

Trapped Like Monkeys in a Cage:  
Structural Racism and Mental Health in the Dominican Republic

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Sociology in the Graduate School  
of Duke University

2017

ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

Haitian immigrants and their Dominican-born descendants face sociopolitical exclusion in spite of their contribution to the Dominican economy. This project engages three key theoretical perspectives to explain inequality in the Dominican Republic. First, intersectionality theory informs analyses of gender- and nativity-based social factors that influence mental health. Mental health inequalities based on gender and nativity have been documented independently; however, few studies have examined how the intersection of these social locations influences mental health. Results show that contextual factors shape gender- and nativity-related stressors according to intersectional patterns, revealing the importance of intersectional analyses of mental health that include nativity as a site of structural oppression. Next, I use stress process theory to examine how documentation policy is a key driver of negative mental health outcomes among Haitian immigrants and their descendants. Results reveal two major findings. First, documentation policy can act as a primary stressor that yields additional stressors for affected populations. Second, documentation policy can produce the social locations which contribute to compound disadvantage as ethnic Haitians are excluded from multiple domains of social life at once: education, employment, political and social participation. Finally, I apply assimilation theory to examine how the racial context of reception affects immigrant incorporation. Data show that although anti-immigrant

sentiment contributes to Haitians' context of reception in the D.R., immigration officials use race and racialized characteristics to screen for Haitian ancestry. This points to the need to explore the racial context of reception when theorizing inequality among immigrants' incorporation trajectories. Collective results from this project underscore the importance of including of nativity in intersectional analyses, examining the social consequences of documentation policies, and measuring immigrants' social contexts comprehensively.

## **Dedication**

For my sons – Miles, Micah, and Maxwell.

For Geroline, Fior, Noemi and Yil.

Estamos aquí en la lucha.

# Contents

Abstract .....	iv
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures .....	xii
Acknowledgements .....	xiii
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Haitians in the Dominican Republic .....	2
1.1.1 Haitian Immigration to the D.R. ....	2
1.1.2 Documentation Status and Citizenship in the D.R.....	3
1.1.3 Anti-Haitian Discrimination.....	5
1.2 Overview .....	7
2. Chapter 1. Gender, Nativity, and Mental Health: An Intersectional Approach.....	10
2.1 Overview .....	10
2.2 Introduction .....	11
2.3 Prior Research.....	12
2.3.1 Intersectional Approaches to Health Inequality .....	12
2.3.2 Gender and Mental Health .....	14
2.3.3 Nativity and Mental Health.....	16
2.4 Data and Methods.....	19
2.4.1 Sample and Procedures.....	20

2.4.2 Measures.....	23
2.4.3 Data Analysis.....	24
2.4.4 Positionality .....	25
2.5 Results.....	27
2.5.1 Sample Demographics.....	27
2.5.2 Depression and Anxiety Symptoms.....	28
2.5.3 Dominican-born Men .....	30
2.5.4 Dominican-born Women.....	33
2.5.5 Haitian Men .....	38
2.5.6 Haitian Women .....	44
2.6 Discussion .....	48
3. Chapter 2. Documentation Policy, Stress, and Mental Health in the Dominican Republic .....	55
3.1 Overview.....	55
3.2 Introduction.....	55
3.2.1 Stress Proliferation Theory .....	56
3.2.2 Cumulative Advantage/Disadvantage Theory.....	58
3.2.3 Immigration Policy and Mental Health Inequality .....	60
3.2.4 Contribution.....	63
3.3 Methods.....	64
3.3.1 Sample and Procedures.....	67
3.3.2 Data Analysis.....	69

3.3.3 Analytic Rigor.....	69
3.4 Setting.....	71
3.4.1 A Site Visit.....	71
3.5 Results.....	75
3.5.1 Sample Demographics.....	75
3.5.2 Mental Health Inequality .....	77
3.5.3 Documentation Policy and Stress Proliferation .....	78
3.5.4 Documentation and Social Location.....	96
3.6 Discussion .....	105
4. Chapter 3. Living in <i>Un País Ajeno</i> : Structural Racism and Context of Reception in the Dominican Republic.....	109
4.1 Overview.....	109
4.2 Introduction.....	109
4.3 Previous Research.....	113
4.3.1 Assimilation Theory and the Context of Reception .....	113
4.3.2 Immigration Policy as a Reflection of Racial Context.....	117
4.4 Methods.....	120
4.4.1 Sample and Procedures.....	122
4.4.2 Data Analysis.....	124
4.5 Results.....	126
4.5.1 Sample Demographics .....	126
4.6 Discussion .....	144

Conclusion .....	150
Appendix A: Measures for Depression and Anxiety (Spanish) .....	153
References .....	155
Biography .....	178

## List of Tables

Table 1. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees .....	53
Table 2. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees .....	107
Table 3. Mean Depression and Anxiety Scores by Documentation Status .....	108
Table 4. Mean Depression and Anxiety Score by Documentation Status and Nativity .....	108
Table 5. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees .....	146
Table 6. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Haitian Immigrants .....	147
Table 7. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Dominicans of Haitian Descent .....	148
Table 8. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Dominicans .....	149

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents with Elevated Symptoms by Sex .....	54
Figure 2. Percentage of Respondents with Elevated Symptoms by Immigrant Status.....	54

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I could not have done this without my family. I am because we are.

# 1. Introduction

Haitians in the D.R. are like monkeys trapped in a cage. They're given apples and bananas and they think they're free, you understand? Even though they are in a cage, they feel like they're free. They play and jump and they have their bananas, but their spirit is always trapped in the cage. Who else do you see living in these conditions like the Haitian? Or their children who live exactly the same way? They start to go to school until they get to a point where they can't finish because they don't have papers. Then they just stop there or get married, you understand? Then their children have children too. The same thing. They go to school until they get to a point where they are asked for papers. And the papers don't turn up, so they get married. That's what I mean when I say they are like the monkeys.

--Chantal, 54-year-old, Haitian

This project engages three key theoretical perspectives to examine the lived experiences of people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. Intersectionality theory informs analyses of gender- and nativity-based social factors that influence mental health. Analyses of documentation status as a primary stressor build on stress process theory scholarship; and I also apply assimilation theory to examine how the racial context of reception affects immigrant incorporation. Ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews shed light on previously unobserved heterogeneity among both immigrants and non-immigrants. Results from this project include new insights that bridge previous theoretical perspectives to provide an alternative window into the specific mechanisms that shape depression and anxiety symptoms, social stressors, and immigrant incorporation.

## **1.1 Haitians in the Dominican Republic**

### **1.1.1 Haitian Immigration to the D.R.**

Contractual Haitian immigration began as a bilateral agreement between the Dominican and Haitian governments. As the Dominican Republic became increasingly involved in the export of sugar, laborers were needed to do the back-breaking work of cutting cane. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Haitian government earned one dollar for every fifteen days of work completed by migrant Haitian workers (Matibag and Downing-Matibag 2011; Grullón 2013). This created a formal means of bringing Haitians into the D. R. Today, however, the vast numbers of Haitians attempting to cross the border make it unnecessary to maintain a monetary exchange between the neighboring nations. Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic fill positions at the lowest rungs of the Dominican economic ladder, including positions in the industries of tourism, agriculture, construction, and domestic employment. A variety of factors contribute to the push-pull factors that influence contemporary Haitian immigration to the D.R. Such factors include temporary or permanent employment, family reunification, education, natural disaster, and step-wise migration to the U.S.

Because of its ability to serve as an important historical lens that shapes Haitian immigrants' lived experience, the field site for this study is a Dominican *batey*. *Bateys* are shantytown communities that developed around sugar mills in the D.R. (Simmons

2010). They are characterized by extreme poverty and poor living conditions. Over time, political leaders changed in both countries and state-regulated migration policies lapsed. Given the historical and political influences on Haitian migration to the D.R., however, a *batey* serves as a prism for examining a number of problems that have been faced by the population as a result of the disjuncture between state obligations and a shifting political climate.

### **1.1.2 Documentation Status and Citizenship in the D.R.**

Historically, Haitians migrated to the Dominican Republic in two ways: through legal and temporary contractual work in agricultural production or through surreptitious means without documentation which could be either permanent or semi-permanent. Many migrant Haitian workers entered the Dominican Republic temporarily with an *ingenio* – or an industrial sugar mill. However, when the seasonal work of cane-cutting ends, some migrant workers seek alternative employment and remain in the Dominican Republic. This creates a legal conundrum for the undocumented workers and for their children of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic.

Ethnic Haitians born in the D.R. are effectively rendered stateless due to national documentation policies. In general, nationality can be based on two principles: *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*. *Jus soli* citizenship, “right of soil” is based on being born in a

territory. The law of *jus sanguinis*, “right of blood,” is based on bloodline and grants a child the nationality of one or both parents. As of 2005, the Dominican Republic grants citizenship to all those born on Dominican soil, except those born “in transit”.

Previously, this definition was applied to migrant workers and children of diplomats. In 2013, however, “in transit” was re-defined to include persons born to undocumented parents. This change disproportionately affects ethnic Haitians born in the D.R. In 2014, the D.R. passed a naturalization law. Although it does not grant Dominican citizenship, this law would grant a path to documentation status for affected stateless persons; however, it requires that Dominicans born to undocumented parents register as foreigners in their country of birth.

In previous U.S.-based studies, documentation is associated with freedom of movement (Dreby 2015). Similarly, undocumented respondents in the present study often feel the weight of immobility as they are unable to leave their homes, their communities, and are too poor to save enough money to go back home to Haiti. In an economic context where there are limited opportunities for low wage work, documentation becomes an important marker of exclusion and inclusion. Because undocumented persons represent a hard-to-reach population, we know little about their lived experiences. Existing data, however, connect precarious legal status to anxiety,

and increased vulnerability, and a culture of fear within immigrant communities (De Genova 2002; Dreby 2015; Joseph 2011; Oliviero 2013).

The inclusion of undocumented persons offers greater insight into the ways that documentation is connected to both mental health and social exclusion. Further, the structural and legal reproduction of marginalization underscores the importance of examining the social impact of documentation policies. As Donato and Armenta (2011: 538) point out, “among the important topics that future research must continue to address are local responses derived from the strong link between laws and the production of unauthorized status.” This project, which examines mental health, documentation status, and immigrant incorporation answers this call.

### **1.1.3 Anti-Haitian Discrimination**

Anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic has a long history stemming from the period of the colonization of the island of Hispaniola. Hispaniola was a Spanish colony that increased in geographic importance as the slave trade began to expand. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the French invaded the island of Hispaniola. As a result, France governed the western part of the island (Haiti) and Spain governed the east (D.R.). This colonization pattern set the stage for linguistic and cultural differences that Dominicans would cite to distance themselves from Haiti.

As a result of a slave revolt lasting thirteen years, Haiti became an independent black nation. The slave revolt posed a threat to the institution of slavery throughout the New World and caused the new nation to be treated as a pariah in the Western hemisphere. Further, fearing that the French would use Dominican territory to reconquer Haiti, the newly established Haitian government invaded the Dominican Republic and occupied the country for 22 years from 1822 until 1844. During this time, the island of Hispaniola was unified under Haitian rule. Some scholars contend that this cemented the desire of Dominicans to separate themselves from their neighbors on the basis of color, culture, religion, and language.

From 1930-1961, Rafael Trujillo governed the D.R under a violent dictatorship. Whitening projects and anti-Haitian propaganda were major components of state-sponsored policy. Trujillo used media, immigration policies, and school textbooks to perpetuate the narrative that Haitians were a dangerous threat to the country. To address what became known as the "Haitian problem," in 1937, an estimated 20,000 Haitians and dark-skinned Dominicans were brutally murdered on the Haiti-D.R. border.

This historical characterization of Haitians as poor, dirty, diseased, and feared was so ingrained that it persists even today and has led to the continued mistreatment and discrimination of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Although today there are

people of Haitian descent in varying socioeconomic levels of Dominican society, Haitians face exclusion and poor treatment regardless of their social position (Jayaram 2010). Haitian immigrants are often exploited for their work in agriculture, construction, and domestic labor (Petrozziello 2014; Simmons 2010) and they are socially and politically rejected in national discourses. Their labor contributes to the economic stability of the country, yet their presence is viewed as a social burden.

Overall, Haitian immigrants in the D.R. have lower socioeconomic status than Dominicans. In a recent report on immigrant health in the D.R., the United Nations Population Fund finds that immigrants from Haiti live in areas of greater poverty than immigrants from other countries (UNFPA 2014). A remarkable 92% of Haitian immigrants live in extreme poverty in the D.R. (UNFPA 2014). Although many immigrants forge new communal networks, the family ties of material support are often severed upon immigration, and the expectation is that the immigrant will earn enough to send funds to their desperate family members back home (Ferguson 2003). Many sugar cane workers, however, fail to meet this expectation.

## **1.2 Overview**

This project examines the lived experience of Haitian immigrants and their descendants in three chapters that draw on ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic. In chapter 1, *Gender, Nativity, and Mental Health: An Intersectional Approach*, I

employ an intersectional lens to the social determinants of mental health among Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the D.R. Results show that contextual factors shape gender- and nativity-related stressors according to intersectional patterns. Dominican-born men discuss unemployment and anti-Haitian discrimination, and Dominican-born women face stressors related to gendered economic dependence and sexual harassment. Haitian men deal with limited social networks and unfulfilled expectations, and Haitian women discuss language barriers and feeling trapped by misery. Results reveal the importance of intersectional analyses of mental health that include nativity as a site of structural oppression. Importantly, although women and immigrants have worse mental health than their counterparts, Haitian men, Haitian woman, Dominican men, and Dominican women face unique stressors that impact depression and anxiety symptoms.

Chapter 2, *"Trapped Like Monkeys in a Cage": Documentation Policy, Stress, and Mental Health in the Dominican Republic*, synthesizes stress proliferation and compound disadvantage theory to offer more comprehensive explanations for mental health among marginalized populations. Specifically, I examine how documentation policy is a key driver of negative mental health outcomes among Haitian immigrants and their descendants. Results reveal two major findings. First, documentation policy can act as a primary stressor that yields additional stressors for affected populations. Second,

documentation policy can produce the social locations which contribute to compound disadvantage. Results show that Dominican documentation policy excludes ethnic Haitians from multiple domains of social life at once: education, employment, political and social participation.

In the final chapter, *Living in Un País Ajeno: Structural Racism and Context of Reception in the Dominican Republic*, I integrate racialized social systems theory with segmented assimilation theory to contribute to explanations for immigrant incorporation. In this chapter, I show that although anti-immigrant sentiment contributes to Haitians' context of reception in the D.R., immigration officials use race and racialized characteristics to screen for Haitian ancestry. This points to the need to explore the *racial* context of reception when theorizing about inequality among immigrants' incorporation trajectories. Collective results from this project underscore the importance of including of nativity in intersectional analyses, examining the social consequences of documentation policies, and measuring immigrants' social context comprehensively.

## **2. Chapter 1. Gender, Nativity, and Mental Health: An Intersectional Approach**

### **2.1 Overview**

Mental health inequalities based on gender and nativity have been documented independently; however, few studies have examined how the *intersection* of these social locations influences mental health. The current study extends previous research by employing an intersectional approach to the social determinants of mental health among Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic (D.R.). Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic research consisting of participant observation and in-depth interviews with 55 residents of an agricultural community in the D.R., I examine the contextual factors that shape gender- and nativity-related stressors according to intersectional patterns. Dominican-born men discuss unemployment and anti-Haitian discrimination, and Dominican-born women face stressors related to gendered economic dependence and sexual harassment. Haitian men deal with limited social networks and unfulfilled expectations and Haitian women discuss language barriers and feeling trapped by misery. Results reveal the importance of intersectional analyses of mental health that include nativity as a site of structural oppression.

## **2.2 Introduction**

As key dimensions of social stratification, gender and nativity (foreign-born versus native-born) structure differential access to resources and exposure to stressors that impact mental health. This paper uses an intersectional approach to examine the social determinants of depression and anxiety symptoms in an impoverished community in the Dominican Republic. Across the globe, women consistently have higher rates of depression and anxiety than men, but the mechanisms that explain gendered differences in mental health vary by social context (Rosenfield & Mouzon 2013; Axinn et al 2013; Leach et al. 2008). Although past research on immigrant mental health suggests that immigrants have lower rates of psychiatric disorders than native-born persons, these findings are overwhelmingly based on research from the U.S. and developed countries (Mossakowski 2007; Alegría et al. 2008). These gaps underscore the importance of examining gender, nativity and mental health in a developing country.

Mental health inequalities based on gender and nativity have been documented independently (Martinez et al. 2015; Read and Gorman 2010); however, few studies have examined how the *intersection* of these social locations influences mental health. Examining inequalities based on gender and nativity separately masks the ways that intersectional dynamics impact the lived experiences of group members (Collins 2000; Davis 1983; McCall 2005; Schulz and Mullings 2006). Applying an intersectional

framework to the ethnic Haitian population in the Dominican Republic (D.R.) provides an opportunity to unpack the processes that connect gender, nativity and mental health; thereby contributing to intersectionality theory and advancing research on social determinants of health.

## **2.3 Prior Research**

### **2.3.1 Intersectional Approaches to Health Inequality**

An intersectional approach is centered on structural inequality (Dill and Zambrana 2009) and stipulates that because social locations such as race, class and gender are fundamental determinants of opportunity structures, they define access to both the resources that promote health and exposure to the risks that undermine health. As such, their effects cannot be disaggregated or understood separately (Brown and Richardson 2016). Intersectional approaches emerge from feminist scholarship, which highlights important differences among women and men rather than simply between them (Collins 1998, Crenshaw 1995). Feminist scholars focus on gender, race and class as “intersecting oppressions” (Crenshaw 1995) that result in unique lived experiences for individuals belonging to different social groups.

Although intersectional approaches to health traditionally include gender, race, and class, nativity is also a fundamental determinant of opportunity structures (Brown 2013; Takeuchi et al. 2007). Like gender, nativity influences the life chances of groups

and individuals and is rooted in a complex set of economic, political, and ideological forces (Valdez 2013; Enchautegui 2015). Nativity, however, is often overlooked as a key intersectional dimension in health scholarship. Only recently has intersectional scholarship included nativity in analyses (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Gee et al. 2006). This study builds on previous scholarship by incorporating nativity as a central component of intersectional analyses on mental health.

The methodological strategies for studying intersecting categories are complex and continuously emerging. Intersectional analyses are not merely additive constructions of marginalization. Rather, intersectionality explores how social statuses intersect to create different experiences. Scholars, then, rely on three analytical approaches to study intersectionality: anticategorical, intracategorical, and intercategory analyses (McCall 2005). An anticategorical approach challenges the singularity and separateness of a range of social categories. It critically questions *how* to constitute social groups and whether to categorize social groups at all. An *anticategorical* researcher might push beyond male and female gender categories to include countless possibilities on the gender spectrum. An *intracategorical* approach also maintains a critical stance toward categories; its focus, however, is to reveal the complexity of lived experience within particular social groups at neglected points of intersection. A researcher in this vein might do an in-depth case study of a single group (i.e. black

immigrant women). This paper takes an *intercategorical* complexity approach. This approach requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among multiple and conflicting dimensions. The focus, then, is to explicate those relationships and move them to the center of analysis. In this study, I examine gender and nativity in the Dominican Republic as sites of structural inequality that ultimately result in differential exposure to stressors that impact mental health.

### **2.3.2 Gender and Mental Health**

Although mental health is the leading cause of disability for both men and women, women generally have higher rates of depression and anxiety than men (Leach et al. 2008; Read and Gorman 2010; Rosenfield and Mouzon 2013). Perhaps because of this pattern, much of the literature on men's mental health focuses on internalized coping and masculinity (Whorley and Addis 2006; Addis 2011) and very little research examines factors that contribute to men's depression and anxiety symptoms. Although men have lower rates of depression and anxiety, it is unclear whether men and women experience different degrees of stress *overall* because they experience different types of stressors that are difficult to equate (Hatch & Dohrenwend, 2007; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost 2008). In comparison to women, men endure more traumatic or adverse events over the course of their lives (Kessler & McLeod 1984; Turner & Avison 2003).

Compared to women, men experience more physical assaults, injury traumas, and motor vehicle accidents.

Men in developing countries may experience context-specific gender-related stressors. Developing countries are marked by poverty, high levels of unemployment, low life expectancy, and high income inequality (Salomon et al. 2012; Pickett & Wilkinson 2015). Unemployment, debt and loss of income have health consequences (WHO-Europe 2009 and Gili et al 2013). Notably, the worst health outcomes related to unemployment are observed among single men, those lacking social support, and in countries with weak labor market programs (Stuckler et al. 2009). Because of these gender specific patterns, it is important to excavate gender specific stressors that impact mental health.

Women's higher rate of depression is linked to social experiences that are shaped by a gendered social structure. For example, in most social contexts, women are primarily responsible for household and family responsibilities (Lennon and Limonic 2009; Meyer et al. 2008; Fuwa 2004). Consequently, compared to men, women report significantly higher family-related stressors (Marchand et al 2016; Young et al. 2014). While men experience more traumatic events over the life course, women are exposed to more specific kinds of violent events. Women experience sexual abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence much more often than men (Hatch & Dohrenwend 2007).

Ellsberg and colleagues (2008) find that women who are subject to gender-based violence have significantly more emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts than non-abused women.

Labor market participation also produces gendered stressors (Taylor 2016). Women who enter the labor market – whether formally or informally – may endure sexual harassment including verbal assault, manipulation, and job loss because of their status as women (Paulo et al. 2004; Browne and Misra 2013; Welsh 1999). Given that men and women represent a wide array of experiences based on multiple identities, previous researchers underscore the importance of using an intersectional approach and integrating cultural and structural factors to understand how stratification shapes mental health (Rosenfield and Mouzon 2013).

### **2.3.3 Nativity and Mental Health**

Like gender, nativity is also associated with unique social stressors that impact mental health. Although immigrants face marginalization in many contexts, immigrant status is only recently becoming a focal point to examine intersectional inequality (Berg and Morley 2014; Brown et al. 2013; Mahalingam, Balan and Haritatos 2008). Although over-arching trends are mixed, past research on immigrant mental health shows that in the U.S., Mexican immigrants have lower rates and risks of psychiatric disorders, including depression, when compared against U.S.-born Mexican-Americans (Alegría et

al. 2007; Escobar and Nervi 2000; Finch, Kolody and Vega 2000). Known as the “immigrant health paradox,” previous U.S. based research suggests that immigrants are healthier than native-born persons, despite socioeconomic disadvantages that some immigrant groups face (Hummer et al. 2007; Markides and Coreil 1986). This advantage, however, declines with a longer duration of residence in the U.S. (Breslau et al 2007).

