the province as a Foreign Skilled Worker (FSW) and applied to go to Ottawa first before eventually obtaining a certificate (interview 12, 2019). Overall, the density and size of Montreal's

Haitian community significantly influence Haitian social networks and solidarity, often making it the focal point for research on Haitian migration to Canada.

Family Solidarity towards Economic Stability: The Impact of Remittances

All participants discussed remittances in some form, whether within the family across borders or at the national level in relation to Haiti's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Within a sociocultural context, Alain indicated from his experience living in Haiti that "family solidarity is really huge in Haiti" and essential for many Haitians' economic stability and survival (interview 01, 2019). *"That's a very great support for Haiti. Some people, if they don't have family outside of Haiti, either Canada or the States they can not afford to survive,"* shares Samentha (interview 04, 2019). While Mirlande adds that for some, it is an expectation within Haitian culture: *"I have friends … that it's obligatory that they systematically send money to Haiti because it is with that money that people eat and do all"* (interview 12, 2019). Even Ronaldo (interview 11, 2019) indicates from personal experience that since friends are part of the expanded family, they can benefit from remittance networks outside of solely relying on immediate family.

Several participants explained that the Haitian diasporas' remittances are vital to Haiti's GDP and a necessary infusion supporting many people's way of life. Emmanuel says, *"the economy in Haiti is being fed from the outside … we are talking about 4 billion dollars a year that the diaspora is sending in"* (interview 02, 2019). If it were not for remittances, Philipe warns, *"I think there would be a total radical revolution in Haiti"* (interview 07, 2019). Adding context to a potential revolution, Alain shares a well-rounded observation of Haiti's economic condition through the relationships between migration, underemployment and remittances:

When someone in the family leaves the country, it's not only that person that is saved … it's all the family back in Haiti too. And I think a third of the GDP ... a third to 40% that is coming from outside of the country. We kind of forget this here in our comfort … at least a third of the people don't have proper work ... another third does not have regular work … so they live with almost nothing a month, you know, and for a family to have 200 [or] 300 dollars a month, it's a saviour. (interview 01, 2019)

While the World Bank (2019) estimated that remittances represented 22.5 percent of Haiti's GDP in 2019, this figure does not include informal transfers to family members (i.e. cash couriers/pocket transfers), which increases annual remittance totals by upwards of 40 percent (Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009). Discussion relative to remittances among the participants demonstrates how migration often extends beyond individual aspiration into a financial coping strategy for Haitian families.

Since remittances act as a transnational proxy for individual household incomes and expenses rather than a broader economic development tool at the state level (Zéphirin, 2014), other participants blame remittances as a method for Haiti's government and its diaspora to avoid the responsibility of investing in the country's systemic or structural problems, such as adequate employment opportunities and access to social services. They contend that remittances continue to exacerbate poor living conditions and foster emigration. "*Now, the country is in a situation where there were no jobs created, and people were starving, and today, they are still starving. So [the Haitian government] created a migration where … the economy in Haiti is being fed from the outside,*" explains Emmanuel (interview 02, 2019). He charges Haiti's history of poor governance for perpetuating the poor socioeconomic conditions that create a continued reliance on migration and remittances.

In contrast, Joseph views household remittances as part of Haiti's overarching problems, despite recognizing how crucial they are for people's livelihoods and day-to-day survival. He explains:

> *There's a lack of the Haitian diaspora in Haiti. What I mean by that if you look at the entire Latin American … A huge portion of that is their own diaspora that invest in their own country ... If you find someone, let's say someone [Haitian] who's in North America working, who has a family back home … he's sending money … to use in the country in a micro point of view of finance, he's [sic] main idea is to send money to take care of his family.* (interview 06, 2019)

This perspective suggests a vicious and paradoxical cycle in Haiti. Remittances perpetually address the subsistence reality for many Haitians while reinforcing the broader, more systemic issues responsible for their overall living conditions.

Regardless of the development impact, the transnational influence and importance of remittances cannot be overstated, as they are an essential dimension of Haitian life in Haiti and its diaspora. Relative to migration, families' financial needs dramatically influence Haitians' drive to leave Haiti to search for work in other countries, such as Canada. When a family cannot emigrate as a group, an alternative survival strategy entails emigrating one member in hopes that they might help support the family by generating essential remittances or in-kind transfers (Audebert, 2012). Remittances are tangible examples of the transmigratory link between Haiti and its diasporas.

Participants also describe the hope of economic reward from remittances as a driving force in creating new transnational migration routes, such as through Latin America. Therefore, migration becomes a form of future investment for some Haitian families. As Emmanuel explains, *"imagine people that left Haiti … they were the ones*

actually providing money to the family back home, now it is starting to be the reverse …
hoping one day they [will] be accepted [by the destination country], they will be starting to
work and pay [it] back" (interview 02, 2019). This reverse trend has also promoted
transnational weblike networks of remittances between Haiti and its diasporas.
"Sometimes you can have like three family members from here or from the States, and
then they put the[ir] money together, and they send [it] to Haiti for people in order to travel
to Chile," explains Samentha (interview 04, 2019). Audebert (2011) characterizes this
dynamic transnational framework as "l'externalisation des réseaux sociaux haïtiens et le
système spatial d'échanges" [the 'externalizing' of Haitian social networks and the spatial
system of exchanges] inherent in the expanded family structure (p. 3). It becomes another
survival-based strategy that resists the migratory pressure to restructure the family social
bond.

Over the past decade, participants indicated that increasing economic
opportunities in Latin America saw the proliferation of new migration routes through Latin
American countries like Brazil and Chile. According to Jasmine, *"the migration in the last*
decade, I mean from 2010 after the earthquake, took several forms. One was the fact
migration to both Brazil and Chile opened up for a variety of reasons pertinent to these
countries' needs for labour" (interview 03, 2019). Yves also discusses how shifting
economic and political realities quickly fostered new migration pathways to Canada:

> *We had a lot of Haitians who thought that was a good opportunity to provide [for]*
> *their family and move to Brazil. Now … those people were not wanted anymore;*
> *they were not needed … First, they moved to Mexico, Tijuana. From there, they*
> *tried to cross the border, and some of them did, and then they realized that their*
> *situation wasn't safe. So, from the States they move, they go to Canada … it's a*
> *different pattern.* (interview 05, 2019)

For many Haitian asylum seekers, migration from Brazil to the U.S. was often a treacherous journey made by foot along an 11,000-kilometre pathway generally referred to as "The Road" (see Appendix B). "*You have some that were passing through about 11 or 12 countries before arriving here in Canada,*" says Philipe (interview 07, 2019). Considering the further precarity promoted by the Trump administration over the latter half of the decade, it is not difficult to conceive of the U.S. as a new leg in The Road for many who continued to seek asylum in Canada.

Through their research, Cénat, Charles, and Kebedom (2020) discovered that Haitians who experienced long migration periods and resided in multiple other countries before entering Canada suffered pre-migratory and migratory traumatic experiences (see figure 7). Additionally, Botterill, Hopkins, and Sanghera's (2019) research on everyday securities for young, ethnic and religious people in Scotland, including asylum seekers,

Figure 7

Traumatic experiences Haitian refugee and asylum seekers
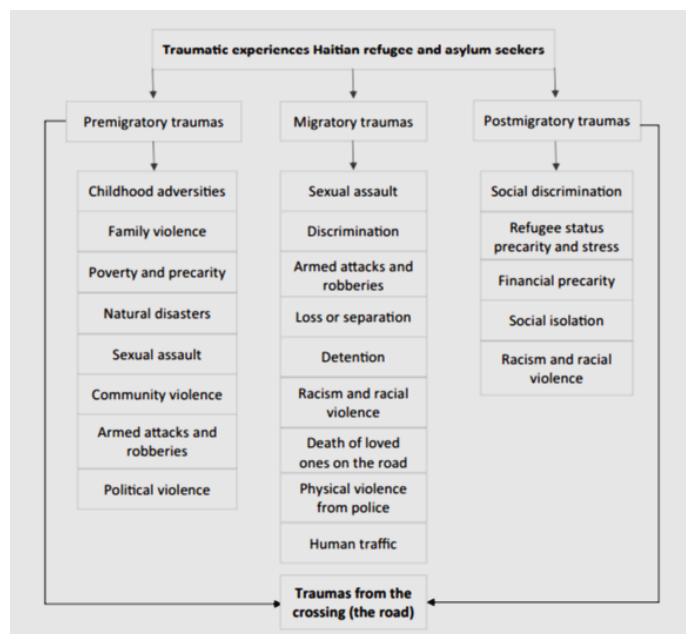
Source: (Cénat, Charles, & Kebedom, 2020, p. 426)

refugees and other migrants, argues that ontological insecurity can result from persistent damage to selfhood stemming from the cumulative effect of past and present lived trauma. These findings demonstrate that factors beyond the original emigration reason(s) can exacerbate personal trauma and intensify the drive to reach Canada regardless of the risk of further trauma. For example, Evans shared a horrific story of a Haitian woman who took The Road to Canada with her two kids:

> *There are people that crossed 14 countries in Latin American before coming here! I knew a woman that had two kids … [and] she had to sacrifice one of her kids [to a wild beast] to be able to save the other. The beast feasted on her kid ... [before] this woman arrived here [in Canada] to make her claim.* (interview 10, 2019)

Such a heartbreaking and shocking incident demonstrates the degree of risk people are willing to endure to find acceptance and security in a place that will presumably increase their life chances. Furthermore, it exemplifies that in some cases choosing Canada is not solely attributed to pre-migratory experiences in Haiti alone. The research highlights that migratory trauma is not limited to Haiti as the country of origin, nor is it a finite condition that ends once they reach Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the Haitian diaspora's transmigrant experiences have a meaningful role in fostering transnational commitments towards asylum and non-asylum Haitians migrating to Canada. For Haitian migrants and asylum seekers, the continuity of family and community solidarity across borders forges a sense of belonging to a Haitian diaspora that also acts as a bridge to Canadian society, facilitating a reterritorialization of Haitian identity. Coupled with the expanded family exceeding the

immediate family to include distant relatives, friends and neighbours, many Haitian newcomers benefit from these broader social networks that support their integration into Canadian society. Furthermore, this cultural norm aligns with Canada's aim to support integration by promoting family reunification as a vital immigration strategy.

Despite the cultural and legal disparity between the expanded Haitian family and IRPAs strict definition of family, the belonging and acceptance generated by the Haitian diaspora's transmigrant reality has a prominent role in Haitians choosing Canada as a destination country. Research participants describe solidarity among Haitians to support and assist those in need as an influential aspect behind choosing Canada because, as a way of life, borders do not constrain such values but extend culturally among the diasporas (Audebert, 2012). When viewing this support in terms of place, it is also a feature that emanates from Montreal's large Haitian-Canadian community and the church's role in Haitian society.

With most Haitian-Canadians living in Montreal, sharing a common culture and languages (i.e. French and Haitian Creole) emanating from such a dense and robust community proves attractive for many Haitian migrants and asylum seekers. They are also more likely to have family or friends living in Montreal than in other Canadian regions like Toronto, strengthening their sense of belonging and easing their adaptation to a new life in a new country. Such a robust community presence provides the necessary conditions for Haitians to feel they belong culturally to the diaspora rather than merely through nationalistic sentiments associated with nation-states and borders. While some Haitians settle in more anglophone regions such as Ontario, Montreal remains a preferred destination for most Haitians entering the country (Audebert, 2012). Furthermore,

Montreal's dense Haitian-Canadian population promotes religious vitality within the community by enabling churches to develop and maintain larger congregations. Despite cynicism surrounding the financial motives in preserving their congregations among a few research participants, churches maintain a pivotal role across the diasporas and in the lives of many Haitian newcomers to Canada.

For many Haitians, the church provides psychological and spiritual endurance and can provide economic and social support, often substituting for a Haitian state that struggles to deliver much-needed social services to the larger population of Haiti (Audebert, 2012). Its role has grown into a normative societal function providing hope where the government does not. In Canada, this trend continues but in a different capacity. While Canada's federal and provincial governments do not struggle to provide basic social services to the degree of the Haitian government, their functions cannot address the everyday idiosyncrasies and struggles of individual citizens and newcomers (Mooney, 2009). The church serves as both a congregational place and a cultural mediator for Haitians now belonging to more than one nation-state, offering refuge and a place to support their self-transformation as new contributive members of Canadian society. As newcomers to Canada often face trauma through psychological and emotional struggles (Cénat, Charles, & Kebedom, 2020), imagining the severing of historical, spiritual and social bonds between Haitians and the church as a religious space is difficult. Beyond the cultural, regional, and institutional influences discussed, socioeconomic realities also influence Haitian migration to Canada, namely remittances.

Since family solidarity is a transnational reality for many Haitians, remittances have long been an integral aspect of the migratory process for Haitian families and the Haitian

state itself. As a significant contributor to Haiti's GDP, remittances continue to be a vital source of income for many families in Haiti and an influential factor behind Haitian migration. For example, Pew Research Center (2019) data shows that Canada's Haitian diaspora remitted an average of 12 million U.S. dollars per month in 2017. Accordingly, remittances are a common financial coping strategy for many Haitian families unable to emigrate as a group or for already emigrated family members who lack sufficient economic opportunities while residing in other countries such as Brazil or Chile. This strategy can also extend to Haitians who experience precarious status that limits their ability to secure more stable employment opportunities.

Overall, the Haitian transmigrant experience in Canada has fostered a combination of influential factors that often exist in concert with one another while reinforcing a sense of belonging to Canadian and Haitian societies. Whether it emanates from a common cultural bond or Canada's prioritization of family reunification, Canada's Haitian diasporic community and its transnational relationship with Haiti are primary reasons for the continued migratory corridor between these two countries. While the imaginings of Haiti as a deterritorialized nation-state largely stem from a significant Haitian population settling outside the country over the past 70 years, transmigration reterritorializes Haitian practices and identities along cultural rather than nation-state lines (Schiller, 2005). Since living in Canada can address the human security issues that many Haitians face today, Haiti's cultural, family and social linkages with its diasporas often make migrating to Canada a more ontologically secure decision.

CHAPTER 5

Beyond Migrant Transnationalism: Discussing a Haitian Diasporic Lakou

This research into contemporary Haitian migration to Canada following the 2010 earthquake has analyzed various factors and processes that influenced the decisions of Haitians to migrate. The previous chapters explored circumstances or conditions that perpetuate Haitian asylum and other migration patterns within and outside Haiti, including the protracted impacts of *slow harm*, the transnational relationships between Haitians and its diaspora, and the bureaucratic realities stemming from Canada's immigration laws and policies. They also examined the role of ontological security—a person's fundamental or subjective sense of safety—in shaping Haitian migratory realities.