Acculturation is the primary stressor associated with immigrant status. This includes the transition into a new country, language barriers, and the social strain of navigating a new landscape with limited social networks (Kimbrow, Gorman and Schachter 2012). While these stressors are typical for many immigrant groups, some groups face anti-immigrant sentiment and added structural discrimination which, in turn, impacts physical and mental health outcomes (Joseph 2011; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda and Abdulrahim 2012).

Anti-immigrant sentiment can also affect native-born descendants of marginalized immigrant groups. In particular, some immigrant groups are treated as perpetual foreigners resulting in social exclusion among second and third generation family members (Liang, Li and Kim 2004; Sáenz and Manges Douglas 2015). Though limited, recent research has examined mental health at the intersection of gender and nativity (Lu & Wong 2013; Letiecq et al 2014). Accordingly, the critical inclusion of

nativity in intersectional analyses can contribute to our understanding of how stressors related to social location impact mental health.

Importantly, these findings are overwhelmingly based on research from the U.S. and developed countries. A developed country provides resources such as access to work opportunities for immigrants and education for their children. Immigration between developing countries, however, may include unique circumstances that impact mental health. This points to the need to investigate more varied and disaggregated populations to theoretically strengthen work on the immigrant health paradox (Alegría et al. 2008). The recent inflow and outflow of people from one country to another has expanded to include streams of migrants going between Caribbean and Latin American countries (Durand and Massey 2010; Ferguson 2003). This is in contrast to the previous unidirectional flows toward the United States. Because of this trend, empirical evidence from the Latin American population is an especially high scientific priority.

The current study advances our understanding of the social determinants of health in several ways. First, I employ an intersectional approach conceptualizing mental health stressors as jointly defined by structural influences of gender and nativity. Second, I analyze data from a developing country thereby providing evidence for context-specific factors that impact mental health based on social location. Finally, I argue for a more critical inclusion of nativity as an intersectional site of structural

oppression by examining the sociopolitical context of incorporation and the resulting limitations of power and privilege among ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

## **2.4 Data and Methods**

This qualitative study employed ethnographic methods including 10 consecutive months of ethnographic interviews and observation of day-to-day activities between August 2014 and May 2015, and formal in-depth interviews with 55 *batey* residents. *Bateys* are shantytown communities that developed around sugar mills in the D.R. (Simmons 2010). They are characterized by extreme poverty and poor living conditions. Data also include interviews with 15 key informants. Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who are familiar with the population of interest. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from a wide range of people—including community leaders, professionals, or residents—who have first-hand knowledge about the community. Key informants for this research were recruited using referrals from the U.S. Embassy, La Clinica de La Familia (a health clinic in the nearby city of La Romana) and other qualified experts.

Because of the sensitivity of discussing mental health concerns, formal interviews with *batey* residents were conducted after spending three months visiting the community and building relationships. I visited the field site 3-4 times each week, with visits lasting 2.5 hours on average. A typical field site visit included spending time with

community members in their homes or in public communal spaces as people prepared meals, did household chores, or other daily activities.

Participants were recruited for formal in-depth interviews based on Charmaz's (2006) notion of theoretical sampling. This procedure, based in grounded theory approaches, is preferable when the researcher is focused specifically on theory development to explain the social worlds of certain sub-groups (Charmaz 2006). Following Johnson (1990), participants were chosen using two strategies which are not mutually exclusive: an a priori, theory-driven framework and an emergent, or data-driven framework in order to produce a sample that allows comparisons based on immigrant status and gender. While this sampling strategy does not allow the researcher to generalize findings to the larger Haitian population in the D.R., it does allow generalization to the theoretical processes that connect social location and mental health. In addition to in-depth interviews and participant observation, data also include a community census in which all households in the batey were counted and basic demographics collected.

#### **2.4.1 Sample and Procedures**

I completed semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants who live and/or work in the eastern region of the D.R.: 4 academic researchers, 4 representatives of NGOs that work with Haitian immigrants in the D.R., 6 health service providers who

work in a clinic that serves bateys in the region, and the principal of the public elementary school in the batey. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was conducted in the language preferred by the participant (Spanish or English). Interviews with key informants were used to identify common mental health concerns and perceptions of depression and anxiety among batey residents. I used information gained from these interviews to shape language and word choice for subsequent interviews with batey residents.

After completing interviews with key informants, in-depth interviews with batey residents were undertaken. Fifty-five batey residents completed interviews with a thematic focus on social stressors and depression and anxiety symptoms. Participants were given the option to complete the interview in either Spanish or Haitian Creole. The author completed all Spanish language interviews and a trained research assistant completed interviews in Haitian Creole. Eighteen participants (33%) completed interviews in Haitian Creole.

The field site, Batey La Tierra<sup>1</sup>, is located near La Romana, a large city of about 140,000 residents in the D.R.'s eastern region. The batey is small, and although it is plagued by limited running water and electricity, unemployment, and food insecurity, it

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the batey has been replaced with a pseudonym. The same is true for names of individual respondents.

has a relatively high level of socioeconomic development in comparison to other bateys in the country. Many residents refer to Batey La Tierra as having better conditions than more geographically isolated bateys.

According to census data generated through this project, La Tierra has approximately 415 residents, including children, and 75 houses. The population in the batey is about one-third Haitian born and two-thirds Dominican born. There is a fairly even distribution of men and women in the batey – 54% of adults are male and 46% are female. Batey La Tierra has relatively more resources than many bateys across the country including an elementary school, a basketball court, a baseball field, and 5 churches<sup>2</sup>. The batey has unreliable access to potable water about five hours per day and electricity about ten hours per day. Due to its location along the highway between two larger municipalities, residents also have access to public transportation. Further, all houses are made of concrete and have cement floors in contrast to houses in other bateys that are made of wood and zinc. Many respondents report moving to La Tierra from other bateys where daily life was more difficult. The main reason why respondents say life is better in La Tierra is related to geographic isolation. In more interior bateys, buses do not travel off the main roads; therefore, completing daily chores like getting

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<sup>2</sup> During my time there, two of the five churches were torn down because the land-owning sugar mill deemed the leaning wood beams and rusted zinc roofs too unattractive to allow in the batey.

groceries, visiting family, or getting to a doctor depends on an inconsistent combination of travel by bus, motorcycle, and/or horse.

This research was conducted in the classic sociological tradition of participant observation, which allows ethnographers to penetrate the lived experience of individuals in a given social and cultural context (Burton and Bromell 2010; Creswell 2007). To facilitate community integration and build trust, I attended community functions, religious services, baseball practices, mourning observances and holiday celebrations in addition to spending time with individuals and families in their homes. I also brought my husband and two sons to the community to connect with participants from the familiar social locations of wife and mother. Because mental health may be a particularly sensitive and stigmatizing subject, this method of integration allowed me to build relationships and establish rapport with participants over time. Data gathered from informal conversations in the field provided an important and necessary check against self-reports derived from in-depth interviews and a way to triangulate findings.

#### **2.4.2 Measures**

Sociodemographic characteristics include gender, age, country of birth, Haitian ethnicity, and education level. Haitian ethnicity was measured by grandparents' or parents' birthplace. If any parent or grandparent was born in Haiti, the respondent was coded as being of Haitian ethnicity.

Depression and anxiety symptoms were recorded during the in-depth interview using items from three sources: culturally adapted Haitian Creole and Spanish versions of both the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and also the Zanmi Lasante Depression Symptom Inventory (ZLDSI), which was locally developed and validated in Haiti. Further, the lead author vetted items measuring depression and anxiety with local mental health professionals, a partner health research organization, and batey residents prior to conducting interviews. Importantly, the purpose of the symptom questions is not to diagnose illness, but rather to aid in the categorization process during analyses (Switzer, Dew and Bromet 2013). The ability to group respondents based on their symptom severity allows the researcher to examine patterns related to gender and nativity.

### **2.4.3 Data Analysis**

Qualitative interviews were recorded in Spanish or Haitian Creole. Spanish interviews were transcribed by a Dominican transcriptionist and interviews conducted in Haitian Creole were transcribed and translated from Haitian Creole to Spanish with the assistance of a bilingual research assistant who identified as a Dominican of Haitian descent. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze qualitative data, which allows key themes to emerge from respondents (Charmaz 2006). Ethnographic field notes and interview transcripts were entered into *NVivo10* software to facilitate analysis.

During the analysis phase, a category of “elevated symptoms” was developed. Respondents were read a list of symptoms during their interviews, and asked to rate how much the symptom bothered them in the past seven days. Five symptoms for depression and five symptoms for anxiety could be rated using a score from 0 to 4 (Appendix A). Potential scores for each illness range from 0 to 20. Higher scores indicate worse mental health. If a respondent had a score of 10 or more, s/he was categorized as having “elevated symptoms”.

#### **2.4.4 Positionality**

Following Kleinman and Copp (1993), I consider my own background as a potential variable that shapes my research. My statuses related to socioeconomic privilege (researcher, PhD candidate, higher income), gender (wife and mother), and foreign origin were the characteristics most interwoven throughout my process of interpreting data. I grew up in a working class family, but I was considerably more affluent than my participants. My apartment in the D.R. had hot running water and consistent electricity. Both of these amenities are luxuries in a developing country. Daily challenges among my research population included food insecurity and poverty-related illness. Children snacked on molasses or sugar cane to get them to the next meal. They gathered water each day from an outdoor pump and they may have ten to twelve

hours of electricity on a given day. The water pump broke three times while I was in the country, leaving residents without running water for up to a week each time.

It was especially difficult for me to see mothers who could not feed their children. I had two young children during my time in the field and I have never had to worry about feeding them. My roles as researcher and wife were often in conflict for respondents. When my husband and children visited a church with me to facilitate my community integration, I explained who I was, what my research was about, and how long I would be in the community. Later, a woman said it was strange that I did all the talking and my husband did not say anything. After several visits to the field site alone, the same woman asked if my husband was comfortable with me spending so much time away from home in the batey. These examples revealed the gendered expectations for women – especially as wives and mothers.

Although privileged, I was a foreigner in the Dominican Republic. I spoke Spanish but still faced language barriers, especially when faced with logistical tasks like renting an apartment, turning on electricity in our apartment, and interacting with teachers at my sons' school and daycare. Especially in the beginning, I felt the shame and embarrassment of someone who should know the norms of social interactions. I felt the confusion of interactions gone unexpectedly wrong and the uncertainty of why an interaction went awry – discrimination based on my appearance and foreign Spanish

accent or the unfortunate encounter with someone having a bad day. Most intensely, I felt the longing for home and the perpetual sense that I was not in my country.

Importantly, though, I had resources and I could leave.

## **2.5 Results**

### **2.5.1 Sample Demographics**

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the sample. Twenty-nine respondents were men and 26 were women. The average age was 40, however, this varied by nativity. The average age of Haitian immigrants in the sample was 59 and the average age of Dominican-born respondents was 32. Twenty-four respondents were Haitian, 21 were Dominicans of Haitian descent, and 10 were Dominican<sup>3</sup> with no reported Haitian ancestry. Respondents were given the option to complete the interview in Spanish or in Haitian Creole. Thirty-seven were conducted in Spanish, and 18 were completed in Haitian Creole.

Education level and housing type was used to operationalize socioeconomic status. Sixteen percent of respondents had no formal education and thirty-six percent of all respondents (20 out of 55) report a primary school education or no formal education

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<sup>3</sup> Amidst the recent legal changes concerning who is conferred Dominican nationality, there is considerable debate about who is “Dominican.” For this paper, I use the term “Dominican of Haitian descent” to refer to persons who have at least one parent or grandparent born in Haiti. I use the term “Dominican” to refer to persons whose parents and grandparents were born in the D.R.

at all. Notably, eighteen of the respondents with less than primary school education (85%) are Haitian immigrants. Families in La Tierra either live in an entire house, a shared house, or a room in a house. In shared houses, wood planks, cardboard, and sheets of zinc separate a house into two distinct sections – the front of the house and the back. One family of 2 to 6 people may live in the front of the house, and a different family lives in the back. It is also common for a single man or a small family to live in a single room in a house. This single room may contain a bed, dresser, refrigerator, and all of the family's possessions. Based on community census data, more Haitians in Batey La Tierra live in shared houses and in single rooms than Dominican-born respondents.

### **2.5.2 Depression and Anxiety Symptoms**

Fifty-five participants completed the mental health symptom survey. Eighteen (33%) reported elevated symptoms of depression and 14 (25%) reported elevated symptoms of anxiety. Most respondents report that factors associated with poverty impact their day-to-day struggles with worry or hopelessness. Such factors include unemployment, financial strain, and food insecurity.

Overall, rates of elevated depression and anxiety symptoms are higher for women than men in the sample (See Figure 1). Thirty-eight percent of women report elevated depression symptoms compared to 27% of men, and 31% of women report elevated anxiety symptoms compared to 21 % of men. This is consistent with global

trends which report a greater prevalence of mood disorders among women (Leach et al. 2008; Read and Gorman 2010).

An examination of differences based on nativity reveals that Haitian immigrants have worse mental health than Dominicans of Haitian descent (see Figure 2). Surprisingly, half of the Haitian immigrants interviewed reported elevated symptoms of depression compared to 19% of Dominican-born respondents. Differences in anxiety symptoms were less pronounced but the pattern is similar. Twenty-nine percent of Haitian-born respondents report elevated anxiety symptoms, compared to 23% of Dominican-born respondents.

Women and Haitian immigrants have worse mental health than their counterparts. Intersectional analyses of in-depth interviews provide greater nuance regarding specific factors that impact mental health for these groups. Dominican-born men report the fewest symptoms of depression and anxiety, but their most salient stressors include unemployment and anti-Haitian marginalization. Though Dominican-born women provide examples of anti-Haitian discrimination, gendered economic dependence and sexual harassment were major reasons for their increased symptom burden. Limited social networks and unfulfilled expectations were major sources of emotional strain for Haitian men; and Haitian women report language barriers and feeling trapped as key stressors.

## 2.5.3 Dominican-born Men

### 2.5.3.1 Unemployment

Each group discussed economic strain as a stressor. Dominican-born men (n=16), however, commonly described their depression and anxiety symptoms in relation to unemployment. Antonio is a 29-year-old man born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents. With a total score of 4 (out of 20), Antonio's quantitative measure of depression and anxiety symptoms was very low. Since women and immigrants have worse mental health compared to their counterparts in the sample, as a native-born man, Antonio's scores are representative of his group's lower levels of depression and anxiety symptoms. When I asked him to describe a bad day during his interview, however, his response reveals the mental and physical effects of unemployment. He explains,

One time, I went to see a baseball game with a friend, and that day I felt something. **(Interviewer: What did you feel?)** Something in my body...like, I could barely see. I could barely see and I felt something like my heart stopped. I felt awful! So I went to my house and told my mother I felt bad. I thought it was something I ate or drank, so we went to the hospital but they couldn't find anything. They told me I was fine so I went back to my house but the feeling didn't go away. I thought I was dying.

As Antonio continued to tell me about his experience, he explained that it happened shortly after he was let go from his job at a local supermarket.

When I was unemployed, I was dating my wife. She was pregnant and I wasn't working, and I always...you know, when I told you I got sick? I was working at Jumbo [the grocery store], but they let me go. I worked there for a year and a half. They let me go.

Antonio's experience shows that although native-born men may score low on depression and anxiety symptoms, particular stressors can impact their lived experiences. The gendered expectation that men financially support their families can be a stressor that uniquely affects men. Unemployment, especially in a country with limited labor market options, is a major stressor for Dominican-born men. Although Antonio describes the pressure of supporting his wife and unborn child, even men without families expressed the pressure of unemployment. The conflict between unemployment and the gendered expectation that men are defined by their labor results in internal tension for the Dominican-born men in the sample.

#### **2.5.3.2 Anti-Haitian Marginalization**

Native-born men encounter anti-Haitian discrimination even though most identify as Dominican. Several individuals in each group (Dominican-born men and women, Haitian men and woman) provide examples of anti-Haitian discrimination. Among native-born men, however, frustration with experience of being a "perpetual foreigner" (Liang et al 2004, Sáenz and Manges Douglas 2015) is salient. Mateo is a Dominican man born to Haitian parents and he uses the word "normal" to describe how he feels about his ethnic and national identities. Because of his social context, it is normal that most people Mateo encounters are of mixed ancestry. He says he does not give much importance to nationality because we are all the same and he treats everyone

equally. When I ask him if he has ever been mistreated because of his Haitian ethnicity, he says no. Then he elaborates with a story of anti-Haitian discrimination.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever been mistreated because you are of Haitian descent?

**Mateo:** No, because of my personality and the way I present myself. I've never been seen like, wow! Look at this Haitian! Because I've always been seen as normal, like a person from here [the D.R.] And I conduct myself in a particular way and I give myself value. I don't let anyone humiliate me.

**Interviewer:** Are there people who try to humiliate you?

**Mateo:** There are people who say things to try to humiliate me but I don't let them.

**Interviewer:** Can you give me an example?

**Mateo:** One time, I worked for this delivery company. We went to a place out near San Pedro to take merchandise to a store, and as I was leaving the box at the store, the owner wanted me to take the merchandise out and put it together. I said 'No, they don't pay me for that. They pay me to make the delivery.' **And she tried to humiliate me saying "Oh come on! This Haitian!" And I said "I'm Haitian but I contribute to the [Dominican] government. I'm Haitian and I work. I work the jobs you don't. Even as a Haitian I leave behind more than you on this earth." And she didn't say anything else.**

Although he says he will not allow anyone to humiliate him, Mateo is reminded

in this instance that he is seen as a foreigner in his own country. The store owner's use of "Haitian" as an insult pushes him to adopt the Haitian identity to stake claim to his national belonging. This frustration was common among Dominican-born men in the sample. They often said they did not experience anti-Haitian discrimination, then

provided an example of mistreatment and how they did not let themselves be humiliated later in the interview.

## **2.5.4 Dominican-born Women**

Like native-born men, native-born women (n= 16) experience stressors related to their ethnicity. Although gender- and ethnicity-related stressors are sometimes intertwined, depression and anxiety symptoms related to their devalued status as women emerge as more salient than ethnicity-related stressors.

### **2.5.4.1 Gendered Economic Dependence**

In Batey La Tierra, labor is gender-based. Although some women work as teachers or service professionals, women who contribute to the household economy typically do so through informal means such as selling goods and services to other community members or in the nearby city. Alternatively, women may find work in the informal sector as domestic workers. Some formally employed residents work in the education, tourism, or health industries; however, most male residents are employed by the sugar mill as planters, harvesters, technicians or supervisors. This large agricultural company owns all houses and land in the batey, and respondents in the sample who work for the sugar mill were all men. Importantly, the gender dynamics of the labor market context result in gender-specific stressors that impact mental health. Because the mill is the primary employer in La Tierra, many women in the community are

economically dependent on men. In some households, gendered economic dependency is a source of anxiety for women. For example, Ani discusses the difficulty of buying what her family needs using her husband's income.

Sometimes [a woman] has three and four kids, and she has to send them to school but the money doesn't stretch for them to eat. And the woman has to struggle to work to see if she can help the husband. I think it's very hard. You understand? And for the man too because there is no salary, you know, for people to live well here. It's hard enough to feed your family...and sometimes you have to go to the doctor. Then all the money is gone.

--Ani, Dominican of Haitian descent, 24 yrs

Ani was responsible for managing the household using her husband's earnings.

This was a source of worry for her as she felt pressure to ensure that the children were cared for while also maintaining the home. This stressor is specifically related to her gender identity as women in La Tierra manage the family's food, childcare, and healthcare. Importantly, Ani's husband was supportive and responsible. For other women, economic dependence was associated with domestic violence and the vulnerability of insecure housing. Miguelina, for example, left her abusive husband twice. Before our interview, a neighbor told me that Miguelina's husband pushed her out of the house, beating her in the street while onlookers tried to intervene. During our interview, Miguelina did not mention the physical abuse, but described her husband as controlling. I asked her how it felt to be in this relationship. She says:

Well, girl, I'm going to tell you honestly. I would like to leave here and never come back, understand? And not even look back, because it's not so much that

he's jealous, but that he fights. All the fighting has got me saying that I should never ever come back, and it's got me feeling...well, you know...bad.

--Miguelina, Dominican, 21 yrs

Women are more likely than men to be victims of domestic violence (Hatch and Dohrenwend 2007). Based on the rest of our interview together, one reason Miguelina stayed with her abusive husband is economic stability. He owned a *colmado*, a local store, and financially provided for her and their two children. During the interview, her eyes welled with tears as she talked about her relationship with her husband. Days after our interview, Miguelina and their daughter went to live with her cousin in a different city. Their son stayed behind to live with his father.

Because housing is connected to male labor, the power to force a woman out of the house is a threat that is, in some cases, exercised. Alexandra is a 36-year-old Dominican woman. When I ask an open-ended question about what might cause her to have a bad day, Alexandra says it is difficult when she gets bad news about a family member or a neighbor and she cannot do anything to help. She describes the fate of a neighbor whose husband put her out of his house.

When I get bad news, it kills me. For example, yesterday I felt bad because I have a neighbor whose husband is horrible. He threw her out yesterday and now she is living in the church. And I feel bad about it. I wanted to help her but I can't, so I feel bad. Because you know that a man shouldn't abuse a woman, especially when there are kids involved. And yesterday, I felt so sad about it, I was in tears! He kicked her out because...you know there are men who...sometimes the man feels superior to the woman. But sometimes there are men who don't know how to treat women. **There are men who, when they get paid, they neglect their**

**responsibilities. They go out and drink. They don't give their woman money for food.** And that's what happened to my neighbor...I feel for her because it could happen to me or to anyone.

--Alexandra, Dominican, 36 yrs

Because of gendered economic dependence and a context where labor is almost exclusively male, social norms dictate that men provide for their wives. When men do not provide, women suffer. For example, later in the interview, Alexandra says that she asks her husband to try to find a room or house for their displaced neighbor, but he says it is a husband's responsibility to make housing arrangements for his wife if he kicks her out. Alexandra expresses distress as a result of her linked fate as a woman in a similar position. She is fortunate that her husband provides her with money and housing, but if he stopped providing for her, she is clear that she too could be left homeless. This illustrates the extent of gendered economic dependence which leaves women without food or shelter if their men no longer support them.

#### **2.5.4.2 Sexual Harassment**

In both the formal and informal labor markets, women are vulnerable to sexist power dynamics. Sandra worked in a restaurant, but because of sexual harassment, she quit the job. When I ask her why she no longer works at the restaurant, Sandra says:

I met an Italian man. He helped me a lot. He told me to quit my job because my boss was in love with me. Since I didn't want to be with [my boss] and I wanted to be with another person, **my boss got upset with me and said things to me, like 'you're a prostitute' and this and that, because I never wanted him...** because I told him 'you are my boss, so you can't be my boyfriend.' He made my

life impossible! Every now and then, there was a problem so my boyfriend told me 'quit this job!' **One time, when I went to see my boss so he could pay me he didn't want to**, so my boyfriend said 'quit this job, let him keep the money' and I quit.

--Sandra, Dominican of Haitian descent, 33 yrs

Sandra quit her job because her boss verbally harassed her and abused his power to affect her pay. Since then, her boyfriend moved back to Italy and discontinued his financial support. She has been unable to find another job. These struggles are associated with intense emotional strain for Sandra. She tells me she feels sad, hopeless, and sometimes lost in thought (*pensativa*) as she recounts this story wondering how her life will unfold. Sandra is a single mother who lives with her aging parents and her three children. In a developing country context where unemployment is prevalent, Sandra feels like she has few options.

Sexual harassment and workplace vulnerability are also concerns for women in the informal labor market. Ana shares her sister's story of humiliation.

My sister worked in a house in Higuey (a city an hour away) and the woman of the house grabbed her if she found anything wrong, she insulted her 'this damn Haitian.' Sometimes you have to deal with things from people's kids where you work, and in many places, the homeowners insult you. **Sometimes, the bosses fall in love with the woman.** Look, many things happen...I think that it happens a lot to women. I don't think it's very good. I have a friend who had to quit, and my sister had to quit too. She had to quit because when she became a woman...listen, the woman [of the house] took my sister in when she was around 11 years old. She lived with them and took care of the babies for the woman. **After she grew up and became a woman, the man of the house fell in love with her and gave her money so she could go to a hotel with him.** And she told him 'No! You raised me from childhood, and now you want to me as a

woman! That's not right!' And she called the woman of the house and told her what happened, but the only thing the woman did was ask her husband if it was true. He said my sister was a liar and so she said, 'well if you believe him, then I'm leaving here because I can't stay in the middle of this.'"

--Ana, Dominican of Haitian descent, 25 yrs.

Although this account is not based on Ana's personal experiences, the narrative in the community is that domestic workers, almost exclusively women, are in highly vulnerable positions where they must endure humiliation, disrespect, and sexual harassment out of desperation for a wage that is barely livable (Petrozziello and Wooding 2011; Wooding and Sangro 2011). Consistent with previous research (Martinez 2013), women in bateys face discrimination on the basis of both their gender and their ethnicity. Ana's sister endures sexual harassment because she is a woman, and the insults-- damn Haitian (*maldito haitiano*) -- are because she is of Haitian descent. These complexities underscore the importance of examining mental health at the intersection of gender and nativity.

## **2.5.5 Haitian Men**

### **2.5.5.1 Limited Social Networks**

Like native-born men, Haitian men (n=12) also discussed the stress of unemployment. Acculturation-related stressors, however, were the most prominent factors related to anxiety and depression symptoms among Haitian men. Traditional migration patterns vary by gender (Parrado and Flippen 2005; Pedraza 1991). In the

D.R., men typically migrate from Haiti in search of work and send remittances to family members in Haiti when possible. After a period of time, sometimes years, women in their family may migrate to the D.R. to join their male relatives (Grullón 2013). For Haitian men working in low-paying jobs, separation from family members is indefinite and acculturation stressors related to gender and nativity coincide. Denel is a 34-year-old Haitian man who went to the Dominican Republic in search of work. He works in the agricultural industry as a day laborer barely earning enough for a meal each day. Denel explains the anxiety of having limited social networks and being isolated from his family in Haiti.

Well, the family that I left there [in Haiti]...I'll always have love for them. I'll always remember them. **I see that I can't go and live with them, I can't talk to them.** Because sometimes you leave your family and you don't talk on the phone with them to let them know that you are here. And those people think that I'm dead, but I'm alive, you know? And if I had money I would go, and when I would get there they would be so happy because I came back, you know? On my end though, I don't have money to go. **And well, sometimes I feel like I have problems and I can't go. Sometimes that's why I'm not happy.** But God knows why. God knows the reason.

Denel lives in a single room in a house and has no family in Batey La Tierra. He is polite and cordial to neighbors, but is typically seen sitting outside alone. The isolation from his family is difficult, especially given that he has no way to communicate that he is safe. Further, his emotional attachment to family in Haiti and the inability to

visit is isolating. This stress is specifically related to the gendered migration pattern among Haitian immigrants.

Many Haitian men grow old in bateys and live alone. In some larger bateys, religious organizations have established elder care facilities for aging Haitian men who have no familial support. Ethnographic data for this project shows that in bateys without such a resource, women in the community informally “adopt” the *viejos*, or “old men” in the batey. They send the men a plate of food during lunch, they allow the men to sit in their yard on a plastic chair and rant about politics, and the adoptive woman may also check on aging men’s health and well-being. In spite of this social support, many Haitian men exhibit elevated symptoms of depression and anxiety which are partially related to feelings of isolation and limited social networks. Eston, for example, lives alone – he has one room in a shared house in La Tierra. Because of financial strain, he deals with food insecurity; and 44 years of agricultural labor have taken a physical toll on his aging body. He explains his connection between limited networks and mental health.

**Who is sending me 50 pesos (US \$1)? It’s just me fighting, fighting so I can get half a peso.** It’s not that it’s such a big thing, but hunger...(chuckles)...you think about it...**Sometimes, I go to bed at night at one in the morning, and at two in the morning, I still can’t sleep.** The thought of not working takes my mind far away. I think about the situation, and about life. There are times when I get up to work, and I can’t go but I HAVE to go....and what about later, when I’m older and I can’t do anything? I’ll die. Well...this is how it is, and this is how I live....everything has a beginning and everything has an end. So I’m just waiting

for the end now because I've always said that I wouldn't kill myself over my problems. There are people who put a rope around their necks and hang themselves because of need, because of their problems. There are people who drink poison to take themselves from the world. But I'm not going to do it.  
-Eston, Haitian, 65yrs

Because Eston is an immigrant man living alone, he has limited social networks that can offer support. Eston works in the sugar cane fields in search of uncontracted day labor. He has four children in the D.R. – two are under eighteen years old and two are adults struggling to provide for their own families so they are unable to offer him financial support. Eston could not rely on the critical familial network of siblings and cousins to mediate his economic strain. He said he would not commit suicide, but his worry and sadness were severe enough for him to consider it.

Unlike other migrant groups, Haitian agricultural workers rarely enter the Dominican Republic to join relatives and friends already in the country (Martinez 1995). As a *viejo* (old man) who has stayed in the D.R. indefinitely, Eston has forged tenuous ties for his own survival. He is a member of a church in La Tierra and when he was injured and could not work, the church members brought him food and some helped nurse him back to health. The day-to-day struggle to provide a meal for himself, however, is his own.

The experience of one respondent's brother offers a counterfactual example of the importance of social networks for men faced with limited labor market options in a

developing country where work is scarce for many. Mercedes is a 56-year-old woman whose family of nine (six adults, three children) live in one house. Her husband is the agricultural supervisor in the batey. She and her family were born in the Dominican Republic. When I asked questions about depression symptoms, including sadness, Mercedes became visibly upset. She bounced her leg nervously, wrung her hands, and averted my gaze as she explained:

Here's what happened. I have a brother, my second brother, and he's the type of person...I don't know how to describe him. Anyway, he worked up there near Higuey, and...he quit his job so now he's back this way. He was staying with our cousin, she lent him a room to live in, but now he has to leave. So he has nowhere to live because I can't have him here. There isn't a room. So I feel a little sad because he might give up hope over this. (She starts to cry softly.) You know why I get sad? Because one time, he tried to kill himself. He drank poison one time...after he lost his job. Someone found him convulsing in a ditch and they recognized him. They knew he was my brother so they found me and we took him to the doctor. They pumped his stomach, and he didn't die. But that time, he drank poison because he wanted to die.

In La Tierra, family members are important social networks that can provide food, money, and housing. Two months after this interview, Mercedes' 29-year-old daughter and two grandchildren ages 4 and 2 moved out of the house. Mercedes' brother moved in days later and lived there for the remainder of my time in the country. Haitian immigrant men do not have extensive familial networks in the D.R. Therefore, the pressure to provide for themselves in a context of scarcity can result in elevated depression and anxiety symptoms.

### 2.5.5.2 Unfulfilled Expectations

Haitian men also expressed discontent related to unfulfilled expectations. They connect their low-wage labor to a clear economic benefit for the Dominican Republic with no reciprocal benefit for themselves. Many respondents, irrespective of nativity, emphasize that Haitian immigrants are a vital piece of the Dominican economy. Further, when discussing their own social position, some Haitian respondents cite shifts in political climate and legal changes as evidence that politicians leverage their position on “the Haitian problem” for political gain. Liswa is a Haitian immigrant who says in exasperation, *“We are just a baseball game for the politicians to negotiate!”* He explains how this dynamic affects his mental health.

This nation says a lot of silly things. They tell you ‘you have no value; you have no country.’ All these words fall on the ears of the whole world, because, you know, we sit in front of the radio and listen to what is happening in the world. And when we hear these words, we have to tie them up and throw them in the sea. These things hurt. Come on! If I come to your house and you give me some of everything, then afterwards you talk bad about me?? **It was me who took care of you. You should feel bad, right? That’s the problem.**

– Liswa, Haitian, 71 yrs.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Haitian government earned one dollar for every fifteen days of work completed by migrant Haitian workers (Matibag and Downing-Matibag 2011). This created a formal, bilateral agreement between the Haitian and Dominican governments. During this period, many Haitian men migrated to the D.R. as part of a mutual exchange: they get work to support their families and the Dominican

government gets the labor they need. These expectations, however, were not fulfilled. Liswa describes an invited guest who takes care of his host and is subsequently insulted. This analogy illustrates his own feelings as a member of a group who was invited into the country to bolster the Dominican economy with its labor. After fulfilling his obligation to work, he is met with contempt in front of a global audience. Many Haitian men in the sample expressed similar frustration with this unexpected political shift.

## **2.5.6 Haitian Women**

### **2.5.6.1 Language Barriers**

In addition to a limited social network, Haitian respondents must confront language barriers in the D.R. Haitian women in the sample discussed the impact of language barriers and they were the group most likely to request an interview conducted in Haitian Creole rather than Spanish. Seven out of twelve (58%) Haitian men provided interviews in Creole compared to 10 out of 11 (91%) Haitian women. Language barriers can result in discrimination in day-to-day interactions with both institutions and individuals. Among interactions with individuals, Haitian immigrants may be presumed incompetent because of a limited ability to speak Spanish. This is especially important for monetary transactions as many Haitian women buy and sell goods in the informal economy to provide for their families. Solange is a Haitian

immigrant who notes the importance of language barriers. When asked if she speaks Spanish, Solange replies:

I can't. I can go to the store and shop. I shop alone, but I can't understand well. When I had just got here [to the D.R.], there were people who thought that I was stupid when they saw how I was. I let them know that I came from Haiti, and I know about money. My eyes were open. I don't know how to speak Spanish, but any money that passes while I'm shopping, I can figure it out in my head.  
-Solange, Haitian, 54

Solange uses the phrase "my eyes were open" to describe herself as alert, attentive, and knowledgeable. Haitian women in the sample are more active in the informal Dominican economy. Many sell homemade bread, peanut butter, avocados, bananas, and household goods to supplement their household incomes. Even though language barriers impact both male and female immigrants, the women discussed the ways that language barriers make Haitian immigrants easy targets for people looking to take advantage of someone and make a few hundred pesos quickly.

#### **2.5.6.2 Trapped by Misery**

In addition to language barriers, Haitian women are the group that most often uses metaphors of feeling trapped when discussing their lives. They use descriptors like "cage" and "jail" to describe their worlds. While Haitian agricultural labor is accompanied by sadness or frustration among Haitian men, Haitian women's tone around labor ranges from matter-of-fact to indignant. Sadness and worry emerge for Haitian women when they discuss feeling trapped in their geographic or economic

situation. Deloni is a 54-year-old Haitian woman who described feeling stuck after the death of her husband.

Well, the father of my children was the one who brought me here [from Haiti]. But he died here, and for me to leave...the misery won't allow me to leave. When he died, he got very sick. He brought me here and he died here. I tried to go but I couldn't go [back to Haiti]. I have problems and I can't go. I want to go where my family is, but I haven't gone because I don't have the money for the trip. Now I'm looking to see if I can go where my family is, and I can't."  
– Deloni, Haitian, 54 yrs

Deloni's immigration to the D.R. was connected to her partner's immigration.

After his death, she was left in the country with her children, little economic support, and few social ties. Deloni relied on neighbors for support until she found another male partner to support her and her children. This new partner, however, is married to another woman. Among Haitians, the term "misery" is commonly used to describe extreme poverty and dire living conditions (Farmer 2003). Deloni says the misery is the reason she cannot go back to her family in Haiti. Because of gendered economic dependence, Deloni has few options. Because she is a Haitian immigrant woman, her limited options, language barriers, and limited social networks leave her feeling trapped.

In addition to gendered economic dependence among Haitian women, some also face gender-based violence. Fifa is a fifty-year-old immigrant woman with no formal

education. She is also undocumented. Her words emphasize the desperation of a woman with limited options facing gender-based violence.

**I have some family here [in the D.R.] but when I consider telling them about my problem, I get embarrassed...so embarrassed. And so I stay here, suffering. I've never gone anywhere. I don't go to anyone's house. All day I'm inside the house, and on Sundays I go to church. Tuesdays I go to a (church) service. I stand a little and I sit...He is there (at home) yelling in my face, insulting me, making me go through travesties, I've dealt with so much misery...sometimes he tells me to get out of the house. He pushes me...every day he's pushing me. I have a prayer at 5, I have a prayer at 12 that I'm doing every day.... every day to see if God will open the door of this prison and take me out of it...I don't live for anything good.**

– Fifa, Haitian, 50 yrs

Fifa's story illustrates two key points about the intersectional impact of stressors related to gender and nativity. First, the shame of being trapped in a dependent, abusive relationship is different for immigrants. For many immigrants, the expectation for moving to a new country is that they will create a better life than the one they left behind. Embarrassment over the inability to improve their life standing is a particular worry for immigrants. Second, Fifa is an undocumented immigrant woman. As a member of an already vulnerable group, lack of documentation leaves her with even fewer options for independence. This highlights the importance of moving nativity to the center of intersectional analyses of mental health.

I distinctly recall the day I gave participants 300 pesos (US \$7) as a thank you for their participation at the end of my time in the D.R. I stepped onto the small concrete

slab in front of Fifa's shared house, and I explained that I wanted to thank her for participating in my research. When I handed her the envelope containing the money, she took it, looked at me incredulously, then shook my hand and pulled me in for a tight, grateful hug. I signed her name on my document tracking receipt of participant compensation since she could not write her own name, and I did not have an ink pad to take her thumbprint. I thanked her again and turned to walk down the rocky path to the next participant's home. When I looked back at Fifa, her head and arms were raised to the sky, praising God for the day's unexpected miracle, both hands clasping the envelope.

## **2.6 Discussion**

Stressors related to gender and nativity are not disassociated from one another. On the contrary, gender and nativity intersect to jointly impact the stressors that people face. This study uses ethnographic data to answer the question: how do gender and nativity intersect to produce differential exposure to stressors that impact mental health? Intersectionality theory allows analyses to center on structural inequality related to gender- and nativity-based social locations in the Dominican Republic (Dill & Zambrana 2009). Findings show that although women and immigrants have worse mental health than their counterparts, Haitian men, Haitian woman, Dominican men, and Dominican women face unique stressors that impact depression and anxiety symptoms.

Methodologically, much further work is needed to define the universal and culture-specific characteristics of depression and anxiety across contexts. I avoided assigning a psychiatric label of depression or anxiety by applying the non-diagnostic term of “elevated symptoms.” I did, however, use depression and anxiety symptoms to distinguish patterns based on gender and immigrant status. Absent specific data on the prevalence of depression and anxiety in the Dominican Republic, available evidence suggests that there are major cross-country differences (Kaiser et al. 2015; Kessler and Bromet 2013). Consistently across countries, women have lifetime risk of major depression roughly twice that of men. Mental health differences based on nativity are much less consistent given the many cultural and contextual factors that shape depression and anxiety symptoms (Brown et al. 2013; Kaiser et al. 2015; Kirchner and Patiño 2011). Future research on mental health must account for sociocultural variation as we explore the ways that depression and anxiety symptoms are interpreted and translated in different contexts.

Intersectional qualitative analyses reveal that unemployment and anti-Haitian discrimination are stressors for Dominican-born men. Importantly, stressors based on gender and nativity represent the most salient narratives of each group; however, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, anti-Haitian discrimination was not unique to Dominican-born men as respondents in each category provided examples of anti-

Haitian discrimination. For Dominican-born men, however, it was one of the most salient stressors.

Dominican-born women face stressors related to gendered economic dependence and sexual harassment. Although professional employment and higher education are increasingly available to women in the Dominican Republic, lack of employment opportunities and few resources at the lowest socioeconomic levels result in pronounced gendered economic dependence (Petrozziello and Wooding 2011). The consequence is that women in bateys are perpetually vulnerable to food insecurity and homelessness unless they are surrounded by a network of family and friends who can offer material support.

Intersectional analyses provide greater insight into the ways that gender and nativity work to create social and material inequality. With few resources and no place to go, Haitian immigrant women use words like “jail”, “cage” and “misery” to describe the immobility of their circumstances. Women who express the most desperation at this intersection are also undocumented. Unfortunately, intersectional scholarship rarely incorporates nativity as a site of structural oppression. Examining immigrants’ social position contributes to our theoretical understanding of how intersectional oppression produces inequality. Inequality researchers have the opportunity to excavate the meanings behind traditional race, class, and gender categories by critically incorporating

others categories like nativity. For example, women's marginalization due to gendered economic dependence is exacerbated by additional barriers to mobility such as lack of documentation (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Raj and Silverman 2002). The increased vulnerability at the intersection of undocumented status and gendered economic dependence merits further exploration. If intersectional analyses incorporate legal status as an important site of structural inequality (Hall 2015; Flippen 2014), then we could better understand structural barriers to equality.

Importantly, the stressors related to immigrant status are not experienced equally by all immigrant groups. Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic face a particular kind of anti-immigrant sentiment, "anti-Haitianism" (Sagás 2000) as a result of their skin color, ethnicity, African heritage, and conflicting colonial histories. Because they are a group levied for political gain and their documentation is often connected to their labor with agricultural companies, poor Haitian immigrants are the immigrant group most likely to face structural barriers to societal inclusion. For example, many Haitian immigrants face the inability to access pensions, and sometimes this is related to lack of proper documentation. Chinese, Pakistani, and West Indian immigrants in the D.R. face their own versions of inclusion and exclusion from the social fabric of the country (Chen 2008; Peguero 2008), but Haitian immigrants' stressors are uniquely

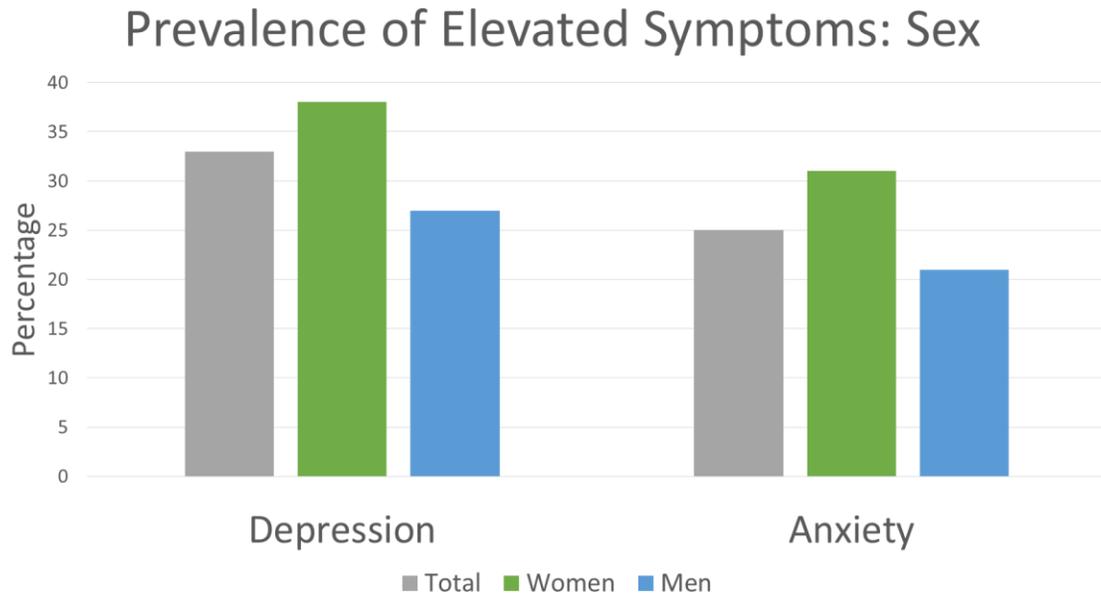
related to their political position in the country as a group that is needed but unwanted (Wooding and Moseley-Williams 2004).

Despite its contributions, this study leaves several important questions unaddressed. First, this study does not speak to the experiences of migrant Haitians who are not permanent or long-term residents of the Dominican Republic. Seasonal migrants – mostly men – come to bateys, work for several months, then return to Haiti. I approached a few migrant workers for an interview, but none accepted. One specifically asked if I would be asking questions about the sugar mill, and even when I said no, he declined an interview. Because I was unable to speak with migrant workers, their unique experiences and stressors are absent from this study.