While many factors propel Haitian migration to Canada, community and family were the most prevalent and consistent themes among the chapters, often intersecting or connecting various topics. Stemming from these themes, this chapter focuses on migrant transnationalism beyond conventional or linear "push and pull" factors often advanced by mainstream migration narratives and offers a more nuanced approach to cultural, economic, social and political relations that produce and are created by spaces of Haitian migration. It particularly examines the conceptual role of Haiti's grouped family living system known as the *lakou*. Historically, the *lakou* system refers to clusters of homes where extended and intergenerational family members reside and work cooperatively to provide economic and social support (Edmond, Randolph, & Richard, 2007). A broader and more modern approach to the Haitian *lakou* system offers ontological security a space to explore further Haitian migration as a multidimensional and transnational topic.

Until recently, transnational approaches to understanding Haiti's *lakou* system received very little attention. Seeking a deeper understanding of how Haitian communities and families shape contemporary Haitian migration to Canada, this chapter explores the concept of a "*diasporic lakou*" as coined by Haitian-American academic Charlene Désir. Offering insight, Désir (2011) explains:

> The lakou is more than a community; it is a theoretical and social framework and an integral part of the social fabric of Haiti … because it engages the spiritual source of Haitian survival and resistance. It is essential now to expand the lakou to several different levels that will represent the entire community, including the diaspora (p. 282).

A *diasporic lakou* is a unique, cultural and spiritual transnational space of collectivist solidarity that provides a new way of exploring Haitian migration to diasporic destinations such as Canada.

This chapter probes what connects the diaspora and the *lakou*, and how they can be valuable analytical tools for future Haitian migration research. The concept of a *diasporic lakou* is based upon Laguerre's (1998, as cited in Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018) concept of *diasporic citizenship*, which is concisely defined as "a set of practices that a person is engaged in, and a set of rights acquired or appropriated, that cross nation-state boundaries and that indicate membership in at least two nation-states" (p. 190). A *diasporic lakou* extends the *lakou* system beyond Haiti's physical geographical borders into the transnational spaces that many Haitians occupy today. It provides context to Haiti's deterritorialization and reterritorialization, which includes the Haitian diaspora as part of its everyday existence. Providing a brief historical account of the emergence of the *lakou* within Haitian culture and society is imperative.

Borne as a physical space of resistance, the *lakou* system emerged following Haiti's independence as a response to exploitation by the colonial plantation system; it incorporated West African cultural values of collective identity and community bonds that were suppressed during times of colonial enslavement (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018; Merilus, 2015; Schuller, 2016). As a place, it is an intergenerational living arrangement fostering "extended family" networks, including fictive or pseudo kinship relationships (Désir, 2011; Hoffman, 2012; Schuller, 2016). It also constitutes and sustains the existence of Haiti's African-based Vodou religion, which provides the spiritual and metaphysical ethic governing social behaviour in Haitian society (Désir, 2011; Merilus, 2015; Mocombe, 2020). Opposing the over-accumulation of power and wealth defining capitalist existence, Vodou seeks to promote equality and liberty within and via the *lakou* system by emphasizing balance and harmony between the laws of creation, cosmic forces, individuals, community and natural environment (Mocombe, 2020). Vodou facilitates the weaving of different private and public spaces without bringing them into conflict (Drotbohm, 2008). Despite this integral relationship, the scope of this research limits an extensive exploration of Vodou's role within the *lakou* and the Haitian diaspora. Nonetheless, it deserves respect and recognition as an integral element highlighting the *lakou* as occupying a diversity of spaces beyond the physical or territorial.

Initially, the *lakou* was strictly a rural phenomenon, rooted in land ownership through an arrangement of houses on a shared plot of land (or a residential compound) where a small group of families reside as a collective in joining both their work and social lives (see figure 8) (Dubois, 2012; Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018; Merilus, 2015). Its emphasis on collective wellbeing eschewed systemic structures of capitalist competition

Figure 8

The Rural to Urban Lakou

Source: (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018)

and colonial exploitation embedded within Haiti's plantation economy. Haitians bonded over their shared culture and identity through the *lakou.* They freely practiced a way of life free from foreign influence and domination in a place of solidarity to build strong social ties and foster economic equality through communal sharing, ensuring that individual basic needs were met (Merilus, 2015; Edmond, Randolph, & Richard, 2007; Mocombe, 2020). In times of distress, it becomes a space of shared suffering (Schuller, 2016).

With Haiti's rapid urbanization in the 20th century in the context of modernization and globalized capitalism, the increase in population density and the lack of physical

space in cities meant that the spatial layout of the original *lakou* was no longer feasibly accommodated in contemporary urban centres (see figure 8) (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018; Edmond, Randolph, & Richard, 2007; Hoffman, 2012). However, scholars note a transcendence rather than a deterioration of the *lakou* system. Haitian-American scholar Claudine Michel (2009, as cited in Désir, 2011) describes the modern *lakou* as follows:

> Whereas the actual physical settings where large families lived and worked together for generations in the countryside might have new geographies, new boundaries and more complex locations that are visible or not, the Lakou, as social mileu *[sic]* remains ever so present in modern Haiti, in both rural and urban settings. Real or imagined, today's lakou(s), are relational spaces that serve our communities, ensure participation and ownership in communal affairs, and provide pillars to build and develop projects and possibilities of all types that benefit the group (pp. 281-282).

Today, the contemporary *lakou* maintains its form as a space of solidarity amid a collective culture that emphasizes what a person can do to support their family and community regardless of place (Edmond, Randolph, & Richard, 2007; Schuller, 2016). It transcends physical boundaries and fosters a social framework based on solidarity among expanded family networks and their collective welfares. As outlined, this cultural and ideological transcendence creates space to acknowledge a transnational extension of the *lakou* system that can recognize the Haitian diaspora as part of its social fabric.

Encapsulating the Haitian diaspora within the theoretical lens of the *lakou* system can reveal new geographical and relational spaces to explore migratory linkages between Haiti and Canada. Joseph, Irazabal, and Désir (2018) refer to a *diasporic lakou* as transnational space-based communal living: "a space whereby transnational social links can be maintained within a culturally relevant space that transcends social boundaries" (p. 169). This explanation gives credence to the *lakou*'s unbounded essence as a social

framework rather than existing only as a rigid place-based system reliant on land ownership. Furthermore, technological advances promoting constant global communication facilitate diasporic populations' spatial and temporal compression (Lundy, 2011). As Junior shared, *"we don't have to deal with … [being] disconnected from the tangible reality, from the concrete reality, from the social reality [in Haiti] … because I believe that communication has reduced, to surpass borders, to reduce distances"* (interview 13, 2019). Such a deterritorialized perspective is crucial because it implies a synchronization of daily life with the reality that many diasporic Haitians connect with two distant places (Jolivet, 2017). A *diasporic lakou* has as much a role in deterritorializing Haiti as a nation-state as it does in its reterritorialization. Haitians become bound culturally and socially across space on a global scale rather than solely by the physical limitations of borders set by the world's nation-state system.

Beyond globalization and migration as primary deterritorializing forces, certain practices in the Haitian diaspora align with features of the *lakou* system, providing evidence of its reterritorialization. Remittances, for example, represent the most obvious example of the *lakou*'s communal foundation. They are a reterritorialization of the *lakou* system's egalitarian practices that seek to promote economic equality and ensure the communal life of the group (Mocombe, 2020). As discussed in chapter four, remittances are often an obligation for those living outside of Haiti because they become vital sources of income for family members who remain in the country. However, there is concern that beyond everyday survival, remittances do very little to support larger struggles for social and economic justice, including promoting Haiti's national economic development (Schiller & Fouron, 1999; Zéphirin, 2014; Jadotte & Ramos, 2016). Regardless of

outcomes, such a phenomenon parallels the *lakou*'s decentralized structure evident in Haitian society's physical and social geographies.