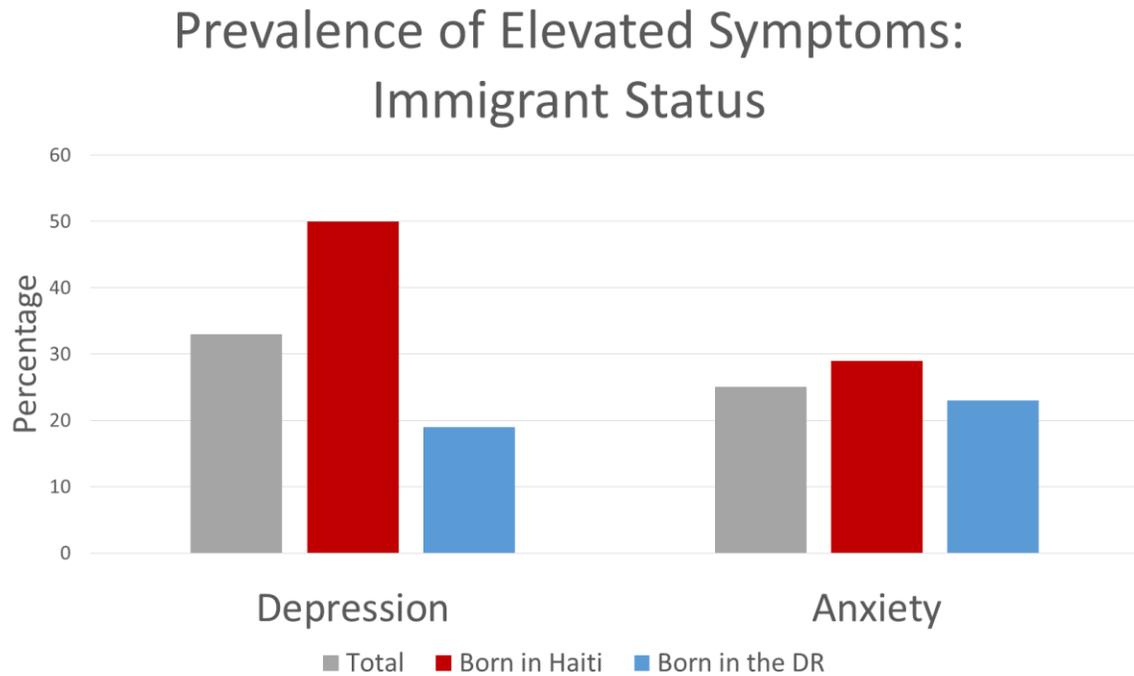
Overall, the present study adds to a small but growing number of qualitative examinations of inequality and mental health using an intersectionality approach. Findings from this study highlight the utility of investigating how gender and nativity intersect to affect depression and anxiety symptoms in a developing country context. The application of an intersectionality approach provides a deeper understanding of the social stratification of mental health, yielding relationships that are otherwise obscured when gender and nativity are examined separately.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
N=55		
<b>Sex</b>		
Women	26	47%
Men	29	53%
<b>Age (mean = 40)</b>		
18-24	10	18%
25-54	26	47%
55 +	19	35%
<b>Country of Birth</b>		
Haiti	24	44%
D.R.	31	56%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Haitian	24	44%
Dominican of Haitian Descent	21	38%
Dominican	10	18%
<b>Language of Interview</b>		
Spanish	37	67%
Haitian Creole	18	33%
<b>Education Level</b>		
None	9	16%
Some Primary	11	20%
Some Middle School	16	29%
Some High School	15	27%
Some College	4	7%
<b>Elevated Symptoms</b>		
Depression	18	33%
Anxiety	14	25%



**Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents with Elevated Symptoms by Sex**



**Figure 2. Percentage of Respondents with Elevated Symptoms by Immigrant Status**

## **3. Chapter 2. Documentation Policy, Stress, and Mental Health in the Dominican Republic**

### ***3.1 Overview***

Stress proliferation and compound disadvantage theories have advanced our understanding of mental health inequality. A critical synthesis of these theories, however, can offer more comprehensive explanations for mental health among marginalized populations. Drawing on ten months of ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic, I examine how documentation policy is a key driver of negative mental health outcomes among Haitian immigrants and their descendants. Results reveal two major findings. First, documentation policy can act as a primary stressor that yields additional stressors for affected populations. Second, documentation policy can produce the social locations which contribute to compound disadvantage. Results show that Dominican documentation policy excludes ethnic Haitians from multiple domains of social life at once: education, employment, political and social participation. Theoretical and policy implication are discussed.

### ***3.2 Introduction***

Social policy changes often have the greatest impact on the most marginalized communities. The mental health impact of such policies merits further theorization, especially as they target vulnerable populations and radically alter individuals' lived experiences. Under one policy, for example, a person is documented and under another,

she is not. Stress proliferation theory and cumulative disadvantage theory offer a means of understanding mental health inequality. The primary question for this paper is: how does documentation policy in the Dominican Republic impact mental health inequality?

### **3.2.1 Stress Proliferation Theory**

Stress theory offers multiple insights into the relationship between inequality and mental health. While the study of stress is an interdisciplinary endeavor, sociological contributions document and explain differences in stress exposure, health, and well-being among social groups (Thoits 2010). Low socioeconomic status is a key predictor of elevated psychological distress and mental disorder when symptoms are compared to those in more advantaged socioeconomic positions (Hayward et al 2000; House 2002; Kessler et al 2005; Mirowsky and Ross 2003). The primary mechanism by which mental health inequalities are produced is differential exposure to stressful experiences (Thoits 2010; Walters et al 2002; Aneshensel 1992). Because social position can “shape the contexts of people’s lives, the stressors to which they are exposed, and the moderating resources they possess” (Pearlin 1999:398-99), it is important to examine the ways that social positions are created and maintained by policy.

Not only does differential exposure to stressors help explain mental health inequalities, stress proliferation theory shows that the proliferation of stressors over the life course and across generations widens health gaps between advantaged and

disadvantaged group members (Thoits 2010). Pearlin (1999) defines stress proliferation as the process by which an initial stressor gives rise to additional stressors. Pearlin and subsequent stress scholars examine micro-level initial stressors such as caring for a loved one with AIDS (Pearlin, Aneshensel, and LeBlanc 1997; Pavalko and Woodbury 2000; Pearlin et al. 1997), job loss (Dilworth and Kingsbury 2005; Grzywacz, Almeida, and McDonald 2002), marital strain (Lincoln and Chae 2010) and loss of a family member (Pearlin 1999; Aneshensel et al. 2004). These studies show that both the primary *and* the secondary stressors increase individuals' distress, depression, and poor health. Rarely, however, are structural factors examined as primary stressors.

Stressors can also multiply across generations (Pearlin et al 2005). Parents' stressors represent stressors to their children. For example, the strains of persistent poverty, unemployment, and poor job conditions can result in stressed parents who give less warmth, attention, support, and effective discipline to their children, further elevating their children's distress and depression (McLeod and Nonnemaker 2000; Menaghan 2009; Wheaton and Clarke 2003). This research examines the indirect intergenerational impact of stressors. Since stress proliferation processes are part of the reproduction of social disadvantage from one generation to the next (Menaghan et al. 1997; Wheaton and Clarke 2003), we must also consider the impact of policies that directly affect multiple generations simultaneously.

### 3.2.2 Cumulative Advantage/Disadvantage Theory

Cumulative disadvantage theory examines stress exposure over time. Robert Merton (1988) described cumulative advantage as dealing with “the ways in which initial comparative advantage of trained capacity, structural location, and available resources make for successive increments of advantage such that the gaps between the haves and the have-nots ... widen” (p. 606). The inverse, then, is that disadvantage based on structural location also contributes to increasing inequality (DiPrete and Eirich 2006; Ferraro and Shippee 2009). Evidence supporting cumulative disadvantage has been provided through analyses of both resource inequality (O’Rand 1996, O’Rand 2001) and health inequality (Ross & Wu 1996; Shuey & Wilson 2008; Ferraro & Kelley-Moore 2003). Although structural location is a central focus of cumulative disadvantage theory, the political production of structural locations through policy implementation remains less understood.

Turner and colleagues have been at the forefront of measuring stressors more comprehensively and in reassessing the effects of cumulative stressors on outcomes such as depressive symptoms and major depressive disorder (e.g., Turner and Avison 2003; Turner and Lloyd 1999; Turner et al. 1995). They show that the influences of chronic strains on mental health were stronger than those of negative events or traumas. Further, negative events, strains, and traumas together explained more variance in

mental health outcomes than negative events alone. Measures of "cumulative stress burden" or "cumulative adversity" (events, strains, and lifetime traumas taken together) explained 25 to 40 percent of the variance in psychological distress and depressive symptoms (Turner et al. 1995; Wheaton 1999), compared to the 1 to 12 percent explanatory power of negative events alone. Consequently, comprehensive assessments of stress exposure have a much more substantial impact on the risks of psychological distress, depression, and other psychiatric disorders than researchers originally believed. Therefore, continued efforts to expand the ways we conceptualize stressors will move researchers toward a better understanding of how stress impacts mental health.

Previous scholarship on cumulative disadvantage examines divergence in outcomes such as education, income, social status and health by social location. Less attention has been given to the structural factors that contribute to social locations. Policy changes can have a major impact on the lives of individuals. Sociological scholarship examining policy as a stressor that impacts psychological well-being can highlight the ways that policy has the potential to both alleviate and reproduce inequality.

### **3.2.3 Immigration Policy and Mental Health Inequality**

Because of the material, social, and psychological implications of immigration policy, its health impact cannot be understated. With the exception of their effect on immigrant access to health care (Oxman-Martinez 2005), however, the health implications of immigration policies have received very little attention (Gee & Ford 2011; Viruell-Fuentes 2012). Anti-immigrant sentiment combined with exclusionary immigration policies can change the social climate for affected communities. For example, in the U.S., Arizona Senate Bill 1070 requires that immigrants have registration documents in their possession at all times and encourages police to check for one's immigration status if there is "reasonable suspicion" that the person is undocumented during a "lawful stop, detention, or arrest." (Arizona State Government 2010). In the Dominican Republic, the Constitutional Tribunal – the Dominican Republic's highest court – retroactively stripped the citizenship of everyone born to undocumented immigrants since 1929. In its September 2013 ruling, the court argued that nationality is more than just a legal bond, rather it also involves "a set of historical, linguistic, racial and geopolitical traits." (Dominican Government 2013). Therefore, foreigners who do not share these traits do not merit access to Dominican nationality; and some groups are perpetual foreigners who face generations of exclusion (Kim et al 2011). Such policies

are likely to have multiple negative effects on the health of immigrants and anyone suspected of being one.

One critical aspect of immigration policy is its connection to documentation, citizenship and its privileges. The literature on documentation and health has also focused on access to health care (Carrasquillo et al 2000; Ku and Matani 2001); yet, it is important to acknowledge that documentation extends deeply into fundamental rights that may impact health and well-being (Viruell-Fuentes et al 2012). Anti-immigrant policies produce a barrage of messages and practices that racialize and construct immigrants as undesirable others who pose a threat to the nation (Chavez 2013). In addition to the well-documented effects that immigration policies have had on limiting access to health and social services for immigrants, such policies also directly impact the fundamental causes of disease by shaping access to life opportunities (Link and Phelan 1995; Viruell-Fuentes et al 2012). In the Dominican Republic, for example, the ability to attend high school, to vote, and to access gainful employment are each connected to documentation. Further, the inability to access legitimate documentation through birthplace results in intergenerational exclusion from citizenship and its accompanying material, sociopolitical, and psychological benefits. Therefore, the effects of anti-immigrant policies can be far reaching in their ability to undermine the health and well-being of immigrants, their families, and communities.

Although research comparing immigrants' mental health to native-born persons is mixed, the types of stressors immigrants face are unique to their experience as foreigners in a new country. In addition to acculturative stress including the transition into a new country, language barriers, and the social strain of navigating a new landscape with limited social networks (Kimbro, Gorman and Schachter 2012), the broader anti-immigrant climate can contribute to experiences with discrimination, stress, and illness (Potochnick, S. R., & Perreira 2010). For instance, Williams and Mohammed (2008) suggested that, compared to previous years, the decline in health that immigrants experienced in California in 2001 might be explained by the anxiety and fear associated with the increase in anti-immigrant sentiment and related imminent policies at play at the time. Similarly, Miranda (2010) found a link between the social, economic, political and historical circumstances into which Mexican immigrants arrived in the United States and the number of depressive symptoms they experienced later in their lives. Finally, although research on the health effects of immigration policies is sparse, Aranda and Vaquera (2015) argue that racial enforcement practices in the U.S. – such as profiling and criminalizing immigrants' behaviors – produce distress, vulnerability, and anxiety in the lives of immigrants and their families. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of examining how individuals and communities are affected by immigration policy changes.

### 3.2.4 Contribution

A growing body of scholarship examines how anti-immigrant policies impact relationships between individuals and families in communities (Dreby 2015; Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Gonzales 2011; Gonzales 2014). Scholars have also examined how documentation policy affects education (Ruge and Iza 2005; Abrego 2006), the labor market (Lowell and Findlay 2001; Lewin-Epstein et al 2001), and sociopolitical endeavors in immigrant communities (Willen 2007; Rosenhek 2000). Building on this scholarship, this paper attempts to bridge two bodies of relevant literature – stress proliferation theory and cumulative disadvantage theory – to better explain mental health inequality by synthesizing the mental health impact of each of these types of negative consequences.

At the aggregate level, both theoretical processes emphasize unequal distributions of risks and resources across social groups that accumulate and expand over time, which creates systematic inequalities in mental health (Thoits 2010). While these theories have been invaluable in conceptualizing systemic inequality and mental health, there has been inadequate attention to the ways that policies can have a multilayered impact on health. Although it is well-documented that conditions in childhood contribute to the development of health in later life, a discriminatory policy can change the lived experience of an entire cohort. Further, stress proliferation theory

tends to examine micro-level primary stressors; yet policies can act as macro-level stressors that give rise to additional stressors.

Ethnic Haitians born in the Dominican Republic are effectively rendered stateless due to current national documentation policies. As of 2005, the Dominican Republic grants citizenship to all those born on Dominican soil, except those born “in transit.” Previously, this definition was applied to migrant workers and children of diplomats. In 2013, however, “in transit” was re-defined to include persons born to undocumented parents. This change disproportionately affects ethnic Haitians born in the D.R. Using data from the Dominican Republic, I examine how documentation policy acts as a primary stressor that results in a cascade of additional stressors for Haitian immigrants and their Dominican-born children<sup>1</sup>. The main contribution of this paper is the analysis of immigration policy as a major factor that results in increased exposure to stressors for an already disadvantaged social group.

### **3.3 Methods**

Data for this project are ethnographic. Fieldwork was completed over 10 months between August 2014 and May 2015. Data collection methods include participant

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<sup>1</sup> All respondents are 18 years of age or older.

observation, in-depth interviews with *batey* residents and key informants, and a community census.

Because of their lower social position in the D.R., this research examines the mental health of Haitian immigrants and people of Haitian descent who live in a *batey*. A *batey* is a settlement around a sugar mill, and it is typically characterized by extreme poverty (Simmons 2010). Although many Haitian immigrants and their descendants increasingly live in urban areas (UNFPA 2014), the *batey* represents an important historical lens that shapes Haitian immigrants' lived experience. As the Dominican Republic became increasingly involved in the export of sugar, the country needed laborers to do the back-breaking work of cutting cane. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Haitian government earned one dollar for every fifteen days of work completed by migrant Haitian workers, and these workers were housed in *bateys* (Grullón 2013). Over time, political leaders changed in both countries and state-regulated migration policies lapsed. Given the historical and political influences on Haitian migration to the D.R., however, a *batey* serves as a prism for examining a number of problems that have been faced by the population as a result of the disjuncture between state obligations and a shifting political climate.

Batey La Tierra<sup>2</sup> is located in the eastern region of the country near a larger city, La Romana. The *batey* is small and has a relatively high level of socioeconomic development in comparison to other *bateys* in the country. For example, although the vast majority of houses lack running water and many struggle to feed their families, the *batey* does have access to potable water (a community water pump), sporadic electricity, and transportation due to its geographic location along the highway between La Romana and Guaymate. Further, all houses are made of cement and have cement floors. Many respondents report moving to Guerrero from other *bateys* where daily life was more difficult.

According to census data collected for this project, Batey La Tierra has about 415 residents and 75 houses. The population in the *batey* is about one-third Haitian born and two-thirds Dominican born. There is a fairly even distribution of men and women in the *batey* – 54% of adults are male and 46% are female. Batey La Tierra also has a primary school, five churches, a basketball court, and a baseball field. Because of these resources, this *batey* is fairly porous as children and adults come to La Tierra to socialize, attend school, or participate in religious events.

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<sup>2</sup> The name of the *batey* has been replaced with a pseudonym. The same is true for names of individual respondents.

### 3.3.1 Sample and Procedures

The researcher completed 15 semi-structured interviews with key informants: 4 academic researchers, 4 representatives of NGOs that work with Haitian immigrants in the DR, 6 service providers who work in a clinic that serves *bateys* in the region, and 1 director who manages the public school in the *batey*. Participants were recruited by referrals from the U.S. Embassy, La Clinica de La Familia (The Family Clinic) in a larger, nearby city, and other qualified experts. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. After completing interviews with key informants, in-depth interviews with *batey* residents were completed.

This research was conducted in the classic tradition of participant observation, which allows ethnographers to comprehend the context and social forces shaping the experiences and interpretations of individuals. Further, since mental health may be a particularly sensitive subject, this method allows the researcher to build relationships and establish rapport over time. I attended community functions, religious services, and group meetings in addition to spending time with individuals and families in their homes. This provided an important and necessary check against self-reports derived from in-depth interviews.

For in-depth interviews, participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method with particular attention to balance based on immigrant status. Following

Johnson (1990), respondents were chosen using two strategies which are not mutually exclusive: an a priori, theory-driven framework and an emergent, or data-driven framework. This produced a sample that allows for a comparison on the basis of immigrant status. All interviewees were 18 years old or older.

Sixty-five people engaged in in-depth conversations about life in the *batey* and in the Dominican Republic. Of these persons, 55 completed a survey of mental health symptoms. Participants were given the option to complete the interview and survey in either Spanish or Haitian Creole. A trained research assistant completed interviews in Haitian Creole for participants who requested it. Eighteen participants completed interviews in Haitian Creole.<sup>1</sup>

Depression and anxiety symptoms were recorded during the in-depth interview using items from three sources: culturally adapted Haitian Creole and Spanish versions of both the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and also the Zanmi Lasante Depression Symptom Inventory (ZLDSI), which was locally developed and validated in Haiti. Further, the lead author vetted items measuring depression and anxiety with local mental health professionals, a partner health research organization, and *batey* residents prior to conducting interviews. Importantly, the purpose of the symptom questions is not to diagnose illness, but rather to aid in the categorization process during analyses (Switzer, Dew and Bromet 2013). Respondents

were read a list of symptoms during their interviews, and asked to rate how much the symptom bothered them in the past seven days. Five symptoms for depression and five symptoms for anxiety could be rated using a score from 0 to 4 (Appendix A). Potential scores for each illness can range from 0 to 20. Higher scores indicate worse mental health.

### **3.3.2 Data Analysis**

Qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed in Spanish. Interviews conducted in Haitian Creole were transcribed and translated from Haitian Creole to Spanish with the assistance of a bilingual research assistant. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze qualitative data, which allows key themes to emerge from respondents. Ethnographic field notes and interview transcripts were entered into *NVivo10* software to facilitate analysis.

### **3.3.3 Analytic Rigor**

Following Burton's (2009) process of "structured discovery," data analysis proceeded along several stages. Analysis began with transcripts on the within-case level. Beginning intra-case allows the analyst to develop a comprehensive understanding of the individuals' experiences. Once the within-case analysis was complete, analysis proceeded to a within-group examination by immigrant status. Similarities between the within-case analysis and the between-case analysis provide

greater evidence for the findings from the within-case examination. The final phase of the analysis involved cross-group analysis examining similarities and differences between foreign-born and native-born people of Haitian descent.

To categorize data, an “open coding” schema was developed focusing on the key analytic variables of documentation status and mental health to incorporate themes that respondents indicate are important but cannot be derived from extant research (Charmaz 2006). The second phase of coding involved axial coding (Strauss 1987) which allows the researcher to discern the key relationships between variables. The final phase involves selective coding, during which the main “storyline” (Charmaz 2006) of the analysis is decided upon.

The reliability and validity of the data collected for this dissertation was established through following best practice criteria established as appropriate for ethnographic data. Recorded interviews were checked against interview protocols to ensure continuity between subjects and interview techniques. Validity was also strengthened by the use of multiple methods and the ethnographer’s prolonged engagement at the research site. Member checking<sup>2</sup>, or the process of testing interpretations and conclusions with participants, was also used to establish validity; and triangulation allowed me to ensure that accounts are rich, robust, and comprehensive. The prolonged engagement of ethnographic researchers allows for a

continual reflexive process during which theories are tested against emergent data and revised. Further, this engagement allows the researcher to check their assumptions against those of respondents to ensure a comprehensive and shared understanding of the social world under study.

### **3.4 Setting**

#### **3.4.1 A Site Visit**

“At the railroad crossing!” I shout to the driver so he knows where to let me off. Specific bus stops and route schedules are rare. I glance at the hole in the floor of the rickety *guagua*<sup>3</sup>. It is partially covered with wooden planks. I walk carefully toward the door gripping the patched up seatbacks. The *cobrador* holds my hand as I step off the bus. “Thank you,” I say. I look both ways for cars, then cross the highway toward Batey La Tierra. An old man with deep brown, wrinkled skin and dusty clothes gets off with me. He carries a sheathed machete and shuffles across the road at the same time as me. We exchange a nod and a “good day.” The rocks crunch noisily under my feet as I leave the paved roadway and enter the *batey*.

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<sup>3</sup> A *guagua* is the typical means of transportation in the D.R. In this region, it is an old, rickety van with a sliding door. Each *guagua* has two workers: the driver and the *cobrador*, which translates as the collector. The *cobrador* recruits passengers, collects fares, and bangs on the roof of the *guagua* to signal to the driver when a passenger requests a stop.

It's about 10am and there is electricity, so few people are around. Men are off working, and women are doing laundry as they take advantage of the critical combination of electricity and daylight. Calichi, lounges on his motorcycle, lying on his back with a dingy white baseball cap covering his face. He peeks out from under his hat, then greets me with a warm smile. We exchange pleasantries. My family is doing well, thank God. Yes, we are always in the struggle. Take care.

Crunch, crunch, crunch.

I walk along the uneven, dusty road careful not to trip and grateful I know to wear closed toed shoes. (Flip flops or sandals mean stubbed toes or sore feet.) I wave to Eddy, as I walk past the *colmado*<sup>4</sup> headed to Omar's house first.

Omar's father, Grigri is the superintendent of this *batey* and several others in the surrounding area. As I approach his house, I open the gate to its peeling white picket fence. I toss my banana peel in the trash can inside the fence, then head up the short path to the house. The yard has short, green grass, cherry and passion fruit trees, and a small white bench for visitors. I walk up three steps to the porch, through a small swinging gate to the open front door. "*¡Buenas!*" I shout through the closed screen door.

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<sup>4</sup> A *colmado* is a small storefront that sells everything from food and household items to school supplies and phone cards.

I wonder how many mosquitoes get in through the smallish hole in the corner of the curling rusted metal screen.

In comparison to the other houses in Batey La Tierra, this house is large. It has a living room, dining room, four small bedrooms (two on the right, two on the left), a bathroom, and a kitchen. In the backyard, there is a small green shed used for washing clothes and a large tree stained with green paint from when El Mudo was cleaning his brushes. El Mudo, The Mute, is the oldest of Grigri and Mercedes' six adult children. He can neither speak nor hear. He lives with his parents but works odd jobs to contribute to the household.

To the right side of the house is a large garden. It is about ten yards deep and twenty yards wide. Grigri grows herbs, cucumbers, spinach, carrots, and other vegetables; and sometimes the teens in the neighborhood come by and ask if they can climb his coconut tree and knock down a few to snack on.

As superintendent, Grigri has the highest labor position in the *batey*. The superintendent receives written reports from the mid-level workers, *mayordomos*, about how much sugar cane was cut and where. Although two of Grigri's daughters have

children by Haitian<sup>5</sup> fathers, Grigri's family is one of the few families in the *batey* that identify as Dominican, but not of Haitian descent.

Mercedes is the woman of the house and Yarine is the 27 year-old daughter who is typically home helping with household chores. While I sit and chat with Yarine and Mercedes, a young girl in a blue school uniform, who looks to be about twelve years old, shouts from the back screen door, "*¡buenas!*" The school is just beyond their backyard and the girl says the Director would like a glass of water. Mrs. Philadelphia Sanchez is the director of the K-7 school in the *batey*. She lives in La Romana, the nearby city, and rides the guagua to Batey La Tierra each day. Children come to the elementary school from 12 surrounding *bateys* in the area. Most have Haitian parents. In my interview with the director, she stressed the importance of seeing each child as important no matter their background while also emphasizing that *these* children may not have learned affection, communication or hygiene in their homes.

Mercedes pours a glass of water for the director while mumbling something about not understanding why the school's water cooler was not re-filled. Of course the director needs water, but the children do too. Won't they be thirsty? The student takes the glass of water and comes back a while later to return the empty glass.

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<sup>5</sup>Grigri's daughters have each had children by men who are Dominicans of Haitian descent. Though they are Dominican by birthplace, they are referred to as Haitian because of their ethnicity.

After about an hour visiting with Mercedes and Yarine, I tell them I'm going to visit "*alla arriba*" up there. This is how people describe the different sections of the *batey*: "up there" and "down there". There is not much social mixing between the groups. Most of the families who are "down there" are Dominican and not of Haitian descent. Their social circles are highly intertwined with one another. One Dominican family lives "up there" but its social circle is still highly connected to the other five Dominican families in the *batey*.

The Haitian and Dominico-Haitian families who live "up there" are greater in number. As such, their social networks are connected based on families, marriages, and church membership. Batey La Tierra has five churches for its population of 411 adults and children at the time of my census in March 2015. Four churches are evangelical and one is Catholic. Most have a congregation that is both Haitian and Dominico-Haitian. Some have a service entirely in Haitian Creole. Churches in the community serve as an important source of material and social support for *batey* residents.

## **3.5 Results**

### **3.5.1 Sample Demographics**

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the sample. Twenty-nine respondents are men and 26 are women. The average age is 40; however, this varies by immigrant status. The average age of Haitian immigrants in the sample is 59 years while the

average age of Dominicans of Haitian descent is 32 years. The main comparison for this study is based on nationality. Twenty-four respondents are Haitian, 21 are Dominico-Haitian, and 10 are Dominican<sup>6</sup> with no Haitian ancestry. Respondents were given the option to complete the interview in Spanish or in Haitian Creole. Thirty-seven were conducted in Spanish, while 18 were completed in Haitian Creole.

The majority of respondents (65%) have less than a high school education. Sixteen percent of respondents have no formal education. This also varies by immigrant status. Of the twenty respondents whose education level is primary school or lower, 17 are Haitian-born. Documentation status varies in the *batey*. Most of the immigrants in the sample (20 out of 24; 83%) report having some form of documentation including a work *ficha*<sup>7</sup>, Haitian passport, or birth certificate. Documentation status, however, does not reflect migration status. Although residents may have documents, they may not have a positive migration status in the country. Notably, while some Haitian-born La Tierra residents spoke with me freely when discussions were informal, a few declined to participate in a formal, recorded interview. This is, perhaps, due to concerns related to

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<sup>6</sup> Amidst the recent legal changes concerning who is conferred Dominican nationality, there is considerable debate about who is "Dominican." For this paper, I use the terms "Dominican of Haitian descent" to refer to persons who have at least one parent or grandparent born in Haiti. I use the term "Dominican" to refer to persons whose parents and grandparents were born in the D.R.

<sup>7</sup> A *ficha* is a card issued to migrant Haitian workers that specifies their work status.

migration status. Almost all of the Dominican-born respondents have a Dominican *cedula*<sup>8</sup>, (29 out of 31; 93%), although some Dominicans of Haitian descent report difficulty registering their children or obtaining marriage certificates.

Subsequent analyses highlight the ways that documentation policy marginalizes Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent. After examining mental health inequality based on documentation status, the following sections show the key domains of stressors that stem from the change in documentation policy: education, labor market, social participation, within families, the intergenerational transmission of undocumented status, and the comprehensive impact of documentation policy on mental health.

### **3.5.2 Mental Health Inequality**

Fifty-five participants completed the mental health symptom survey. The mean depression score for the sample was 7.2 (out of 20), the mean anxiety score was 7.3 (out of 20), and the mean total score was 14.6 out of 40 (See Table 1). Overall, the mean depression, anxiety, and total scores are higher for undocumented participants than documented participants in the sample. The mean depression score for undocumented respondents is 9.8 compared to 5.8 for documented respondents. The mean anxiety

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<sup>8</sup> A *cedula* is national identification card allows Dominican citizens to work in the formal economy, attend university, and access services such as bank accounts and private health insurance.

score for undocumented respondents is 9.4 compared to 6.2 for documented respondents.

When disaggregated by place of birth (Haiti or the D.R.), survey results reveal patterns that vary based on mental health outcome, documentation status, and place of birth. Documented Dominicans of Haitian descent have the best mental health outcomes with scores of 4.6 for depression symptoms and 4.9 for anxiety symptoms. Documented Haitians have lower anxiety scores (5.7) than undocumented Haitians (8.8); but depression scores among Haitians are similar for documented (9.5) and undocumented (9.1) respondents. Undocumented Dominicans of Haitian descent have the highest scores of all comparative groups (depression = 12.5; anxiety = 11.25).

### **3.5.3 Documentation Policy and Stress Proliferation**

#### **3.5.3.1 Education**

The current documentation policy in the Dominican Republic bars many Dominicans of Haitian descent from access to education. Although the Dominican state has initiated literacy programs for agricultural workers across the country, lack of documentation limits access to education for the second generation. Dominicans of Haitian descent face new barriers because of immigration policies that target their ethnic group.

Almost all respondents in the sample can name close friends or relatives who have been impacted by the legal changes, and the narrative of suspended education is quite common. Cristobal is 36 years old. His mother is Dominican and his father is Haitian. Cristobal was born in the Dominican Republic.

Sometimes because of your last name, there can be problems. Because the last names from here and there [Haiti] are different. For example, my last name is Sensiel on my father's side and that's not very common here. On my mother's side, I'm Guzman, but that last name is very common here [in the D.R.]... I know people who have had to suspend their studies because of papers...My brother's wife has not been able to finish high school because of her last name...It's something that makes you feel bad, you understand? Because you want...you choose a path and you want to finish it, but because of problems with papers, you know you have to stop because of these processes.  
--Cristobal, 36 yo, Dominico-Haitian

Cristobal identifies having a Haitian last name as the source of being identified as a foreigner in the education system. The last names that are typically singled out are "Haitian-sounding" names; names with French rather than Spanish derivatives. Many respondents share that last names are often used as a screening tool to "catch" people who were registered in an irregular manner. Therefore, evidence of Haitian ancestry is used to profile Dominicans of Haitian descent and pull them out of the system – even though there are Dominicans and people from other immigrant groups who have been irregularly registered.

The inability to finish school is striking for Cristobal – perhaps because of what education represents for Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. For many

respondents, education is a symbol of freedom and it embodies their hope of social mobility. Yolanda is a 26 year old Dominican of Haitian descent whose parents are undocumented Haitian immigrants. Her father registered her birth using his *ficha*, and she has a Dominican *cedula* that has been deactivated. Yolanda describes her plight,

**Yolanda:** We are prisoners. We are not free yet. (Chuckles). Really! Because here we are supposedly with a document and unable to do anything. Because there are many, I have heard, that have finished high school but can't go to university.

**Interviewer:** When you say "we are prisoners because we are not free," have you thought about that? Does it make you feel worried?

**Yolanda:** Yes, it worries me a lot because...for example, one day, God willing, I will have a baby and I can't register him if I don't have documents. Because I have my *cedula*... and my sister has her *cedula* and she registered two babies with that *cedula*. But now, she has another baby that will be three months old and she still hasn't been able to register him.

--Yolanda, 26 yo, Dominico-Haitian

The provocative imagery of imprisonment is not uncommon among respondents who have been impacted by the documentation legislation. The stress of their uncertain futures has a major impact on the lives of many Dominicans of Haitian descent (Hischnjakow 2011). Yolanda describes Dominicans of Haitian descent as prisoners, and the example she gives is one where a person has finished high school but cannot move on to university because of problems with documentation. In this instance, university represents advancement, and the inability to pursue higher education results in a population that is stuck in limbo, uncertain of their next steps (Gonzalez 2015). For

Yolanda, the crisis is even more dire as she imagines her future children's imprisonment. In Yolanda's case, the stress of the recent documentation policy proliferates additional stressors including lack of access to education, an uncertain future for herself, and for her unborn children.

Not only does education represent the ability for social mobility, but for some, it is also a representation of self-fulfillment and self-actualization – both of which are necessary psychological resources in an oppressive environment (Gonzales et al 2013).

Denis is a 20-year old Dominican of Haitian descent who explains what education means to him.

I love to study. I really do. It motivates me a lot. Because whenever someone studies and explores, it is an opportunity to progress. It opens another world where you discover more things. With a deeper vision, one can get ahead. I mean, someone who studies can go further than someone else who doesn't do anything. That's why I like to study. I like to explore. And even though you want to get ahead a little more, you know how it goes with financial matters. Everything is about money and you have to pay for education, but I'm waiting on God. We'll see...

--Denis, 20 yo, Dominico-Haitian

For Denis, education leads to discovery and exploration. It gives him motivation to keep pushing ahead. Although education serves as a source of personal betterment, Denis explicitly connects the pursuit of knowledge to social mobility. Like many *batey* residents, Denis does not have the money to enroll in university. His *cedula*, however, provides hope that one day he can.

### 3.5.3.2 Labor Market

For those who do not pursue a high school or university education, the formal labor market can provide a source of income and a means to provide for a family. While the Dominican Republic is a developing country with limited economic opportunities and widespread poverty for many of its citizens, the formal labor economy offers more stable opportunities than the informal economy. A high demand and a limited supply of low-skilled jobs means that documentation status is a convenient exclusionary tool.

Anti-immigrant policies in the D.R. create labor market stressors for people impacted by the legal changes. Haitian immigrants with little to no formal education work in the most vulnerable sectors of the Dominican economy. These sectors include agriculture, construction, and domestic labor. Labor is scarce enough for those who have proper documentation. Those without documentation are in an even more precarious position. Benel is a 34 year old undocumented Haitian immigrant who immigrated to the Dominican Republic in search of work. He had documents when he entered the country but he was robbed one night when he fell asleep on the way home from the fields. The thief stole his wallet which included his money and all identification documents. In the following passage, he explains what it has meant for him to work without documentation.

The work is worthless. The jobs don't have...these jobs...for example – a person who cuts cane, who pulls up cane, this is not worth any money. And I'm not

going to work in construction anymore because I spent like 2 months in construction...a pay period of 2 months and the trainer and the boss left with all my money. (**Interviewer:** They left with just your money?) They left with all the workers' money! They took it all. A Haitian woman gave me 150 pesos (about US\$3.00) and a man selling phone cards gave me 50 pesos (about US\$1.00). I walked for part of the way and there was a man in a truck who brought me here. That's how I got here from the other city where I was working....But like I was saying, if I'm at one of these jobs, I don't see anything from them. Ummm, the little work we're doing isn't work that worth any money, you understand? We are working under these people. The price of these little jobs they send... La Romana takes a piece, Higueral (a larger nearby batey) takes a piece, and when the administrator comes, he takes a piece. And on Saturday, he can report your work in someone else's name so that he can go collect for himself, taking money from the very people working in the batey. On Saturday, that guy is eating well in his house and you're not.

**And how do you feel when these things happen?**

Well, I just stay cool. I can't say anything to them, I can't go and cut his head off, I can't scream and cry about it. So, I'm calm. But I haven't gone to work here and been turned away. I mean, these little contract jobs that I'm telling you about, people do them with cedula and without cedula. You don't need a cedula for this kind of work. But like I was saying, if I had a cedula, I would look for better jobs where I could make a few more pesos. Then one day, I could go and see my family. If I can't find a better job, I don't have anything going for myself.

--Benel, 34 yo, Haitian immigrant

In this passage, we hear multiple themes. The first is that because he does not have the proper documents, Benel is stuck in jobs that do not pay him enough to live. Apart from not being able to earn a living wage, undocumented workers are also vulnerable to exploitation. Because of their vulnerable position, they can work and not be paid what they were promised for their labor or they may not be paid at all. At

another point in the interview, Benel shares a story about a supervisor who routinely takes one of the laborers' work days. For example, if the contract laborers work five days in a week, the supervisor pockets a day for himself and records only four days for the worker. So the worker is cheated out of his money and the supervisor earns extra. In this case, Benel says he got into an argument with the supervisor over it, but in the above passage, he seems resigned to his own powerlessness. He says he can do nothing except stay calm. Workers are desperate for the little money they earn which makes it easy for supervisors to replace dissenting laborers with other desperate and vulnerable workers (Cranford 2005; Hall et al 2010).

Benel's story is representative of undocumented Haitian workers in the D.R., and it also represents the labor market stressors of Dominican-born persons who became undocumented after the change in Dominican documentation policy. Undocumented workers are vulnerable to deception and exploitation, and the current documentation policy in the Dominican Republic creates tens of thousands more undocumented adults seeking work in the Dominican labor market. As a result, the exploitable labor population is increasing. Employers hire undocumented workers to fill economic needs because they can pay those workers less money. Luisne, a 68 year old undocumented Haitian immigrant, connects his own experience with the systematic exploitation of undocumented workers.

**Interviewer:** Have you dealt with deception?

**Luisne:** If you count the fact that a job should cost 20,000 pesos (US \$430) but they want to cheat me and give me 10,000 pesos (US \$215) or even 5,000 pesos (US \$105). That's an abuse. You understand?

**Interviewer:** Why do you think they do that?

**Luisne:** Because we're under them. Just to get a little bit more, they want to cheat. They want to keep you down.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think they cheat you?

**Luisne:** Because they know that you don't have anywhere to run, of course!

**Interviewer:** Has this ever happened to you?

**Luisne:** Yes, of course! When I go to work, I do the job at a lower price – a much lower price. You know that what you're getting paid is not the right cost for the job. Since I'm not going to look bad if suddenly I do a job for you at one price and on another day you come to me with different prices and I don't have any problem. The truth is that situations make people do a lot of things. But instead of doing something bad, I'd rather pull up weeds you know what I mean? Really, if I had a means of coming and going, my life would be different.

--Luisne, 68 yo, Haitian

Without documentation, Luisne is hyper aware that he is exploited for his labor.

Since the only other option he sees is “doing something bad” to earn money – like steal from others – he continues to work as an agricultural laborer. According to previous research, the stories that Benel and Luisne share are not uncommon. Undocumented workers across the globe are vulnerable to robberies and pay exploitation (Monzini 2015; Gleeson 2014; Huffman et al 2012). Unfortunately, inadequate compensation during

prime labor-intensive years is often followed by an additional stressor: the inability to collect a pension in old age. Sugar mill workers in the Dominican Republic are eligible to receive a pension. Some have successfully received their pensions while others have been trying to access their pension payments for years. The pension for workers is 5000 pesos (a little over US\$100) per month. Eston, a 65 year old Haitian immigrant has spent two years trying to access his pension. By the time I left the country, he was still unsuccessful. Eston explains,

**Eston:** My life is very difficult. I've been working for the company for 44 years, since 1971. I have a pension request in el Central Romana, some pension documents. The first Dominican peso I earned in the country, they took out three cents. Forty-four years working up until now. In November of 2006, I applied for pension. Now, here we are on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January in 2015. That'll make two years traveling to the capital and I have never been able to see results.

There are days that I cannot go to work. There's a pain there (he points to his abdomen) when I squeeze it there I feel a ball, like that (he squeezes). I can't bend down or stand up. Really, at night I have to sleep with my head up so that I don't put my head like this (he tilts it to one side). Now I find that the only solution for my life so I can have rest is that pension. In a month sitting without eating one dies. Because of this, many times I go to work. Because things do not hand themselves to you. Imagine! I go out in the name of God, this is how my life is, I have no help... I have no help. Who is sending me fifty pesos (US\$1.15)? ...Who is going to send me that? I'm struggling, struggling. To get half a peso. Not that it amounts to much, but hunger (he chuckles) ... imagine! Sometimes I lie down at night at one o'clock, at two o'clock, I cannot sleep, thinking of not working...it is taking me away (my thoughts).

**Interviewer:** What do you think about?

**Eston:** Well the situation and life. Sometimes I get up to work, I cannot go but I have to go. And later I will get older and I won't be able to do anything. If I don't have that pension, what am I going to do? I'll die. That's how I live.  
--Eston, 65 yrs., Haitian

The physical toll that the work has taken on his body is clear from this description. Agricultural labor, sometimes called "stoop labor," is associated with back, knee and other joint problems (Simmons 2010; Hansen & Donohoe 2003). He also has physical reminders of violent injuries that have never healed properly. Attacks coming home from work. A car accident. Eston goes to work each morning. He is a 65-year-old man who returns to physically demanding labor in spite of his pain. At the time of our interview, Eston was no longer a full-time employee of the sugar mill. He worked as a *chilipero*, doing odd jobs as they become available. Eston worries that if his pension application does not go through, he will die of starvation.

Eston's story offers another example of how undocumented labor is at once valued and devalued. Because of their desperate situations, many poor workers clamor for work that is difficult, arduous, and unstable. Their options are to work in these jobs or go hungry for the day. Sugar mills have little incentive or accountability to provide a living wage for workers, to pay them for the days they work, or to provide the pension they earned for decades of labor with the company. Governmental policies that increase the undocumented population continue to reproduce an exploitable population. Sociologist Golash-Boza (2013) terms this phenomenon the "immigration industrial

complex." Based on ideas developed with regard to the prison and military industrial complexes, the immigration industrial complex is the confluence of public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement, and the promotion of 'anti-illegal' rhetoric. Governmental policies that create more undocumented people result in more individuals and communities affected by these exploitative practices; and the labor market stressors created by such policies contribute to poor mental health among affected communities.

### **3.5.3.3 Social Participation**

In addition to access to education and labor market opportunities, undocumented persons are also experience stressors related to sociopolitical participation. Among other activities, this includes the inability to purchase goods with credit and the inability to vote. Solon, an undocumented Haitian immigrant married to a Dominican woman of Haitian descent, explains the changes in his ability to buy a cell phone with his work-issued document.

**Interviewer:** What kind of cedula did you have before?

**Solon:** I had an immigration cedula.

**Interviewer:** Did you lose it?

**Solon:** No. No I didn't lose it. They collected everyone's. We turned them in and they gave us Haitians...let me show you what they gave us. Look. They gave us this ID card. When we turned in our cedula, they gave us this. The company gave us this and a paper that we use to collect our payments when we go to the

office. You can't just go anywhere with this. Only to the office to collect your payment. It's not worth anything anywhere else. You can't even buy a [cell] phone with this! Well, you used to be able to, but now they don't accept it....now they ask for a passport...or a cedula. During Balaguer's government, he ordered that all the cedulas be changed – just like now, when they changed out the old cedulas for new ones. So, I mean they were changing the old cedulas for new ones but when they changed the cedulas for us Haitians, they didn't give us a cedula. They didn't give us anything. The company gave us these old green pieces of paper. That's what we have now. We can't use it to buy anything from any company. Well, if you have cash in hand you can buy things, but not on credit. If I want anything, it's my wife who buys it. Any little thing, it's she who goes with her cedula to fill out the forms...Things are so hard now that to sell you a phone, they ask what your mother's name is, what your father's name is!