The notion that remittances have little to no impact on a national scale lends itself to the decentralized foundation of the *lakou* system, whose egalitarian 'bottom-up' economic ideology has endured as an integral feature of Haitian society at home and abroad (Merilus, 2015). The *lakou* is a space of self-regulation and solidarity that resists foreign influence in the absence of the Haitian state. As a financial coping strategy for Haitian families, remittances help forge a reterritorialization of a Haitian cultural practice and form a transnational resistance to the consequences of neoliberal influence and domination in Haiti. They adapt to a more modern *lakou* system, experiencing the emergence of new geographies in a global economy increasingly intertwined through labour and mobility.

Haiti's intertwining geographies of dispossession and resistance mean that the conventional *lakou* system and its ideologies have remained a prevalent feature of Haitian society in a post-colonial and post-plantation world (Mocombe, 2020). Once the bedrock and cornerstone of colonial economies and the *lakou* system alike, the plantation system has not only endured but transformed since decolonization in the Americas to ensure the continued growth and industrialization of the North Atlantic metropolitan regions. This extractive system expropriated wealth and exacerbated dispossession among racialized economies such as Haiti. A global extraction economy continues to exploit and thrive on the persistent underdevelopment and impoverishment of Black life today (McKittrick, 2013). Now, a global economic strategy coupling modernization principles and neoliberal practices have promoted and maintained a 'trickle down' form of development, enabling

longstanding and uneven racial geographies to persist from the North Atlantic regions or Global North's relative consolidation of wealth and power (Merilus, 2015; McKittrick, 2013). Such a top-down world system produces and perpetuates inequalities between the Global North and South, maintaining harmful levels of wealth disparity and a social order that consistently marginalizes most Haitians (Farmer, 2004b; Fatton Jr., 2014). The incessant inequality many Haitians face is where the *lakou*, as an emancipatory space, finds an imperishable existence in modern Haitian society.

The *lakou* system has also evolved through global migration. Haitians have ironically expanded the *lakou* into new diasporic geographies among some of the same wealthier countries (e.g. Canada) whose historical continuity persists in dispossessing Haiti of its wealth and Haitians of their political and socioeconomic stability (*See, e.g.,* Bellegarde-Smith, 2011; Engler & Fenton, 2005; Fatton Jr., 2014; Schuller, 2016). Whether forced or not, international migration patterns enable Haitians to resettle and grow diasporas that reterritorialize their more egalitarian, social and cultural practices. For example, remittances are one offset of a *diasporic lakou* whose evolution beyond bounded space has amplified its integrity as a transnational and translocal concept.

Emanating from transnationalism research, translocal as a concept provides a frame to understand how mobility connects and influences different localities and people. A translocal emphasis is not merely transcending political and national boundaries but drawing attention to a spatial interconnectedness that understands a multiplicity of cultural, economic, religious and social borders (Gottowik, 2010; Porst & Sakdapolrak, 2017). For instance, development discourses might allude to remittances as complementary to economic development practices, but an egalitarian system like the

lakou befits a perspective of remittances as a global redistribution of wealth. Irrespective of remittances, the role of community is also integral in the formation and structure of the *lakou*.

For Désir (2011), remittances are not enough for full acceptance into the *lakou*, and a real-time commitment to the community is also necessary. Michel (2010, as cited in Désir, 2011) adds, "these communal frameworks offer great hope for rebalancing development, shifting political equations and rebuilding the country's [i.e. Haiti] social fabric as organic systems grounded in specific worldviews pertaining to the Haitian population and geared towards orienting and sustaining life for its progeny" (p. 293). In this case, the roughly 300 Haitian Hometown Associations (HHTAs) across Canada and the U.S. serve as a helpful example of the diasporas' time commitment to the Haitian community (Orozco & Burgess, 2011). They demonstrate Haitian interconnectedness on a transnational scale.

While economic activities are a principal feature of HHTAs, describing them as translocal socioeconomic spaces of support and reconnection proves more accurate. As migrant-formed organizations, they are grassroots philanthropic institutions whose members share a common nationality and live in the same community (Orozco & Zanello, 2009; Orozco & Burgess, 2011). As a primary objective, they collectively assist in developing local community projects or humanitarian-led efforts back in their home countries; however, they also provide migrants with social support and services by reconnecting members of their diaspora through social and charitable events (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). Given their physical remoteness from Haiti, their features align with the conceptual essence of a *diasporic lakou*.

Applying the *diasporic lakou* conceptually, HHTAs become cultural spaces that Joseph, Irazabal, and Désir (2018) refer to as a "social experience [that] can occur in many places" (p. 169)—their research distinguishing and negotiating HHTAs as cultural networks of trust rather than institutions strictly associated with Haiti as a place. Their framework situates Haiti as a translocal community open to broader spaces of solidarity and collectivist action. It presents Haitian community engagement as a social experience open to multi-relational cultural pathways, developing nonlinearly within and between Haiti and its diasporas.

What remains unclear is whether a particular threshold for community engagement or commitment is required for acceptance and inclusion within a broader translocal *lakou* system. However, a *diasporic lakou* provides a social framework governing Haitian solidarity and behaviour. Community engagement is assumed free to occur within and outside Haiti. Thus locally-driven community organizations also thrive within the Haitian diaspora, beyond HHTAs, because they stem from the egalitarian core of the *lakou* system. In chapter four, Philipe described the Haitian way of life as predicated on the solidarity of the expanded family and its inherent benevolence to help others with their problems. As a founder and member of a community-based organization assisting migrant newcomers in Montreal, he attributes the organization's founding to this compassionate way of life: *"When someone comes that has a problem, we take care of it. That is why we formed, look the [organization] it is Haitian formed"* (interview 07, 2019). Referencing the expanded family as benevolent resonates with the social values embedded within the *lakou* system; however, the notion that such benevolence has broader community relevance lends credence to its transnational reach among the

diasporas. Furthermore, a *diasporic lakou* emerges as an accommodating cultural space able to project empathy beyond Haitian society to assist outsiders who find themselves in distress.

A *diasporic lakou* provides an impetus towards helping Haitians and outsiders alike; it emphasizes a universal set of social or societal values not confined by nation-state boundaries and provides more evidence of Haiti as a deterritorialized transnational nation. *Lakou* regulations exclude outsiders from its internal operations, and one cannot become a member unless there is a close connection to the family (Merilus, 2015). However, such exclusivity does not exclude the possibility of helping outsiders. Haitian society is a collective culture focused on supporting others, whether at the household or community scale, and some may value it as obligatory (Edmond, Randolph, & Richard, 2007). Furthermore, diasporic Haitians in multicultural places like Canada are more likely to be part of more culturally and ethnically diverse communities, increasing the likelihood that their benevolence transcends their ethnic or national boundaries.

Earlier discussions related to fictive kin, such as neighbours and close friends, demonstrated the *lakou*'s flexibility to embrace individual subjectivity. However, research has shown that an individual's *lakou* may consist of emotional and functional attachments. Schuller's (2019) exploration into the humanitarian impacts on Haitian households following the 2010 earthquake helped to define the *lakou family* in emotional and functional terms, with one Haitian interview participant stating: "if someone else has a problem, I feel like I have been affected too" (p. 79). This empathetic statement validates Philipe's explanation of a Haitian way of life that includes helping others with their

problems. Another one of Schuller's (2019) research participants provides further validation, saying:

> A family is like someone who can provide me with something if I'm in need. I can go to their house and they give it to me. If they need something they can also come to my house and I will give it to him *[sic]* (p. 79).