--Solon, 67 yo, Haitian

Social participation includes the ability to make purchases and access a credit line. This is especially important for day laborers who earn just enough for the day's meal and for undocumented persons who cannot open a bank account to accrue savings. Solon laments the changes he has seen in the documentation policies since he came to the D.R. in 1971 in search of seasonal labor. Because of policy changes, documents that were once valid forms of identification are no longer recognized as such. Joaquín Balaguer was a Dominican president who served three non-consecutive terms: first from 1960 to 1962, again for a second term from 1966 to 1978, and again for a third and final term from 1986 to 1996. During his presidency, Haitian immigrants were issued a document which gave them limited temporary permission to remain in the Dominican Republic on the basis of their employment contract. This document is called a *ficha*. Recent documentation policies nullify the validity of the *ficha*. Therefore,

workers can no longer use it for official business such as accessing their pension payments or registering their children's births. Further, many Dominican-born adults who were registered using *fichas* currently face the nullification of their registration, and therefore the revocation of their Dominican citizenship.

Solon's story provides evidence that policy changes can impact the lived experience for entire groups by creating barriers to their social participation. In this case, both the Dominican government and the sugar cane company are complicit in the processes that marginalize Haitian workers. Because Solon's *ficha* is only of use within the sugar mill, it controls his access to Dominican social and political resources and effectively limits his full participation in Dominican society. He has to rely on his wife to make purchases for their household and based on his tone during the interview, this bothers Solon. It may seem like a simple thing, but the independent ability to purchase a cell phone proves a source of frustration for Solon while also maintaining his position on the periphery. It reinforces and serves as a reminder of his status in the country as permanent visitor.

Sociopolitical exclusion has a clear impact on the mental health of people of Haitian descent living in the D.R. Identification with a politicized group that is used for gain at their expense wears on the spirit of some of the respondents in my sample. Liswa is a 71-year old Haitian immigrant who feels the tension of his existence

as a member of a politicized group pulled by both Haiti and the D.R. for national gain at will. He explains his perspective.

In Haiti, they know what's going on with us here. They know where we are. Why don't they come to Guaymate (a local city) and speak to us? Foreigners come here all the time to talk to us. The Canadians, Americans, Europeans, why not Haiti? ...Sometimes you think and ask yourself, when will a government come that will allow one to live in peace? That will fix the problems in your country and let you live in peace? So when you see what is happening – more pain. Pain here, pain there, pain here, pain there. I don't know if you understand that...It could be that you live in someone else's country where you're mistreated with harsh words, and afterwards, you feel hurt. So you don't want to stay, and you want to leave their country but then you turn on the news to see the same mistreatment in Haiti (he chuckles).

--Liswa, 71 yo, Haitian

During most of our interview, Liswa gives calm and measured responses. When we discuss politics, however, Liswa speaks with enthusiasm and he frowns often, as though he is offended. He crosses his arms and legs, seemingly to protect himself from feelings of betrayal. Liswa is one of the few respondents who indicts the Haitian government alongside the Dominican government. The bilateral agreements and disagreements over the course of decades have left Liswa feeling frustrated and disillusioned. His sadness is heartbreaking as he details his experience of pain on both sides of the border. There is no place – and no government – that will allow a poor, Haitian worker to live in peace.

### 3.5.3.4 Families

An examination of intimate and familial relationships shows how documentation status works to create fissures between family members. Based on census data collected as part of this project, one-third of residents in Batey La Tierra are Haitian-born and two-thirds are Dominican-born. Many families are mixed: a Haitian father and Dominican-Haitian mother, a Dominican-Haitian father and a mother who identifies as “pure” Dominican. In spaces such as these, documentation becomes an important marker of difference within families. Complications with one’s documentation is an additional stressor within families because of the stigma associated with being undocumented. Therefore, within households, documentation can be used to delineate boundaries between Dominicans and Haitians.

Sara is Dominican-Haitian and her husband is Dominican. Because of her Haitian ethnicity, Sara and her husband are unable to get an official marriage license. While Sara and I talk about discrimination during her interview, I ask her if she has ever heard an offensive joke. She replies, hesitantly:

My husband, sometimes joking with me, I mean, he joked with me on the day that he and I were going to get married. So when I got there to the office, there was a problem...the one I was telling you about. He (my husband) doesn’t have this problem. So he started saying ‘wow, it’s bad...umm...dealing with Haitians!’ (she laughs) But it was a joke (she laughs) ‘It’s bad dealing with the Haitian. Look, now I can’t get married because you are Haitian’. It really made me feel bad. I said, ‘wow!’ and I felt bad so I told him, ‘well you are congo!’ That means someone who is an immigrant from Haiti, but he’s not (she laughs). I was just

trying to, like, vent by saying that. Besides, it's not my fault. It's my parents' fault for not getting a Dominican cedula after so many years here. So I said, 'if I'm Haitian, then you're congo!' (she laughs).

--Sara, Dominico-Haitian, 31 yrs.

Sara's problem is that her parents are Haitian and have an irregular migration status in the country; and because of new policies, her own documentation status is irregular. Although she was born in the Dominican Republic, she is having trouble getting a marriage license. Her husband's joke represents the interactions in intimate relationships that separate ethnic Haitians as "others." Within mixed families, being undocumented can cause divisions. She laughs uncomfortably as she recounts this story, often looking down at the table between us. Later in our interview, Sara laments being unable to have an official marriage and wedding ceremony. The impact of the limitations placed on her by the state is exacerbated by intra-familial tension (Hischnjakow 2011).

Further, Sara shifts her husband's blame from herself to her immigrant parents who did not fulfill their documentation responsibilities. This is one mechanism that Sara uses to deflect the pain of her husband's insult. Another mechanism is to fire back with a counter insult. The term "*congo*" is used colloquially to refer to Haitian seasonal migrants (Martínez 1995). By contrast *viejos* ("old men") are Haitian immigrants who came to the D.R. for seasonal labor, but settled in the country (Martínez 1995). The above exchange and the insults employed reveal the tension the new policy has created

between spouses. It also reveals future additional stressors associated with documentation problems. A marriage license offers both symbolic and material benefits. Symbolically, Sara and her husband would be able to make a public commitment to each other in the presence of their family and friends. Materially, a marriage license would give Sara to access her husband's company-sponsored health insurance. It would also allow Sara to remain in company-owned housing if her spouse dies. Because Sara does not have access to either of these benefits due to complications with her documentation, she may encounter future complications related to her health care and housing if her husband gets injured or falls ill.

Consistent with stress proliferation theory, stressors within mixed-status families in the sample also impact intergenerational relationships as parents make complex decisions about their children's documentation. It is not uncommon for undocumented persons to have their children registered under someone else's name (Petrozziello et al 2014). Some respondents even say that documentation office officials *told* them to find a Dominican to register their child. Chantal is a 54-year old Haitian woman who feels stuck in the Dominican Republic because her 14 year old daughter had a baby but cannot register him. Chantal has considered registering her grandchild under her own name, but decides that this would ultimately create more problems. Chantal explains,

The baby's father wanted a family member to declare the baby together with him, but I don't want to. She [my daughter] is the one that gave birth to the child

and her child should carry her name, you understand? I was the victim of something similar. When I had my first child, I wasn't married to his father by law...and he said that he didn't want a child and that he wasn't going to recognize any child. When I had that baby, I felt a little uncomfortable when I saw that I had to go to the office of civil registry to declare my child...I didn't have papers either. I asked my mother to do it in her name for me since I didn't have papers. So my mother registered him. Even though my son has the same last name as me, he's not my son now. He's my mother's son.... And I don't want this girl [my daughter] to go through the same thing. Now my son is doing well. He's successful, but he's my little brother...not my son.  
--Chantal, 54 yo, Haitian

The emotional toll that this can take on families is great. By law, Chantal's son is not hers. The disjuncture between their familial relationship and their legal relationship can pose problems throughout a child's life as they interact with social institutions (Gleeson and Gonzales 2010). They are reminded of the legal discrepancies when moving from one grade level to the next, when applying for a driver's license or a *cedula*, and when seeking formal employment. This is such a burden that Chantal is not willing to choose the same path for her daughter and grandchild. Because of Dominican documentation policies, Chantal's grandchild bears the effects of the generational transmission of undocumented status. In this way, documentation-related stressors are passed from one generation to the next. Because Chantal is undocumented, her daughter and granddaughter will encounter a marginalized life in their country of birth.

### 3.5.4 Documentation and Social Location

#### 3.5.4.1 The Undocumented Next Generation

Documentation problems for immigrants reverberate for generations when birthright citizenship policies are rescinded. Limited labor market opportunities due to being undocumented ensure that immigrants and their descendants are relegated to the informal economy or have no source of income at all which results in a lifetime of poverty. Further, they are unable to register the births of their children which also puts their grandchildren at risk for being undocumented, thereby creating a cycle of societal and political exclusion for an entire population. In this way, cumulative disadvantage impacts individuals, families, and communities for multiple generations.

The generational transfer of undocumented status is a major problem facing undocumented families of Haitian descent. Undocumented Haitian parents have lawfully or unlawfully registered their children's births. Their adult children have their own documentation status interrogated or suspended. Their grandchildren, then, cannot have their births registered.

Ani is a 24 year old Dominican of Haitian descent. When I ask if she's had problems with documentation, she says that she has not had problems with her own *cedula* but she has had trouble registering her one-year-old son's birth.

**Ani:** Yes, I've had problems. Because I...the problem is...I have my *cedula*, right? Well, I have my son, but I can't declare him because my parents are foreigners.

**Interviewer:** But you have yours.

**Ani:** Yes. Here, that's what's happening. Here, if you have documents and your parents are foreigners, they make it difficult to get documents for your child... We filled out a paper the other day. We'll see what they tell us so I can declare my son. It makes me feel bad. If I told you I felt ok, it would be a lie because this is a problem. I want my child to have his documents.

--Ani, 24yo, Dominico-Haitian

For Ani, it is a major source of stress that she cannot register her child. She takes the steps she can to submit the appropriate paperwork, but throughout her interview Ani expresses feelings of sadness and worry for the future of her child.

Some, like Ani, try what they can to register their children in spite of the confusing bureaucratic process. Others are so discouraged by the process that they do not try at all. Fifa is a 40 year old Haitian immigrant who is undocumented because her papers got lost during Hurricane George in 1998. When the interviewer asks Fifa if she has gone anywhere to try to register her seven children, she replies

No, what I'm trying to tell you is that if you don't have papers you can't declare your child. Once you get to the office, they ask you for your papers. You can't show up with your two pale hands and say "I came to declare my child". If you don't have papers, what are you going to declare them with? You can't declare them.

--Fifa 40 yrs, Haitian

As a result of Fifa's inability to register her children's births, they will grow into adulthood without a birth certificate and therefore be relegated to second-class status in the Dominican Republic.

Another story illustrates how policy changes from president to president can impact documentation statuses within a single family. Simona is a 45 year old undocumented Haitian woman. She has four children – two had their births registered under a Dominican's name and the other two were lawfully registered under a past political initiative. She explains her situation:

Two of my children have their documents and the other two don't. It was easier to register the older two under Balaguer [Dominican president 1986-96]. After him, there was Leonel [President L. Fernandez 1996-2000] and it was much harder to register your kids. Now, the older two are having problems getting their cedula. They need them so they can go to university. One wants to do accounting, but I think he should do architecture. He draws very well.  
--Simona, 45yo, Haitian

Simona faces the challenge of trying to make sure her older children have the documents they need, even though she registered their births lawfully. This challenge is directly related to changes in the Dominican political climate and shifts in immigration policy stipulations. She is undocumented but she used her late husband's work *ficha* to register her children. This practice, however, is no longer valid. As presidencies change and political initiatives come and go, one's citizenship status could be nullified. This has clear, material consequences for the individuals affected by these changes. Simona's children are now faced with the inability to pursue university education and she is also working to resolve the problems created for her younger children who were registered by a Dominican couple who employed her as a domestic worker. Unfortunately, if her

children must register as foreigners, then *their* children may never receive full Dominican citizenship.

Because they are barred from full citizenship, people born to undocumented parents lost their right to political participation. Politics is a major topic of conversation in Batey La Tierra, even though most respondents regard politicians as untrustworthy. Given the mistrust and the dire socioeconomic situation in the community, respondents worry more about labor market opportunities than political participation. In past presidential elections, however, Dominicans of Haitian descent have been a critical constituency (Sagás 2000). The political implications of a Dominican-born population that cannot vote, however, is paramount. Yemenas is a Dominican of Haitian descent who describes documentation and the right to vote.

**Interviewer:** It seems like the politicians don't want to say you are Dominican. Why do you think that is?

**Yemenas:** They don't! I don't know why not. Because when they are running for office, everyone born here who has their cedulas, we go and vote for them. Why do we vote for them? Because we are Dominicans too. Because if our cedula said that we were unable to vote, then we wouldn't. But it says that we can vote, you hear? So we are legal.

--Yemenas, 54 yo, Dominico-Haitian

Here, Yemenas seems exasperated by the fact that Dominicans of Haitian descent are not perceived as truly Dominican, but politicians still want their vote. Further, she connects her legality to her ability to vote. Conversely, then, those who have documents

that do not grant the ability to vote are not fully legal. This logic applies to the tens of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent who are forced to register themselves in the Book of Foreigners. As part of the national attempt to document all undocumented persons, the Dominican government has implemented a Regularization Plan. All undocumented foreigners and Dominican-born persons whose birth was registered in a manner that is no longer accepted must be appointed in the Book of Foreigners. They will be issued a document and offered a nebulous path to citizenship in the coming years. This document cannot be used as an official document to access higher education, the formal labor market, or to vote. Consequently, cumulative disadvantage transfers from one generation to the next resulting in a generation of Dominican-born people of Haitian descent that is politically disenfranchised.

#### **3.5.4.2 Social Location and Mental Health**

Policy can create marginalized social locations, and the awareness of this process negatively impacts mental health. Dominican documentation policy results in the accumulation of stressors from multiple domains. Many respondents mention three or more domains that have been impacted by the new documentation policy. Some say that this multidimensional exclusion is an explicit plan to keep Haitians and Dominicans unequal. Benjamin is a 65 year-old Haitian immigrant who shares his perspective on the

connection between documentation policies and national power dynamics between Dominicans and Haitians.

In nineteen ninety-something, Balaguer collected the migration cedula from all of us who had one, and he gave a *ficha* to everyone who worked (for the sugar mill). In those times, you couldn't declare your children who were born here (in the D.R.), Balaguer said you couldn't have a voice or anything! Because if they gave us a legitimate document, the Haitians would have the same value as the Dominicans. That's why they are nullifying the documents of Haitian immigrants. They gave us a little piece of paper that has absolutely no value. You can only use it to work for the sugar mill, that's it. You can't declare your child, you can't buy anything, you can't start a business, you can't get a loan. Nothing. - --Benjamin, 65yo, Haitian

Benjamin sees the lack of a valid document as the source of unequal status in the Dominican Republic. The *ficha* is only considered a valid document in the sugar mill. They are barred from all other domains including registering children, starting a business, making purchases with credit, or getting a loan. Without valid documentation, Haitians can be a steady source of labor without full participation in other domains of Dominican social life.

Chantal, the undocumented Haitian immigrant having trouble registering her grandchild's birth, was one of few participants to name the current policies as part of a larger cycle of disadvantage for the entire population.

Haitians in the D.R. are like monkeys trapped in a cage. They're given apples and bananas and they think they're free, you understand? Even though they are in a cage, they feel like they're free. They play and jump and they have their bananas, but their spirit is always trapped in the cage. Who else do you see living in these conditions like the Haitian? or their children who live exactly the same way?

They start to go to school until they get to a point where they can't finish because they don't have papers. Then they just stop there or get married, you understand? Then their children have children too. The same thing. They go to school until they get to a point where they are asked for papers. And the papers don't turn up, so they get married. That's what I mean when I say they are like the monkeys.

--Chantal, 54 year old, Haitian

Chantal's perspective illustrates the ways that Dominican politicians give Haitians and their descendants small things to keep them pacified in their marginalized place. For example, Haitians and their descendants are given mediocre replacements as valid documents change. First, immigrant workers' documents were replaced by *fichas*. This was not ideal but they were told that they could use them to document their Dominican-born children. Today, past birth registrations using the *ficha* are nullified but affected individuals can register themselves in the Book of Foreigners with the hope of a path to full citizenship. According to Chantal, none of this is true freedom. So, the current policy exacerbates social inequality as Dominicans of Haitian descent remain like monkeys, trapped in a cage.

Although some respondents push forward and keep trying to access a system that rejects them, others feel hopeless and frustrated by the process of navigating new legislation that leaves them newly undocumented. Jimi is a 23 year-old Dominican of Haitian descent whose citizenship was nullified. He shares the logistical and emotional struggle of trying to get his documents under the new law.

How do I explain this? Sometimes these people...when you get to the office to verify something, they call you and they say, 'look, you need to go to San Pedro or to the capital so they can give you this paper because here, we're not doing that.' And sometimes you don't have the money so you can't go anywhere. And especially if you're not working and you don't have papers to work, you can't make moves to go anywhere. This is why I'm fed up and I don't want to go to the office again...I'm not working. The only work you can get without papers is in construction...if you don't have papers, you're not going to make anything. Without papers, I can't work... I think a lot about work, about my future...  
--Jimi, 23yo, Dominico-Haitian

Here, Jimi emphasizes the cyclical process of exclusion from both legitimate documentation and the labor market. He cannot access the process of getting documented because of structural exclusion from the labor market. Undocumented laborers cannot make enough money to have extra for anything – not even for transportation to get their documents. Jimi's interview is melancholy as we discuss his unemployment. The lack of documentation is a source of hopelessness and frustration for him. As we complete his survey of mental health symptoms, his scores (depression score = 19/20; anxiety score = 13/20) are high on depressive symptoms: sadness, feelings of worthlessness, and feelings of hopelessness for the future. This trend is representative of mental health for undocumented Dominican-born people of Haitian descent whose average depression and anxiety scores were the highest compared to documented Dominicans and both documented and undocumented Haitian immigrants. At the end of my fieldwork, Jimi had not yet found work.

While Jimi's interview shows the mental health impact of being newly undocumented, Denis' story offers a counterfactual portrait of what documentation means for mental health. He is a 20 year old Dominican of Haitian descent who was recently able to get his *cedula* after two years of trying. During our interview, I ask Denis to tell me about a time when he had a good day. His response is about documentation.

Well, the day that I loved, truthfully...the day that was very happy for me... You know that with documentation, someone who has immigrant parents in the country...this was a problem for me. It's the reason why many doors were closed for me. Because maybe if I had been able to get my documents earlier, maybe now I would be working. Or maybe I would be in a university. All of this was a problem for me and became a major process until finally they gave me my documents. The day they gave them to me, really, that was a very happy day for me. That was the most special day for me. Look, when I felt it in my hands, I really felt happy, content, so happy. Because now, a door has opened for me. A greater opportunity in life. Because you know, someone without documents really faces closed doors. You don't have access to, let's say, study, work, get paid, to have a bank account, none of this. But when you have a *cedula*, an identity, it's an opportunity to keep pushing ahead, you understand?

**Interviewer: What kinds of things were different for you after that day?**

Well, now, it's a different reality than before. Before, when people came to the house to do interviews and asked us "Do you have a *cedula*?" I would feel like I was in trouble. Because you know that once you're 18 years old you should have your identification card that says they are of age. And so I was 19, then 20 years old and I still didn't have my *cedula*. And so it was something...every time I went to the city or went outside the house, I always felt troubled, worried. I would ask myself, "Wow! What if immigration grabs me?" But now, after getting my *cedula*, it's like I was saying before: this has marked a before and after in my life. I feel more free. I feel more confident when I walk down the street because now I know that I'm walking with my documents. No matter what, if I'm going to buy something and they ask me for my documents, I simply pass it to them.

--Denis, 20 yo, Dominico-Haitian

Even though he is unemployed and cannot afford to go to university, Denis connects his documents to open doors and possibilities. For him, documentation represents both an identity and an opportunity for upward mobility. Importantly, it represents freedom. He is free to shop, free to go to school, and free to walk down the street without fear of deportation. The door to his cage is open.

### ***3.6 Discussion***

Stress proliferation and compound disadvantage theories have advanced our understanding of mental health inequality. A critical synthesis of these theories can offer more comprehensive explanations for mental health among marginalized populations. Using qualitative data from Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic, I bridge these theories to highlight two major findings. First, documentation policy can act as a primary stressor that yields additional stressors for affected populations. Second, documentation policy can produce the social locations which contribute to compound disadvantage.

Because social position can shape the stressors to which people are exposed, we must consider the impact that policies can have on social position. They create observable cohort changes – persons subjected to policy changes lead different lives than those who came before the change and those who will follow if the policy changes again. In the case of the ethnic Haitians in the D.R., the new law created even more reduced opportunities

for a group already disadvantaged. In theory, however, policies could have the opposite effect – certain policies could expand the opportunities for immigrants and other marginalized groups. If stress proliferation is seen as a ripple effect similar to the way that waves are caused by a pebble thrown into a pond, then immigration policy represents a boulder that can create deep and lasting changes to a cohort affected by changing policies.

To address health inequalities, the structural conditions that put people at risk of stressors should remain an area of focus for researchers. Although documentation policy creates additional stressors for marginalized groups, other structural forces can also proliferate stress. Structural racism, for example, is a macro-level stressor that impacts mental health for individuals (Geronimus 1992, 2006), but it has not yet been examined using stress proliferation theory.

If structural racism is a primary stressor, then what are the subsequent stressors that stem from it to affect depression and anxiety among communities of color? Results from future research on this topic would continue to build knowledge on how policy has the potential to both alleviate and reproduce inequality.