The Haitian family extends beyond the immediate household and includes more than just blood relations. Such flexibility even enables one's concept of family to extend beyond their personal sphere, and in some cases, as far as to include God (Schuller, 2016). The thought of God as part of someone's expanded family or *lakou* is viable, considering the transnational role of religion and the church as a place of hope among Haitians at home and abroad.

Among the Haitian-Canadian diaspora in Montreal, Haitian churches and those supporting Haitian congregations offer refuge and a social space where community members share common beliefs and practices to promote a sense of belonging and identity (Mooney, 2009). Like many non-profit community-based organizations offering social services, they also have a communal and egalitarian role in facilitating access to basic needs and integrational support for Haitian newcomers to Canada. After all, the existence of the *lakou* as a social framework in the diasporas still requires spaces for gathering and bonding (Désir, 2011; Merilus, 2015). Like HHTAs, church congregations become a discernable manifestation of a *diasporic lakou* as both are spaces of cultural mediation that foster transnational and translocal networks of solidarity, support and assistance.

Based on the collective wellbeing and cultural solidarity among a group of people or community, one can view the *lakou* system as a Haitian trust network (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). Trust is also intrinsic to ontological security as the "protective cocoon" that enables people to establish social relations required to maintain a stable sense of self-security within their routinized everyday reality (Giddens, 1991, p. 54; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). "Ontologically secure individuals are able to exercise agency because of the existence of a 'protective cocoon' which shields them from the many threats to their physical or psychological integrity," adds Shani (2017, p. 282). As this chapter demonstrates, the *lakou* system is fundamentally predicated upon the establishment of multi-generational social relations in order to shield its members or expanded family from threats to their wellbeing. It is in and of itself a protective cocoon.

The decision to migrate or flee one's home to go to a foreign country is a precarious endeavour. Migration for many Haitians is not merely an opportunity for individuals or families to improve their livelihoods abroad. It is also a coping strategy to mitigate slow harm and improve the lives of family and community members who remain in Haiti. Now entwined with Haiti's social fabric, these transnational family linkages and solidarities help establish chain migration patterns between Haiti and its diasporas (Audebert, 2012). They also support the drive to acknowledge the diaspora as part of Haitian society's broader *lakou* framework.

As a result of urbanization and global migration, the *lakou* system's transcendence from its territorially bounded origins has influenced Haiti's national consciousness. The *lakou's* cultural relevancy as an ontologically secure space

propagates Haitian identity and solidarity as a trust marker that extends transnationally beyond Haiti's borders. It represents both a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Haitian cultural practices and values grounded in compassion and solidarity toward people's safety and wellbeing. Within this space, many Haitians' migrating or fleeing abroad seek the protective force of diasporas that maintain strong linkages and ties to Haiti and its people (Audebert, 2012). For those with family members and close friends living abroad, the choice of destination country might come easier knowing that their chances of ontological security are greater. At the same time, shared experiences and cultural solidarity might prove enough for those without close networks.

The *lakou* system's extension into a *diasporic lakou* offers more culturally appropriate perspectives of security and Haitian decision-making that maintains chain migration to countries like Canada, where most Haitian diaspora members form densely concentrated communities in places like the greater Montreal area (Mills, 2016). Historically, the Canadian public also has a broadly positive outlook towards immigration (Hiebert, 2016). According to Gallop's most recent Migrant Acceptance Index, Canada has ranked among the top 4 most accepting countries for migrants since 2017 and is now globally ranked as the most accepting country for migrants as of 2019 (Esipova, Ray, & Pugliese, 2020). Haitians benefit from the relative positivity that immigration receives in Canada, including the outspoken support the Haitian-Canadian community provides. However, Haitian cultural and ethnic solidarity and trust will undoubtedly vary. After more than half a century of significant outmigration from Haiti, many Haitians have become accustomed to life abroad, and newer generations are born and raised without ever experiencing day-to-day life within the country.

Regardless of modern technology's ability to compress time and space, members of the Haitian diaspora do not experience everyday life in Haiti, which has fostered a history of disjuncture or fissures between homeland Haitians and those abroad. Schiller and Fouron (2009) outline three significant areas disconnecting Haitians in the diaspora from those in Haiti: (1) Haitians financially dependent on those in the diaspora often feel the support is inadequate and resent their presumably more prosperous relatives who find themselves overburdened by financial responsibilities; (2) Haitian transmigrants are perceived as opportunists and a threat to the established social order in Haiti regardless of the extent of economic, political and social capital they may acquire; and (3) Haitians both in Haiti and abroad are at political odds over whether further privatization of public utilities (e.g. electricity) would prove beneficial for people in Haiti. These fissures coalesce to demonstrate how resource provision such as remittances can further class tensions in Haiti.

The conflict surrounding the privatization debate exemplifies how economic, political and social capital gained by Haitians in the diaspora can influence divisions back in Haiti. In the diaspora, some technicians and professionals believe privatization of public utilities will lead to better service, infrastructure and jobs in Haiti. Better job creation suits not only the notion of offering improved employment opportunities for family members supported via remittances but also diasporic Haitians if they return to Haiti. Families in Haiti supported by relatives abroad often echo the same sentiments and support privatization. However, many impoverished Haitians with no family in the diaspora or who lack the support of remittances remain fearful that privatizing public utilities will only make their lives more difficult (Schiller & Fouron, 2009). Historically,

the privatization of Haiti's public entities has done little to ameliorate living conditions for the most marginalized, which includes a negative effect on creating or improving employment opportunities for the country's lower class, who largely remain informally employed (Farmer, 2012; Dupuy, 2010a; Schuller, 2016; Sprague-Silgado, 2018; World Bank and ONPES, 2014). Haitian transmigrants as outsiders to Haitian daily reality can come across as arrogant or all-knowing to people back in Haiti, fostering resentment towards the diaspora (Dupuy, Fatton Jr, Trouillot, & Wah, 2013). Such attitudes can cultivate class tensions by lending themselves to the perception that Haitians living abroad in places like Canada are opportunists and a threat to those in Haiti.

Revisiting the research by Joseph, Irazabal, and Désir (2018), they explain that tensions exist between HHTAs and Haiti's civil society organizations relative to local development projects in Haiti. Belonging to the middle and upper classes, Haiti's civil society leaders who historically dominated control over scarce local resources feel threatened by a diaspora with the same if not more resources than them, including greater access to networks outside Haiti. They perceive HHTAs as a source of competing power and a threat to the social order. However, the Haitian state's history of acting against the nation also bears much responsibility for creating the Haitian diaspora and, along with it, a lingering history of distrust—"a reflexive form of self-defence to survive historical periods of oppression and scarcity"—that resides in the Haitian national consciousness (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018, p. 171). Conditioning complicated feelings of resentment that hinder collaboration between homeland and diasporic Haitians. Joseph, Irazabal, and Désir (2018) add that the 2010 earthquake's

devastation and its longstanding reconstruction process have intensified homeland Haitian's distrust of outsiders, fracturing social ties that routinely bound many Haitians together in transnational solidarity.

Although divisions and differences exist between Haitians living in Haiti and abroad, a *diasporic lakou* remains a useful conceptual lens recognizing that Haitian solidarity exists across scales where contextual differences may arise. As Philipe iterated when questioned about the possibility that solidarity was waning in Montreal, "*no no no the solidarity is there still … It's true there are some exceptions of course I understand … but solidarity is there*" (interview 07, 2019). As a conceptual tool, the *diasporic lakou* might help better understand how the role of solidarity plays out across varying geographical scales and spaces. It could prove helpful in providing a deeper insight into Haitian migration to Canada and among all the Haitian diasporas, as well.

My goal in this chapter has been to explore the *diasporic lakou* as a conceptual tool, providing deeper insight into the topics of Haitian migration. As a contribution to transnational migration studies, this chapter adopts a more culturally-specific perspective on Haiti. Since considerations of security influence a *diasporic lakou* and are influenced by it, it also aims to advance migration research relative to ontological security. As one of the largest Haitian diasporas globally, the Haitian-Canadian community offers an opportunity to expand the scope of migration research because the existing yet limited research into a *diasporic lakou* stems from experiences borne of the Haitian-American diaspora and focuses primarily on its impacts in Haiti rather than on processes of outmigration from the country (i.e. Désir, 2011 and Joseph,

Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). The scope of this study is modest but fills a gap in the literature on the Haitian diaspora in Canada.

Despite its cultural appropriateness and viability as a resource for academic knowledge production, the relationship between Vodou and the *lakou* as a spiritual space and theoretical framework guided by Haitians' situated knowledge presents a couple of challenges for my research (Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). First, as a non-Haitian Canadian-based researcher, I cannot experience or immerse myself in the *lakou* system. Therefore, I must remain cognizant and respectful of the ethnic and cultural limitations encountered in researching such a culturally intimate space extensively. I do not fetishize or romanticize this concept, but identify it as a potential conceptual tool predicated upon my research findings. Second, the Vodou religion has been devalued and misrepresented in the West, leaving it misunderstood and underrepresented in Western academia (Bellegarde-Smith & Michel, 2013). This does not undermine, however, the *lakou* system's potential value as a culturally appropriate space to study Haitian migration throughout Western institutions.

I aim to address a research gap in migration and transnationalism studies by recognizing and promoting a culturally diverse and Haitian-specific range of perspectives. A *diasporic lakou* may provide new opportunities to understand Haitian migration better and offer insight into alternative methodologies to study migration across cultures and other parts of the world. Furthermore, the lakou system ties West African traditions of *lakou* with the diaspora, creating an analytic for understanding Haitian migration beyond the usual frames of migration and displacement. These cultural links cannot be negated as they provide a glimpse into the transnational

essence of a *lakou* system whose cultural foundation passed from Africa to the Americas. It validates a *diasporic lakou* as a viable framework to study migration because the *lakou* system itself has transnational beginnings predicated on African people's forced displacement. It also suggests that research findings using such a framework can overlap across other cultures, especially African cultures sharing similar perspectives on the role of family and community.

By emphasizing community and family solidarity, this chapter explored and promoted a *diasporic lakou* as a valuable concept to generate new geographical insights into Haitian migration. A *diasporic lakou* was first made possible by Haiti's *lakou* system developing from a territorially bounded space into a theoretical and social framework governing people's behaviours and shaping a Haitian national consciousness. People's ontological security requires feelings of belonging, recognition and inclusion, and the *lakou's* egalitarian ideology prioritizes collective trust across expanded family networks and communities to ensure social security and wellbeing. After decades of Haitian outmigration and displacement, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Haitian culture across large diasporic communities help transform the *lakou* into a transnational space of ethnic solidarity regardless of nation-state boundaries. With Haiti existing as a transnational nation, representing a Haitian *diasporic lakou* as a space of ontological security offers a novel and more culturally appropriate approach to exploring the influences that maintain chain migration patterns between Haiti and its diasporas in places like Canada.

CONCLUSION

On August 14th, 2021, Haiti suffered a deadly 7.2 magnitude earthquake, marking a second decade with an earthquake of this magnitude (Lowrie, 2021). While not as devastating as the 2010 earthquake eleven years prior, it was nevertheless a destructive and painful reminder of Haiti's vulnerability to natural calamities that coexist with the pre-existing vulnerability and persistent adversity many Haitians face daily. Immediately following the earthquake, former Canadian Governor General and Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean (2021) tweeted: "Haiti battered by extreme insecurity: banditry, kidnappings, assassinations, the capital ravaged by attacks, disastrous political crisis, food shortages, absolute poverty and again an earthquake! Grief!" Another fellow Haitian and a member of Quebec's legislature, Frantz Benjamin, added: "un drame de trop qui s'abat sur Haïti. Nos coeurs saignent" [one drama too many that falls on Haiti. Our hearts bleed] (Goudreault, 2021, para. 3). Like 2010, Montreal's Haitian community urged the Canadian federal government to expedite existing Haitian immigration files, grant permanent residency to those with undocumented or precarious status and increase family reunification (Lowrie, 2021). This sense of déjà vu highlights the relevance and significance of this thesis addressing Haitian migration.

Often the subject of why many Haitians choose to migrate, mainstream academic, humanitarian and public discourses predominantly hold Haiti's long history of economic and political turmoil responsible for the country's insecurity and instability. However, focusing on Haiti's economic and political troubles presents a linear perspective of a globalized world where people's movement or migration across borders has become increasingly routine—whether forced or not. While Haitian state or institutional structures

have led to various forms of indirect or subtle violence, the harm inflicted is an ongoing experience for many Haitians. Accordingly, this thesis has demonstrated that for Haitians, a culture of migration has developed to avoid the outcomes of slow harm and achieve not only physical but ontological security by extending social networks and living spaces transnationally.

This research thesis identified and analyzed conditions that shaped and influenced contemporary Haitian migration to Canada in the decade following the 2010 earthquake. In contrast to research that explores conditions predominantly in migrant-sending countries, this thesis took a transnational approach by emphasizing relations extending beyond Haiti's borders. I explored people's most basic security and the differentiation between living standards in Haiti and Canada. By conducting qualitative research with members of Montreal and Toronto's Haitian-Canadian communities, I emphasized Haitian knowledge and perspectives, including the spatially-distributed relationships that actively bind the social lives of Haitian-Canadians simultaneously with Haiti and Canada. Using a transnational lens revealed contemporary Haitian migration as a dynamic process traversing diasporic relationships, with immigration bureaucracy as influential.

A transnational framework positioned Haitians as decision-makers who are in continuous control of their own lives and mobility, if under conditions not of their own making (Faist, 2010). Borrowing from various scholarship on *ontological security,* I tried to illuminate Haitians' lives before and after migration—or as exerting personal continuity—by moving beyond external scripts of victimization and establishing people's subjective sense of security as integral to migration discourses (*See, e.g.,* Botterill, Hopkins, & Sanghera, 2019; Giddens, 1991; Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017; Mitzen, 2006;

Shani, 2017). Beyond Haitians' physical well-being lies their psychological welfare nurtured through the social and cultural bonds defining Haitian identity. This cultural solidarity has a fundamental role in maintaining migration to Canada as the second-largest Haitian diaspora outside the Caribbean region (Audebert, 2012). Despite this emphasis on transnationalism, this thesis still recognizes conditions in Haiti as significant and influential.

Applying Hodžić's (2016) *slow harm* concept to Haiti helps illuminate and explain the precarious conditions (e.g. political conflict and acute poverty) that render Haitian lives vulnerable, influencing some to leave Haiti. Research participants demonstrated an astute historical understanding of Haiti's political, economic and social realities influencing outmigration from Haiti to Canada. Furthermore, anti-government protests have significantly increased since the latter half of the 2010 decade as more segments of Haitian society denounce political corruption, economic hardship and rising gang violence (*See, e.g.,* Human Rights Watch, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2021; John, 2021; Sanon, 2022; Schuller, 2022). Most Haitians have become even more aware of their perpetual precarity and the slow harm it entails.