**Table 2. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>N=55</b>		
<b>Sex</b>		
Women	26	47%
Men	29	53%
<b>Age (mean = 40)</b>		
18-24	10	18%
25-54	26	47%
55 +	19	35%
<b>Country of Birth</b>		
Haiti	24	44%
Dominican Republic	31	56%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Haitian	24	44%
Dominican of Haitian descent	21	38%
Dominican	10	18%
<b>Language of Interview</b>		
Spanish	37	67%
Haitian Creole	18	33%
<b>Education Level</b>		
None	9	16%
Some Elementary School	11	20%
Some Middle School	16	29%
Some High School	15	27%
Some College	4	7%

**Table 3. Mean Depression and Anxiety Scores by Documentation Status**

	<b>DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>ANXIETY SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>
<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	7.2	7.3	14.65
<b>DOCUMENTED</b>	5.79	6.18	11.96
<b>UNDOCUMENTED</b>	9.8	9.35	19.15

**Table 4. Mean Depression and Anxiety Score by Documentation Status and Nativity**

	<b>DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>ANXIETY SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>
<b>Documented Dominican-born</b> n=17	4.59	4.94	9.53
<b>Documented Haiti-born</b> n=4	9.5	5.75	15.25
<b>Undocumented Haiti-born</b> n=18	9.06	8.81	18.5
<b>Undocumented Dominican-born</b> n=4	12.5	11.25	23.75

## **4. Chapter 3. Living in *Un País Ajeno*: Structural Racism and Context of Reception in the Dominican Republic**

### **4.1 Overview**

Assimilation theory offers an important lens through which to understand immigrant incorporation. A critical synthesis of racialized social systems theory and assimilation theory, however, can offer more comprehensive explanations for immigrant incorporation. The historical and contemporary connection between immigration policy and race provides evidence that immigration scholars must account for the *racial* context of reception when theorizing inequality among immigrants' incorporation trajectories. Drawing on ten months of ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic (D.R.) including 65 in-depth interviews, this article examines the discriminatory enforcement of documentation policy to understand how structural racism impacts Haitian immigrants. In this paper, I show that although an anti-immigrant context contributes to Haitians' marginalization in the D.R., immigration officials use race and racialized characteristics to screen for Haitian ancestry. This provides evidence of the continued convergence of immigration policy and structural racism against Haitian immigrants and their descendants.

### **4.2 Introduction**

Immigrants have a difficult transition as they create new lives in an unfamiliar country. Acculturation factors such as language acquisition, navigation of new cultural

norms, and separation from family members make life challenging for immigrants across the globe (Finch & Vega 2003; Im et al 2013; Abraído-Lanza et al 2016). In addition to these challenges, immigrants may also confront anti-immigrant sentiment. Depending on the receiving country and the circumstances of their entry, some immigrant groups are met with contempt and resentment. Evidence suggests that the reasons for anti-immigrant sentiment include perceived size of the immigrant group, historical relationships between nations, and unstable economic conditions (Hooghe & De Vroome 2015; Pichler 2010; Semyonov et al 2006). The convergence of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment is much less understood.

Race is an integral part of the lived experience of all social groups. Racial categories are defined by social experiences and interactions with people and institutions solidify racial identities (Omi & Winant 2014; Sellers et al 2006; Telles 2014; Wade 1997). Although there is no biological basis for racial classification, people are often sorted into racial groups based on their physical appearance including skin color, facial features, and hair texture. As these categories become publicly disputed in the competition for different forms of power, race not only distinguishes between racial groups but it also promotes a hierarchy. These racial hierarchies are maintained by systems that privilege whiteness over other racial groups in the distribution of power,

prestige, and resources (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Viruell-Fuentes et al 2012; Baez 2000; Sears et al 2000).

Scholars have long argued that racism operates at multiple levels, ranging from the individual to the structural (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; Jones 2000; Bonilla-Silva 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2003). Structural racism refers to the ideologies, practices, processes, and institutions that operate at the macro level to produce and reproduce differential access to power and to life opportunities along racial and ethnic lines (Gee and Ford 2011; Geronimus and Thompson 2004; Darity et al 2001). Structural racism is more dangerous, more difficult to recognize, and harder to eliminate than individual racism. But how does race shape the context of reception for immigrants? Non-white immigrants may face social exclusion because of their immigrant status and also because of their race.

By integrating race theory with theories on immigrant incorporation, this study provides evidence that although context of reception includes anti-immigrant sentiment, structural racism also contributes to the ways that immigrant groups are incorporated into a given society. The primary research question for this study is: how does structural racism shape Haitian immigrants' experiences in the Dominican Republic? By focusing on documentation policy, I highlight the interpersonal experiences that reflect structural marginalization at the convergence of race and immigrant status. Results

highlight three main processes that maintain a racialized context of reception for Haitian immigrants in the D.R. First, the narrative of a universal immigrant experience allows individuals to overlook the importance of race and normalize anti-Haitian racism. Second, immigration officials routinely use skin color to racially profile individuals in search of undocumented Haitian immigrants. This affects dark skinned populations including Haitians, Dominicans, and West Indians living in the Dominican Republic. Lastly, documentation and deportation officials engage in discriminatory practices using racialized characteristics including speech, last name, and social networks to exclude ethnic Haitians from Dominican citizenship. Results provide examples of how structural racism impacts the lives of Haitian immigrants in the D.R., thereby contributing to our understanding of how the racial context of reception matters for immigrant incorporation.

Most empirical studies designed to build on our understanding of structural racism and immigration policy have been conducted using data from the U.S. Because of differences in the structure of national policies and historical patterns of immigration, it is unclear whether existing results are relevant to the experiences of minority populations in developing countries. Building on previous research, I show how Dominican immigration policy reproduces structural racism against ethnic Haitians;

thereby contributing to the way we understand immigrant incorporation among racialized immigrant groups.

### **4.3 Previous Research**

#### **4.3.1 Assimilation Theory and the Context of Reception**

A dominant theoretical framework for explaining inequality among immigrant groups is segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993; Alba 1999; Alba and Nee 1997). According to this theory, immigrant groups take one of three pathways to incorporation: "one of them replicates the time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight into the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Portes and Zhou 1993: 82).

Contemporary assimilation theorists acknowledge a disaggregated approach that considers multiple reference populations, and envisions distinct processes occurring in different domains (Brubaker 2001; Waters 1994; Favell 2001; Waters & Jiménez 2005). This results in a conceptual shift from asking "how much assimilation?" toward asking about assimilation "in what respect, over what period of time, and to what reference population?" (Brubaker 2001). Although some immigration scholars highlight the

importance of ethnicity – including language, cultural practices, and communal solidarity– when answering these questions (Zhou 1997; Conzen 1996; Martinez et al 2004), a critical synthesis of racialized social systems theory and assimilation theory can offer more comprehensive explanations for immigrant incorporation.

Importantly, the context of reception facing immigrants upon arrival plays a vital role in their incorporation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). Much of the research in this vein operationalizes context of reception by measuring anti-immigrant sentiment (Hooghe & De Vroome 2015; Pichler 2010; Semyonov et al 2006). Scholars typically account for economic, social, and political contexts of reception in relation to anti-immigrant sentiment (Massey & Sánchez 2010), few examine the *racial* context as a definitive attribute of the context of reception (Ignatiev 1995; Bovenkerk & Verbunt 1990). The tendency to view context of reception solely in terms of immigrant status ignores racist policies and historical discrimination against immigrants racialized into lower status categories. In the Dominican Republic, for example, ethnic Haitians have faced discriminatory policies such as the revocation of birthright citizenship and have also been targeted by governmental deportation initiatives (Blake 2014; Hannam 2014; Matibag & Downing-Matibag 2011). Their experience offers an example of the intersection of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment; importantly, this intersection

contributes to their context of reception in the D.R. Therefore, the particular marginalization that racialized immigrants face merits further exploration.

Increasingly, scholars are bridging the gap between structural racism and the study of immigration (Viruell-Fuentes et al 2012; Bashi 2004; Brown 2013b). One of the many facets of immigrant incorporation, is their place in the racial order of the receiving country (Duany 1998; Itzigsohn 2005). Racialization is the processes of ascribing a racial identity and its resulting hierarchical position of power to a given characteristic (Barot and Bird 2001). The concept of racialized incorporation posits that regardless of the ethnic and cultural differences across immigrant groups, racial identification is the primary principle of social organization (Maldonado 2009; Chaudhary 2015). Historical context and theoretical research at the nexus of race and immigrant status provide the tools necessary to examine how immigration policies both shape and reflect the racial context of reception for immigrants (Brown 2013a; Wucker 1999).

Most of this research, however, is U.S.-based and depends on a U.S. racial context. Racialized incorporation in the D.R., for example, may take a different form because of its Latin American racial social system. Dominican racial identity is quite complex, and the word “race” – or *raza* – can have multiple meanings (García-Peña 2015). When most Dominicans interpret race, it is in reference to a fusion of both skin color and national identities (Roth 2012; Wheeler 2015; Golash-Boza 2010). Because of

this fusion and the high proportion of Dominicans who identify as mixed race (Candelario 2007; Mayes 2014), conceptual interpretations of racial context in the D.R. must explicitly incorporate people of Haitian descent. Based on their skin color, ethnicity, African heritage, and conflicting colonial histories, people of Haitian descent face a particular stigmatization that manifests as an ideology called “*antihaitianismo*”, or anti-Haitianism (Sagás 2000). Therefore, racial context in the D.R. includes both phenotypical distinctions *and* markers of national origin.

Racial context also includes ideological beliefs about race and racism. In contrast to racial formation in the U.S. (Middleton 2008), race in Latin America is typified by greater degrees of miscegenation and the declaration that *mestizaje*, or racial mixing, creates a racial democracy (Seigel 2009; Hoetink 1985; Howard 2001). In a racial democracy, racism does not exist. Contemporary scholars of race in Latin America, however, provide evidence that rejects the concept of a racial democracy (de la Fuente 2001; Sawyer 2005; Sheriff 2001; Twine 1998). Their work shows that racial hierarchies and discriminatory practices are, indeed, maintained even within a system that denies the presence of racism. These belief systems, however, still persist in popular narratives about race and make it difficult to identify structural racism and its implications for Haitian immigrants.

### **4.3.2 Immigration Policy as a Reflection of Racial Context**

Structural racism in contemporary Dominican documentation policy impacts Haitian immigrants' incorporation by impeding access to citizenship. Nations define certain immigrant groups as inassimilable "others" (Brubaker et al 2006; Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008) and determine who qualifies for citizenship along racial lines (Collins 1998; Gualtieri 2009; Ignatiev 1995). As several scholars have noted, "othering" processes produce and reproduce "marginalization, disempowerment, and social exclusion" (Grove & Zwi, 2006: 1933; Schwalbe et al 2000). In the U.S., for example, many Asian-American and Latino ethnic groups are racialized as "perpetual foreigners" (Kim et al 2011; Devos & Banaji 2005). In other words, they are not seen as true Americans no matter how many generations their families have lived in the country. A similar phenomenon unfolds for ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Some immigrant groups have arguably been accepted as Dominicans maintaining their identities but being included as part of mainstream Dominican society, including Chinese, Jewish, Lebanese, and Japanese immigrants (Chen 2008; Metz 1990; Peguero 2008). Haitians, however, are the racialized other and they encounter stigma and discrimination based on their ethnicity (Keys et al 2015; Keys 2016).

Racialized immigrant groups' incorporation patterns are not only affected by anti-immigrant sentiment, but also by encounters with a new racial hierarchy and its

accompanying power structure. For example, research on Latinos' racial identification upon migration to the U.S. shows that racial identity formation is based on interactions with the receiving country's racial order (Duany 1998; Itzigsohn 2005). A structural approach to racialized incorporation, however, would provide evidence of the ways immigration policies can systematically incorporate racist practices. Exclusionary immigration policies target racialized immigrant groups (Wilson 2000). Such policies provide the most permanent and broad-scale type of segregation by prohibiting groups from entering the country, deporting those already there, and limiting the rights of those deemed to be threats (Gee and Ford 2011; Bashi 2004; Brown 2013a). In the past, immigration policies have defined racial groups and reinforced the social hierarchy both implicitly or explicitly. In the process, these policies have excluded immigrant groups deemed to be undesirable (López 2006; Sánchez 1997; Hing 2012).

As in many other countries, race and immigration policy in the D.R. have always been integrated. Rafael Trujillo, a dictator who ruled from 1930-1960, used immigration policy to whiten the country's population. Because Haitians were blamed for the "browning" of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo looked toward Europe to enact a targeted immigration policy that would effectively promote *blanqueamiento* (whitening) in the country (Hernández 2013; Derby 2009). He issued a "call for immigrants" in newspapers and government memos as part of a larger campaign to whiten the country.

Trujillo's regime imposed a tax on black and Asian immigrants and offered land to white immigrants, thereby reinforcing his racialized vision of desirable and undesirable immigrants (Peguero 2004).

Today, race and Dominican immigration policy still intersect to reflect a racial context that marginalizes Haitians. Birthright citizenship in the country has been reinterpreted to systematically exclude people of Haitian descent. The Dominican Constitution grants citizenship to all those born on Dominican soil, except those born "in transit" (Matibag and Downing-Matibag 2011). Previously, this definition was applied to migrant workers and children of diplomats. In 2013, however, "in transit" was redefined to include persons born to undocumented parents. In the past, migrant Haitian workers could declare their Dominican-born children citizens using a card based on their work status, a *ficha* (Riveros 2014). Recently, however, Dominican documentation offices are contesting the birth certificates of people declared using a *ficha*. The change disproportionately affects ethnic Haitians born in the D.R. (Riveros 2014). This exclusionary policy effectively renders ethnic Haitians born to undocumented parents stateless. It remains to be seen how this particular racial context of reception is reflected in interactions between ethnic Haitians and immigration and documentation officials.

Because of their position as a racialized immigrant group, I examine how Dominican immigration policy reproduces structural racism against ethnic Haitians to

understand how the racial context of reception shapes immigrant incorporation. Data show that many Haitians and Dominicans describe the difficulty of the immigrant experience as universal and independent of race. Data also show how immigration officials and documentation offices use racial profiling and racialized characteristics to screen for Haitian ancestry. The coexistence of these results offers evidence that structural racism against Haitians is both obscured and maintained by narratives that exclude the racial context of reception.

#### **4.4 Methods**

This research examines how structural racism is incorporated into the implementation and enforcement of Dominican immigration policy to affect ethnic Haitians living in a *batey*. A *batey* is a settlement around a sugar mill and is typically characterized by extreme poverty (Simmons 2010). Although Haitian immigrants and their descendants represent various socioeconomic levels (Jayaram 2010; Riveros 2015), poor Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent are most often targeted by discriminatory documentation policies.

Batey La Tierra<sup>1</sup> is located in the eastern region of the country near a larger city, La Romana. The batey is small and has a relatively high level of socioeconomic

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the batey has been replaced with a pseudonym. The same is true for names of individual respondents.

development in comparison to other bateys in the country. For example, although the vast majority of houses lack running water and many struggle to feed their families, La Tierra does have access to potable water (a community water pump), sporadic electricity, and transportation due to its geographic location along the highway between two larger municipalities. Many respondents report moving to La Tierra from other bateys where daily life was more difficult.

Data for this project are ethnographic. Fieldwork was completed over 10 consecutive months between August 2014 and May 2015. Data collection methods include participant observation, in-depth interviews with batey residents and key informants, a skin color scale, and a community census. Because of its ability to give context to analyses of structural racism, I recorded interviewer-rated skin color and open ended responses to participants' self-identified skin color. Following Telles (2014), interviewer-rated skin color was measured using a scale of 1 (lightest) to 5 (darkest). For analyses, I collapsed the highest and lowest ends of the spectrum to create three categories: light, medium, and dark. To increase the validity of this measurement, my research assistant and I independently rated 15 *batey* residents and compared our coding to test for interrater reliability (Sidanius et al 2001). Qualitative responses for

participants' self-identified skin color included (from lightest to darkest): *blanco, indiecito, indio, moreno, negro claro, and negro*<sup>2</sup>.

According to census data collected for this project, Batey La Tierra has about 415 residents and 75 houses. The population in the batey is about one-third Haitian born and two-thirds Dominican born. There is a fairly even distribution of men and women in the batey – 54% of adults are men and 46% are women. Batey La Tierra also has an elementary school, five churches, a basketball court, and a baseball field. Because of these resources, La Tierra is fairly porous as children and adults come from surrounding bateys to La Tierra to socialize, attend school, or participate in religious events. This daily movement in and out of La Tierra makes respondents cognizant of geographic restrictions and freedoms associated with valid documentation.

#### **4.4.1 Sample and Procedures**

The researcher completed 15 semi-structured interviews with key informants: 4 academic researchers, 4 representatives of NGOs that work with Haitian immigrants in the DR, 6 service providers who work in a clinic that serves *bateys* in the region and 1 director who manages the public school in the *batey*. Key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who are familiar with the population of

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<sup>2</sup> English translation: *white, light Indian, Indian, brown, light black, and black*

interest. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from a wide range of people—including community leaders, professionals, or residents—who have first-hand knowledge about the community. Key informants were recruited using referrals from the U.S. Embassy, La Clinica de La Familia (The Family Clinic) in a larger, nearby city, and other qualified experts. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. After completing interviews with key informants, in-depth interviews with batey residents were completed.

For in-depth interviews, participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method with particular attention to balance based on immigrant status. Following Johnson (1990), informants were chosen using two strategies which are not mutually exclusive: an a priori, theory-driven framework and an emergent, or data-driven, framework. This produced a sample that allows for a comparison on the basis of immigrant status.

This research was conducted in the classic tradition of participant observation, which allows ethnographers to comprehend the context and social forces shaping the experiences and interpretations of individuals. I attended community functions, religious services, and group meetings in addition to spending time with individuals and families in their homes to build relationships and establish rapport over time. This

provided an important and necessary check against self-reports derived from in-depth interviews.

Sixty-five people engaged in in-depth conversations about life in the batey and in the Dominican Republic. Participants were given the option to complete the interview and survey in either Spanish or Haitian Creole. A trained research assistant completed interviews in Haitian Creole for participants who requested it. Eighteen participants completed interviews in Haitian Creole.

#### **4.4.2 Data Analysis**

Qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed in Spanish. Interviews conducted in Haitian Creole were transcribed and translated from Haitian Creole to Spanish with the assistance of a bilingual research assistant who identified as a Dominican of Haitian descent. A grounded theory approach was used to analyze qualitative data, which allows key themes to emerge from respondents. Ethnographic field notes and interview transcripts were entered into NVivo10 software to facilitate analysis.

Following Burton's (2009) process of "structured discovery," data analysis proceeded along several stages. Analysis began with transcripts on the within-case level. Beginning intra-case allows the analyst to develop a comprehensive understanding of the individuals' experiences. Once the within-case analysis was

complete, analysis proceeded to a within-group examination by immigrant status. Similarities between the within-case analysis and the between-case analysis provide greater evidence for the findings from the within-case examination. The final phase of the analysis involved cross-group analysis examining similarities and differences between Dominicans<sup>3</sup>, Haitian immigrants, and Dominicans of Haitian descent.

To categorize data, an “open coding” schema was developed focusing on the key analytic variables of structural racism and immigration policy to incorporate themes that respondents indicate are important but cannot be derived from extant research (Charmaz 2006). The second phase of coding involved axial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1997), which allows the researcher to discern the key relationships between variables. The final phase involves selective coding, during which the main “storyline” (Charmaz 2006) of the analysis is decided upon.

The reliability and validity of the data collected for this study were established through following best practice criteria established as appropriate for ethnographic data. Recorded interviews were checked against interview protocols to ensure continuity between subjects and interview techniques. Validity was also strengthened by the use of

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<sup>3</sup> Amidst the recent legal changes concerning who is conferred Dominican nationality, there is considerable debate about who is “Dominican.” For this paper, I use the term “Dominican of Haitian descent” to refer to persons who have at least one parent or grandparent born in Haiti. I use the term “Dominican” to refer to persons whose parents and grandparents were born in the D.R.

multiple methods and the ethnographer's long-term engagement at the research site. Member checking, or the process of testing interpretations and conclusions with participants, was also used to establish validity; and triangulation allowed me to ensure that accounts are rich, robust, and comprehensive (Creswell and Miller 2000). The long-term engagement of ethnographic researchers allows for a continual reflexive process during which theories are tested against emergent data and revised. Further, this engagement allows researchers to check their assumptions against those of respondents to ensure a comprehensive and shared understanding of the social world under study.

## **4.5 Results**

### **4.5.1 Sample Demographics**

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the sample. Twenty-nine respondents are men and 26 are women. The average age is 40, however, this varies by immigrant status. The average age of Haitian immigrants in the sample is 59 years and the average age of Dominicans of Haitian descent is 32 years. Twenty-four respondents are Haitian, 21 are Dominicans of Haitian descent, and 10 are Dominican. The majority of respondents (65%) have less than a high school education. Sixteen percent of respondents have no formal education. This also varies by immigrant status. Of the twenty respondents whose education level is elementary school or lower, 17 (85%) are

Haitian-born. Therefore, the sample represents low-SES people of Haitian descent who would be the primary targets of discriminatory immigration enforcement.

Table 2 presents data on respondents' interviewer-rated skin color and self-reported skin color. Most respondents have dark skin (61%) and about half self-identify as black (51%). This pattern varies by nationality. For example, ninety-one percent of Haitians identified as *negro* (black) and most of the respondents who self-identified as *blanco* (white) were Dominican (45%). Dominicans also had the most respondents externally categorized as light (64%). Dominicans of Haitian descent are persons born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents or grandparents. Most Dominicans of Haitian descent were externally categorized as dark skinned (78%), but the most common self-identified skin color among them was *moreno*, or brown-skinned (43%). Only 35% of Dominicans of Haitian descent self-identified as *negro* (black). The skin colors represented in the sample reflect a group likely to be impacted by anti-Haitian enforcement efforts that use phenotype to identify people of Haitian descent.

The racial context of reception in the D.R. shapes the experiences of Haitian immigrants and their descendants in several ways. First, both Haitians and Dominicans normalize Haitian immigrants' marginalization by viewing the challenges of the immigrant experience as universal. This perspective reflects a context of reception based solely on immigrant status which masks the importance of race in determining

immigrant incorporation. Second, immigration enforcement officials use skin color to identify undocumented Haitian immigrants resulting in the racial profiling of multiple groups including dark skinned Haitians, Dominicans, and West Indians living in the Dominican Republic. Lastly, gatekeepers in documentation offices use non-phenotypical racialized identifiers such as last name, accent, and social networks to exclude people of Haitian descent from access to legitimate documentation. These practices underscore the importance of including the racial context of reception in analyses of immigrant incorporation.