Haiti's shift from authoritarian to democratic rule nearly 40 years ago came with the hope that the ensuing democratic era could help spur economic development and ameliorate Haitian living conditions (Dupuy, 2010a). However, the power vacuum created in the absence of the Duvalier regime emboldened foreign interference in its political and economic affairs (Dupuy, 2010a; Sylvain, 2013). As chapter two outlined, the liberalization of the Haitian economy and subsequent decades of austerity measures (e.g. Structural Adjustment Programs) at the behest of the International Financial Institutions failed to

reach the anticipated economic growth. For example, while Haiti's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown since 1991, its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita[8] has decreased by about 21.7 percent (UNDP, 2020b). Cuts to social spending have also weakened the government's capacity to deliver adequate social services to the extent that International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGO) now function as a parallel state delivering most aid and social services to Haitians (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015; Schuller, 2017). Perversely, neoliberal governance and democracy have fostered slow harm by exacerbating rather than improving political and socioeconomic conditions.

Today, poor governance and weak state capacity persist in Haiti. As a result, human insecurity and state instability are commonplace. The Haitian government lacks the necessary resources to manage ongoing rapid urbanization and overcrowding in cities like Port-au-Prince (Farmer, 2012). Poor infrastructure and a weak public sector remain the norm as many Haitians still lack easy access to electricity, water, sanitation and healthcare (UNDP, 2020b). The country continues to experience chronic poverty and unemployment, with 70% of Haitians reporting to have lost their income base during the COVID-19 pandemic and nearly half the population suffering from food insecurity (approximately 4.4 million people) (World Food Programme, 2022). The agricultural sector continues to perform poorly as the country imports more than 50 percent of its food needs, and with inflation at its highest since 2003, food prices range from 30 to 77 percent more than in the Latin America and Caribbean region (World Food Programme, 2022; World Bank, 2022c). Such pricing makes even the most basic food needs unaffordable for many. Haiti consistently maintains one of the lowest human development rankings

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[8] GNI is a better measure of economic well-being than GDP because it accounts for repatriated foreign profits (World Bank, 2022d).

globally based on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI).[9] Furthermore, the government has lost the capacity to control the growing gang culture.

Military and police capacity has deteriorated to the extent that gangs are omnipresent across the country, controlling virtually half of the capital city of Port-au-Prince (Fatton Jr., 2021). The government is simply losing control and legitimacy. As Haitian professor, Robert Fatton Jr. (2021) adds:

> The situation with the gangs seems to have reached a point where the very survival of the state is at stake … where legitimate authority has lost its capacity to impose any order, and everyone has lost confidence in the government's capacity to do so. (n.p.)

Living with a rampant gang presence fosters an everyday fear for many Haitians, where merely running daily errands poses a risk of potential harm, from kidnapping to even death (Thomas, 2021). Along with such insecurity, Haiti remains highly vulnerable to reoccurring natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes.

A natural disaster is not merely an uncontrollable natural event because societal conditions dictate the extent of its outcome. Since every disaster has a human component, the aftermath depends on society's ability to cope with the immediate or long-term impact (Smith, 2006, as cited in Hyndman, 2011). In Haiti, slow harm interacts with natural hazards such as hurricanes and earthquakes as a compounding force, exacerbating people's unnatural vulnerability to such events. "Dynamic pressures [in Haiti], such as neoliberal economic policies and structural adjustments, transform the root cause of capitalism into concrete lived experiences like malnourishment, overcrowding,

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[9] Haiti is ranked 170 out of 189 countries based on its HDI value of 0.510. "The HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living" (UNDP, 2020b, p. 2).

and lack of government services," explains Kulstad-González (2019, p. 280). Haiti's other environmental conditions, such as land degradation (i.e. deforestation and soil erosion), receive little to no mention by the research participants. When mentioned, they are described as a symptom of Haiti's political economy, validating existing environmental migration research that suggests land degradation plays an indirect role while political and socio-economic issues remain primary reasons to migrate (*See, e.g.,* Alscher, 2011; Mezdour, Veronis, & McLeman, 2016). While participants in this research acknowledge the 2010 earthquake as a historical migration event for Haitians, most participants directly addressed the continuous deterioration of Haiti's poor political and socioeconomic conditions as the primary culprits producing much of the outmigration from the country— viewing the earthquake's devastation as a factor exacerbating those conditions.

While devastating natural disasters like the 2010 and 2021 Haitian earthquakes mobilize global sympathy and humanitarian-led immigration policies, the reality that Haitians continue to migrate to Canada is a reminder that long periods of steady outmigration are no anomaly. No longer does it suffice to focus on conditions in migrant-sending countries and merely compare them to living standards in destination countries. Globalization and migration have deterritorialized modern nation-states like Haiti, with Haitian social relations and cultural practices shifting and adapting to norms in other countries. The Haitian diaspora and its transnational relationships have established longstanding social networks promoting cultural identity and solidarity across borders (Audebert, 2012; Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Désir, 2011; Joseph, Irazabal, & Désir, 2018). They form fundamental pathways or linkages between Haiti and its diasporic communities, forming the necessary social capital to help navigate migratory conditions

across various scales, such as more intimate spaces of kinship and community to bureaucratic spaces involving state immigration practices. These transnational relationships are what makes choosing a destination like Canada appealing.

With over 90 percent of Haitian-Canadians living in the Montreal region and most Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers entering Canada choosing Quebec as a preferred destination, participants highlighted the relationship existing between Haiti and Quebec as influential. After all, they are both primary French cultural centres in the Western hemisphere (Mills, 2016). Language and kinship are essential elements of Quebec nation-building, and Canada also relies on family reunification to simultaneously promote cultural diversity with economic and population growth as a nation-building project (Hiebert, 2016; Geislerova, 2007; Mills, 2016). For Haitians, Canada's family class immigration stream has historically predominated over the economic and refugee classes. The 2010 decade is no exception, reversing a trend prioritizing and increasing economic immigration numbers over the first decade of the 21st century (Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009). Existing family ties in Canada also inform discretionary approval for permanent residency under Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (H&C) (IRCC, 2020c). Sharing francophone origins and prioritizing family reunification creates a complementary effect with the importance of family connections in Haitian culture. Haitians and their communities rely heavily on the expanded family, including friends and neighbours, to provide broader social networks that act as an extended safety net. The Haitian diaspora has become a vital element of these familial safety nets for many Haitians.

Responsible for roughly a third of Haiti's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP), remittances provide an overt representation of a transnational safety net among families

whose members reside in the diaspora (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020). They are a vital lifeline ensuring family and individual welfare by supplementing incomes for those back in Haiti (Todoroki, Vaccani, & Noor, 2009; Zéphirin, 2014). Sending a family member abroad for remittance purposes has become a financial coping mechanism for some Haitian families. It also serves a dual purpose of extending a family's social capital in places like Canada, hoping that other family members may join them in the future (Audebert, 2012). While remittances are an essential income source for Haitian livelihoods and can be a direct emigration influence for some, they point to family solidarity as having a fundamental influence on cultural practices and values. This cultural influence extends across the Haitian diaspora playing a key influential role in choosing a destination. The notion of collective familial assistance and support is also a primary foundation of Haiti's *lakou* system—a communal framework based on solidarity among expanded family networks that aim to provide the economic and social support necessary to ensure the wellbeing of its members.

As a clear distinction from nuclear family values emphasized across Canadian society, the expanded Haitian family influenced the opportunities for many Haitians seeking permanent residency in Canada during the 2010 decade. For example, political pressure from the Haitian-Canadian community led to the Quebec government temporarily expanding IRPA's strict family definition during Canada's humanitarian response to the 2010 earthquake—enabling Haitian-Canadians in the province to sponsor their siblings and nieces/nephews. Even the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and the U.S. has a family exemption rule, rendering asylum seekers who have extended family members in Canada eligible to claim asylum at official border

crossings when those who do not cannot. However, family reunification is subtle in influencing migration, often facilitating migration desires motivated by other existing factors or plans. Nonetheless, the Haitian-Canadian diasporic community provides a unique advantage for many Haitians seeking permanent residency in Canada.

Most research participants were community leaders and activists with decades of direct experience assisting and politically supporting Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers. With a firmly established political presence in Quebec, the Haitian-Canadian diaspora has a long history of solidarity, exercising their rights to lobby both the federal and provincial governments on behalf of their communities, whether in Canada or Haiti (Icart, 2006; Mills, 2016). Community members, leaders, and activists provide an active political voice and advisory role for Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers navigating Canada's immigration bureaucracy. Such solidarity and social capital become an influential migration factor because their intrinsic elements of trust, reciprocity and belonging facilitate feelings of inclusion and access to resources apart from reliance on the state (Babacan & Babacan, 2013). Furthermore, Haitian migrants are not merely abject subjects relegated to suffering. They navigate institutional landscapes and disparate elements (e.g. social actors, relations of power, bureaucracies, discursive frames, etc.) in varying modalities that do not necessarily conform to expected trajectories (Landolt & Goldring, 2016). Migrant agency and subjectivity matter in understanding the dynamics and complexities of transnational migration.

Apart from social integration into Canadian society, understanding how the transnational vitality of cultural solidarity among Haitian communities and families in the diaspora influences Haitian migration to Canada is an area for further research. The

Haitian community is not a singular or unified actor. A closer examination of the internal divides and differences relative to community, class, politics and religion would enhance understanding of the nuances of solidarity as it relates to the diaspora. Drawing on findings from this research, the final chapter drew links to the transnational concept of a *diasporic lakou* as a cultural space of solidarity capable of generating new and valuable geographical insights into Haitian migration.

Deriving from Haiti's original *lakou* system that arose as a physical and communal space of collective resistance to colonial and capitalist pressures (Merilus, 2015), Désir's (2011) *diasporic lakou* is a transnational extension of a modern *lakou* system that transcends physical boundaries into a social and egalitarian framework. It conceptually speaks to Haiti's deterritorialization as a nation-state and its reterritorialization that includes the diaspora as a space of ethno-national solidarity—or as part of a (trans)national consciousness. Through a shared culture and identity, the *lakou* promotes solidarity across Haitian expanded family networks to help ensure their collective welfare. As part of Haiti's broader social fabric, a *diasporic lakou* encourages a transnational culture of care across Haitian society and communities in Haiti and abroad.

As a collective trust network fostering values of egalitarianism across Haitian society, the *lakou* system ensures collective security and well-being, functioning to promote individual identity and personhood (Hoffman, 2012). It acts to shield its members from harm to provide the security and stability necessary to maintain personal continuity and develop a stable self-identity—a protective social space striving to bring ontological security to individuals through collective means (Giddens, 1991; Shani, 2017). A *diasporic lakou* relative to migration can make a destination country like Canada more appealing

for Haitians perceiving the Haitian-Canadian diaspora as a trusted and valuable social network—whether through family or community ties. Assuming that the mere act of migrating to another country can solve the conditions of uncertainty initially justifying migration creates a superficial understanding of migration and displacement. Individuals must establish hope or the perception that their destination will provide the ontological security needed to establish a continuous sense of self-control rather than an uncertain existence.

Diasporic lakou is a unique concept that offers culturally appropriate space for academic research to study how migrant transnationalism and ontological security coexist beyond conventional security discourses (e.g. human security) in the context of migration between Canada and Haiti. How does a *diasporic lakou* manifest across the Haitian diaspora, and what are its impacts? How does it materialize within the social and cultural dynamics of the diaspora? These are clear research gaps. As a potential future research tool, *diasporic lakou* offers an alternate means to explore how Haitian cultural values, solidarity and agency add an influential transnational dimension to understanding overall Haitian migration.

Over the last two decades, the rapid doubling of Canada's Haitian diaspora attests to its appeal as a destination country for many Haitian immigrants and asylum seekers (Statistics Canada, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2017). As illustrated by slow harm, the dynamic economic, political and social pressures leading to the attrition of many Haitian livelihoods are influential factors behind Haitian emigration and asylum-seeking to places like Canada. However, the existence of a robust diaspora provides both a vital lifeline for families in Haiti and for Haitians who become displaced or choose to leave. Haitian-

Canadians have formed transnational identities that simultaneously belong to two distant countries and societies, extending Haitian living spaces beyond Haiti's borders.

The blurring of nation-state boundaries through the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of a shared culture and identity emphasizes communal solidarity as a vital migration factor and survival strategy. While bureaucratic barriers still exist and many Haitians still seek permanent residency in Canada, Haitian-Canadian community leaders and activists demonstrate the political willpower and motivation to influence Canadian immigration politics, creating the opportunities for many to gain status they would otherwise lack. Migration in this context should not be regarded as only an escape from harm but as a means to ensure ontological security. As research participants featured in this thesis shared, many Haitians migrate in hopes of a better life. However, leaving one place for another does not guarantee this. A place of possibility and stability influences one's choice of a destination country. For many Haitians, Canada is that hope.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The 1987 Constitution of Haiti – Title II: Haitian Nationality (with Revisions Noted Below)

TITLE II

Haitian Nationality

ARTICLE 10:
The regulations governing Haitian nationality shall be determined by law.

ARTICLE 11:
Any person born of a Haitian father or Haitian mother who are themselves native-born Haitians and have never renounced their nationality possesses Haitian nationality at the time of birth.

ARTICLE 12:
Haitian nationality may be acquired by naturalization.

ARTICLE 12-1:
After five years of continuous residence in the territory of the Republic, any foreigner may obtain Haitian nationality by naturalization, in conformity with the regulations established by law.

ARTICLE 12-2:
Haitians by naturalization shall be allowed to exercise the right to vote but they must wait five(5) years after the date of their naturalization to be eligible to hold public posts other than those reserved by the Constitution and by law for

ARTICLE 13:
Haitian nationality is lost by:

a. Naturalization in a foreign country;

b. Holding a political post in the service of a foreign country;

c. Continuous residence abroad of a naturalized Haitian without duly granted authorization by a competent official. Anyone who loses his nationality in this manner may not reacquire it.

ARTICLE 14:
A naturalized Haitian may recover his Haitian nationality by meeting all of the conditions and formalities imposed on aliens by the law.

ARTICLE 15:
Dual Haitian and foreign nationality is in no case permitted.

2012 Revisions to Haitian Constitution

🔗 **Article 13**

[Abrogated by the Constitutional Law of 9 May 2011 / 19 June 2012]

🔗 **Article 14**

[Abrogated by the Constitutional Law of 9 May 2011 / 19 June 2012]

🔗 **Article 15**

[Abrogated by the Constitutional Law of 9 May 2011 / 19 June 2012]

Sources: (Haiti. Const. Title. II, Haitian Nationality, 2011; Haiti. Const. rev. 2012)

Appendix B

"The Road" – Migratory Pathway from Brazil to U.S./Canada

Source: (Cénat, Charles, & Kebedom, 2020)