#### **4.5.1.1 Living in Un País Ajeno: The Universal Immigrant Experience**

Many respondents, both Haitians and Dominicans, describe the challenges that Haitians face as part of the universal immigrant experience. In interviews, this emerged among respondents as the universally uncomfortable experience of not living in your own country. About a third of the Haitian immigrants in the sample used the phrase *país ajeno*, translated as “someone else’s country,” to describe their immigrant experience in the Dominican Republic. Typically, the phrase was used surrounding topics such as difficulty getting documentation, financial insecurity, and the obligation to follow the rules of the country in which you live, even if the rules differ from those in your home country. Some respondents used the metaphor of being a visitor in someone else’s

home: you eat when they eat, you respect the rules in their house, and you do not have a right to do whatever you want.

Solon is a 67-year-old Haitian man who says you cannot live in peace when you are living in someone else's country. When he tells me that he is having difficulty obtaining the documents that would grant him permanent residency in the D.R., I ask him how it makes him feel. Solon explains,

I just stay calm. I'm not upset. I don't say anything. The only problem I have is that if I can't get the papers I need, at least I have my country. If I cannot stay in this country, I'll get up, take my suitcase, put on my clothes and go back to my country. Because I know where I came from. That's the only thing I think about. If it were not for my wife who was born on this land...I mean, I'm here with her. **When you live in a país ajeno, you are living with other people. It's something that causes anguish. Because you are living in a way that does not allow you to really be comfortable in the way that you might want to because you are living with other people.** I mean, this house is not mine, it belongs to the company (the sugar mill). I am here because I work for the company. That's why I'm in this house.

--Solon, age 67, Haitian immigrant

Solon is both literally and figuratively living in someone else's house. Therefore, in two different domains, he cannot truly be comfortable. Solon lives in a house owned by the sugar mill. People who live in company housing cannot grow a garden on company land. Gardens provide a source of supplemental income as people sell products from small crops like corn and beans grown on personal land. Nor can batey residents in La Tierra raise animals which provide a means of wealth through property ownership. Pigs and goats represent an asset to trade or sell in times of economic

difficulty. They cannot invite family members in financial hardship to live in the house with them without the explicit permission of the company. All of these constraints remind La Tierra residents that their space is not their own. Figuratively, living in someone else's country is like living in someone else's house: you must abide by their rules and behave like a guest. For Solon, the anguish is part of the set of circumstances immigrants must deal with because they are guests in someone else's country. The narrative of a universal immigrant experience obscures immigrants' varied incorporation into the receiving country's racial order. Racial and national background impact the way that host country nationals will receive an immigrant group. By normalizing the challenges of the immigrant experience as universal, targeted racism against Haitians is obscured.

Not only does the universalization of the immigrant experience obscure anti-Haitian practices within immigration policy, but it also allows individuals to make inaccurate distinctions between structural racism and the difficulties of being an immigrant. For example, Ameson is a 64-year-old Haitian man who explains that feeling social isolation is part of the immigrant experience. During his interview, he responds to general question about how he is feeling that day.

Right now, well...I'm feeling kind of, umm...a little unstable. **Because when you are living in another country, that country is not your country. It's not they mistreat you in the country, but you know you are Haitian and that the country is not your own.** When you are living in país ajeno, there are some words that

people say and you are listening. It's like they are saying you are a problem, but you cannot figure out how to...if you could leave and go live in your own country...but things are difficult, you see? You have to stay in the país ajeno. But there are things people say that bother you.

--Ameson, age 64, Haitian immigrant

Ameson's perspective reinforces the universality of the lived experience as an outsider in a country that is not your own. Further, he makes a clear distinction between his challenging experience as a foreigner and potential interpretations of mistreatment. In fact, this interview was completed by a research assistant, and Ameson made a point to find me and reiterate that he did not feel mistreated in the Dominican Republic. This narrative describes a context of reception that is the same for all immigrants independent of racial identity, thereby obscuring the importance of anti-Haitian discrimination.

Mireya, a 61-year-old Haitian woman, also normalizes interactions with immigration officials as part of the universal immigrant experience. During her interview, I ask her to compare her life in Haiti to her life in the Dominican Republic.

She responds,

**When you live in your own country, you live more comfortably because when you are in a país ajeno, they are always asking you for papers.** There are times when you are having problems with your papers, but sometimes you want to walk around and you can't because you don't have papers. But in your own country, it wouldn't be like that. They will grab you and send you to Haiti like animals because of problems with your papers. If you just want to go to La Romana (a nearby city) because, maybe your family is there or you want to buy a little rice for your children, they will grab you and send you to Haiti! One time, I

went shopping and they grabbed me. It was God that made them let me go!  
After that, I got my passport and when I go out, I take my passport.  
--Mireya, age 61, Haitian immigrant

Mireya's experience shows that some respondents view interrogation about documentation as part of the immigrant experience. When living outside your country, one must be vigilant and carry documentation at all times in anticipation of harassment by immigration officials. Although the Haitian respondents who subscribe to the universality of a difficult immigrant experience discuss harassment about documents, they do not attribute the harassment to their Haitian identity, rather they attribute it to their immigrant identity.

All of the previous respondents were Haitian immigrants who describe a universal immigrant experience characterized by discomfort, social exclusion, and harassment about documentation. Many Dominican respondents in the sample also describe the universality of the immigrant experience, and some use it as evidence that racism does not exist in the Dominican Republic. Yesenia, for example, explains that Haitians in the D.R. are treated the same as Dominicans in Puerto Rico or in the U.S.

**Yesenia:** Look, I'm going to be honest with you...the issue is that there are people who come as foreigners and they deal with disrespect. **I mean, if you are in a different country, you are going to be uncomfortable.** People are going to call you 'Dominicano del diablo' (Dominican from hell). They are going to say 'look at this loser!' Here in this country, we do not mistreat them [Haitians]. **The problem is that if they come here, they can't think that they are going to have the same life that we [Dominicans] have here. But they are not mistreated.** If they were mistreated, then they wouldn't get the best positions and jobs. If you

go to a store, the first cashier you see is a Haitian. Then you look and you realize that the manager is Haitian too! So where is the mistreatment? They are not barred from entering stores or banks...here, they are not blocked from anything. I don't believe there is any racism here.

**Interviewer:** Some people say they are called a maldito Haitiano [damned Haitian]. What do you think about that phrase?

**Yesenia:** It's the same as the phrase Dominicans hear when they go to Puerto Rico or New York. They hear 'fucking Dominican!' (said in English). **That's just how it is.** So I don't believe there is racism here. If there were racism, then we would have race wars with machetes and guns. Look at the U.S.! They always have wars. That's racism because they hate each other to death. But here, that stuff doesn't happen, so there is no racism.

--Yesenia, age 34, Dominican

For Yesenia, all immigrant groups face anti-immigrant sentiment. Her example of Dominicans' subordinate status upon migration to Puerto Rico and the U.S. is validated by previous research on transnational migration in the Caribbean (Duany 2006; Benson 2006). The exclusion, however, is partially based on their placement in the racial order of the receiving country. Dominicans are ascribed a new racial identity upon migration to the U.S. that can be accompanied by inferior social status and discrimination (Itzigsohn et al 2005; Frank et al 2010). What Yesenia sees as universal is actually driven by a racialized social context. The immigrant experience converges with structural racism to create a hierarchical immigrant incorporation where race is the dominant framework. Yesenia also builds a case that racism does not exist in the D.R.; rather, the real racism is in the U.S. The distinction between racial oppression in the U.S.

and in the D.R. obscures the reality that structural racism marginalizes Haitians and people of Haitian descent. Although a universal immigrant experience masks the racial context of incorporation, many respondents' narratives provide evidence of structural racism in the enforcement of Dominican documentation policy.

#### 4.5.1.2 Racial Profiling

Contrary to accounts of a universal immigrant experience, immigration officials target Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. During a focus group, I asked participants about their stressors and they shifted the conversation toward documentation and immigration policies. They were especially concerned about deportation efforts. One participant said "*they are rounding up morenos!*" The use of *moreno*, a skin color descriptor, indicates that deportation efforts are not applied to all immigrants equally. When I ask about differential treatment among immigrants, Jeremias, a Dominican of Haitian descent, replied

**The rules are for everyone, but more for the Haitians.** They don't bother other immigrants. The French are here. The Italians are here. The Chinese are taking the country for themselves. But Haitians are the ones getting attacked. -- Jeremias, age 34, Dominican of Haitian descent

I follow up with Jeremias in a one-on-one in-depth interview and probe for clarification on the topic of racial discrimination and immigration policy. When I ask for his perspective on documentation laws in the D.R., he explains,

**The problem with documentation here is that they attack Haitians more. Because here, there are people from many nations. There are many immigrants here from all over the world! However, the Dominicans are always harassing the Haitians....** The majority of my friends here have documentation problems. Not the majority, all of them! Antonio has a problem, his wife has a problem...I mean, the majority here have some problem with documentation. I was saved because my mother is Dominican. If my mother were Haitian, I would have problems too!  
--Jeremias, age 34, Dominican of Haitian descent

The targeted surveillance and harassment of Haitian immigrants and their descendants is characteristic of contemporary immigration policy in the Dominican Republic. At 80% of the total immigrant population, Haitians are the largest immigrant group in the country (UNDESA 2015), but they are not the only group with undocumented members (OBMICA 2016). Because of their status as a racialized immigrant group, Haitians and their descendants are often the target of immigration policing efforts as they are often framed as a burden on the country's already limited resources. For example, while we were discussing the poor conditions in Dominican hospitals, a Dominican woman told me that Haitians are a drain on the facilities because they "*breed like animals*." In a brief conversation with a Dominican taxi driver about immigration, I asked him about other immigrant groups in the D.R. He responded, "*They're fine. It's the Haitians! That little river separating our countries is nothing. They just walk across and they're here. There are just too many!*" Because Dominican immigration policies exist primarily to control the Haitian immigrant population, gatekeepers must

use screening tools to identify Haitian immigrants. Skin color is one such tool, but because of the racial context in the D.R, racial profiling affects many groups with dark skinned members including Haitians, Dominicans, and West Indians living in the Dominican Republic.

Usmel, a 51-year-old man with dark skin, was born in Haiti and immigrated to the Dominican Republic with his mother as an infant. During a discussion about Dominican-Haitian relations, Usmel says:

**They want to kick out all of los prietos!** Soon there will be even more Haitians [here in the Dominican Republic] because Haitians and Dominicans intermarry more than other groups...look at my granddaughter (he points to a 5-year-old nearby), she will probably marry a Dominican. So there will be more Haitians here in the future.

--Usmel, age 51, Dominican<sup>4</sup>

The word *prieto* is often used to describe people with the darkest skin color.

Usmel's commentary on Haitians in the Dominican Republic indicates that the *prietos* he references are Haitian. The use of dark skin color to identify Haitians is evidence that immigration officials use racial profiling to drive deportation efforts. Because dark skin makes people a target for immigration officials, immigrants with lighter skin may not share the "universal" immigrant experience of being harassed about documentation. Consequently, all immigrants are not equally affected by Dominican immigration policy.

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<sup>4</sup> Although Usmel was born in Haiti, he identifies as Dominican because he has spent all of his life in the D.R.

The racial context in the Dominican Republic includes many people from various national backgrounds with dark skin. During an informal conversation under a palm tree one morning, Yefri – a dark skinned Haitian immigrant – describes how racism is incorporated into documentation enforcement.

Discrimination here is not about color. It's about being Haitian or of Haitian descent. **The immigration authorities round up people to send them to Haiti but because they don't know better, they round up dark-skinned British people and send them to Haiti when they don't speak a word of Kreyol!** But there are people with lighter skin who are Haitian and they are passed by as though they were Dominicans."

--Yefri, age 20, Haitian immigrant

The group of dark-skinned British people that Yefri references are locally referred to as *cocolos* (del Castillo 1987; Martinez 1999). Historically, *cocolos* from the West Indies were the first group to migrate to the D.R. to cut sugar cane (Martinez 1999). For Yefri, because of the connection between skin color and Haitian ancestry, dark-skinned immigrants of various nationalities are vulnerable to deportation. This shows the importance of skin color in determining which immigrants are deported and which are not, thereby underscoring the reality of a racialized immigrant experience.

Dark skinned Dominicans' experiences further elucidate the ways that racial profiling is integral to immigration policy enforcement. During an interview with Francisco, a dark skinned Dominican of Haitian descent with valid documentation, we discuss the connection between racism and anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic.

**Francisco:** I'm very worried. Because for someone who is from here but doesn't have documents from here that say they're Dominican...I mean, tomorrow these people could come and send them someplace and they don't even know where they're going, don't know where they are! We are really worried about this. Imagine!

**Interviewer:** And the group in power, why do you think they are doing these things?

**Francisco:** Well, I don't know. Because what they're doing is letting others know that they're racists. What they want to be is racist. We don't know why. Only they know why they want to be racists.

**Interviewer:** Racist against blacks or against Haitians?

**Francisco:** Against blacks. Because, let me tell you something. **Here, it's because of color. If they start to round up the Haitians, but you're Dominican and prieto (very dark skinned), right away they'll say "You! Your documents!? Get in the truck!" Here, when you get to a place, because of your color, you are Haitian.** But no sir! You have to take out your documents and say "Look! I'm Dominican." And if you don't walk around with documents, you're Haitian no matter what you say to them, no matter how nice you talk with them, you are Haitian.

--Francisco, age 56, Dominican of Haitian descent

It is not uncommon for people born in the Dominican Republic to be without documentation<sup>5</sup>. A poor, dark-skinned Dominican could be targeted by immigration officials who assume he "looks Haitian." If he were unable to provide evidence of Dominican citizenship, he could face deportation to Haiti. Not only does this provide

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<sup>5</sup> In some communities across the D.R., especially in rural areas, births often go unregistered. People may give birth at home rather than at the hospital because of geographic isolation; and they may not get a child's birth certificate because of the costs associated with travel to and from documentation offices.

evidence of racism in immigration policy (López 1996, Ngai 2014, De Genova 2002), but it also shows that racial profiling is one of the key mechanisms by which anti-Haitian immigration policies are enforced.

#### **4.5.1.3 Language, Name, and Networks: When Skin Color is Not Enough**

Because of the racial context in the D.R., racial profiling is an unreliable means of identifying undocumented Haitian immigrants. Gatekeepers, therefore, incorporate non-phenotypical characteristics to exclude Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. Although the law revoking birthright citizenship applies to all persons born to undocumented parents, the interactions between individuals and officials reveal that Haitian immigrants are the true target for discriminatory practices. Gatekeepers in documentation offices and immigration officials have a wide margin to enforce policies and very little transparency. As a result, factors such as last name, accent, and limited social network become screening tools for exclusion.

Cristobal is a dark skinned Dominican of Haitian descent who explains that people with Haitian-sounding last names are having trouble getting their documents.

**Sometimes because of your last name, there can be problems. Because the last names from here and there [Haiti] are different.** For example, my last name is Sensiel on my father's side and that's not very common here. On my mother's side, I'm Guzman, but that last name is very common here [in the D.R.] ...I know people who have had to suspend their studies because of papers...**My brother's wife has not been able to finish high school because of her last name...**

--Cristobal, age 36, Dominican of Haitian descent

Cristobal identifies having a Haitian last name as the reason for being identified as a foreigner. The last names that are typically singled out are “Haitian-sounding” – names with French rather than Spanish derivatives. Last names are often used as a screening tool to “catch” undocumented Haitians. Therefore, evidence of Haitian ancestry in one’s last name is used to interrogate the citizenship of Dominicans born to Haitian parents.

Speech and accent are also racialized tools that immigration officials use to screen people for Haitian ancestry. Calichi is an undocumented Haitian immigrant with a medium skin color who says it is easy for him to get in and out of the country as long as he knows how to talk. When I ask him what he means by this, he explains using a narrative story between himself and the guards:

They say, “You can’t come through, you don’t have documents, you have to pay more”. I say “look, I have an emergency situation, I have to go see my family” they say “pay the money...10,000 pesos”.<sup>6</sup> Then I say, “I have 300 pesos. I had more money but I got robbed.” I show them my work ID and explain about the money. It’s a lie but it’s what you say. Then the guards talk to each other trying to decide what to do asking “Now, what are we going to do with this moreno?” **After a while, they say “let him go, he’s Dominican.” [“They say you’re Dominican?” I ask, confused.] Yes, they say ‘el sabe hablar’ (he knows how to talk). You just have to know how to talk. –**  
--Calichi, age 53, Haitian immigrant

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<sup>6</sup> The normal fee is 300 pesos (about US \$6), but people pay 5,000 to 10,000 pesos (about US \$100-200) to cross if they are undocumented.

Use of speech and accent to decipher Dominicans from Haitians has historical roots that stem from Trujillo's infamous "parsley test" during the Haitian massacre. During genocide against the Haitian population living on the border in 1937, soldiers tried to distinguish between native Afro-Dominicans and immigrant Afro-Haitians by asking them to say the Spanish word for parsley, *perejil* (Turtis 2002). In the French-origin language, Haitian Creole, native speakers have difficulty pronouncing the Spanish "r". If they could pronounce it in correct Spanish, the soldiers considered them Dominican and let them live. If they pronounced it with a French accent, they considered them Haitian and executed them. Contemporary use of speech patterns and accent reveals another mechanism by which gatekeepers use non-phenotypical characteristics to screen for Haitian ancestry.

Limited social networks among Haitian immigrants serve as an additional barrier to Dominican citizenship when they interact with documentation officials. A Dominican woman's interaction with documentation officials is presented in contrast to the experience of a Dominican woman of Haitian descent to show how social networks privilege Dominicans seeking valid documentation. Mercedes Hernandez is a Dominican woman with a medium skin color who has six adult children. One of her daughters is having trouble getting her national identification card. During one of my visits with the Hernandez family, Yarida has just returned from renewing her

identification card. Eliza, her sister, says little. Although I did not know to ask about it, Mercedes explains that her own name was written differently on her two daughters' documents and she did not realize it. She says it did not matter with her other children because the officials knew her in the office. When I probe about documentation problems during our one-on-one interview, Mercedes explains,

I've had problems getting Elisa's cedula [ID card]. When she was declared, they didn't put my last name on her birth certificate. Because my name is María de las Mercedes Medrano, but they only put "María de las Mercedes" on her birth certificate. So we've gone to the office many times about this, and we've sent these papers to Santo Domingo. Now, they're saying that we have to look for a lawyer who will charge 20,000 pesos (US\$430) to fix her last name. **One time, with my son Omar, they put "Omal" on his birth certificate. You know Omar is spelled with an "R." Well when they noticed that his name was written wrong, I paid 200 pesos (US\$4.30) and they just took a pen and turned the L into an R on his document.** It's a little more difficult with Elisa because it's my last name that's missing.

--Mercedes, age 56, Dominican

Mercedes' story illustrates that documentation offices make mistakes often.

Further, these mistakes are not specific to people of Haitian descent. Dominicans must also deal with complications because of mistakes made by documentation officials.

Unfortunately, however, the impact these discrepancies have on families and their ability to correct them is based on race and Haitian ethnicity.

Although she is still having trouble getting the appropriate document for her daughter, Mercedes was able to fix the small problem with Omar's name relatively easily and Elisa was able to finish high school because the people at the school knew her.

Mercedes does not have any of the markers associated with Haitian ancestry. She has a medium skin color, identifies as *morena*, speaks Spanish without an accent, and has a Dominican last name – Hernandez. By contrast, Yuberkis has been trying to correct a small error on her birth certificate for several months. She says, "My name on my cedula (ID card) has an accent on the E. But on my birth certificate, there is no accent. So I have been back and forth with a lawyer trying to fix it." Yuberkis is matter-of-fact about this problem and moves on to the next topic in our interview. Notably, though, the accent over one letter in her name seems as easy to fix as changing the L to an R in Omar's name. Although it has not hindered Yuberkis' ability to finish high school, the financial costs associated with lawyer fees and travel back and forth to documentation offices mount monthly. Yuberkis does not speak Spanish with a Haitian accent, but she is dark skinned and her last name is Pierre – a common Haitian last name. Because of the lack of transparency in documentation offices, it is easy for gate keepers to use their own discretion when determining whether or not to renew or validate a patron's documents. Data show that Dominicans can usually get small discrepancies corrected or have them overlooked – as with Mercedes' son Omar's misspelled name; but these discrepancies can become major barriers for Dominicans of Haitian descent resulting in exclusion from education and labor market opportunities.

## **4.6 Discussion**

The social context of reception for immigrants in the Dominican Republic is not based solely on anti-immigrant sentiment. Instead, I find that Haitian immigrants have a racialized incorporation experience. Context of reception is a major determinant of immigrant incorporation and includes more than anti-immigrant sentiment. Results from this study show that the racial context has significant implications for Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic. This suggests that scholarship on immigrant incorporation include the racial context in analyses of a host country's social context of reception.

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: how does structural racism shape Haitian immigrants' experiences in the Dominican Republic? Examining racialized screening tools in documentation policy enforcement highlights the interpersonal experiences that reflect structural marginalization at the convergence of race and immigrant status. Results indicate that anti-Haitian racism is a key element of Dominican immigration policy. Specifically, data show that immigration officials and gatekeepers in documentation offices use racial profiling and racialized screening tools including last name, accent, and social networks to target people of Haitian descent.

This research demonstrates the importance of scholarship at the intersection of immigration and race theory. In addition to anti-immigrant sentiment, racialized

immigrants also encounter a new racial hierarchy and its accompanying power structure. Access to valid documentation and birthright citizenship represents access to power, privilege, and material rights including education and legitimate labor market opportunities (Bloemraad 2013; Bloemraad et al 2008). Because of structural racism in Dominican documentation policy, Haitian immigrants and their descendants are marginalized and inequality in the Dominican Republic is exacerbated.

Immigration policies that further marginalize Haitian immigrants have effects that reverberate for generations to come. Future generations of Dominicans of Haitian descent will face barriers to sociopolitical inclusion that leave them living on the fringes of Dominican society. Without valid documentation, Haitian immigrants and their descendants are barred from access to a marriage license, driver's license, bank accounts, business loans, purchasing credit, high school or university education, and the formal labor market. The impact of targeted discrimination against racialized immigrant groups is that they are never fully incorporated into the larger society resulting in generations of second class citizens. If we continue to examine the role of the racial context of reception, then scholars will reach a more comprehensive understanding of the processes that result in differential incorporation among immigrant groups.

**Table 5. Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>N=55</b>		
<b>Sex</b>		
Women	26	47%
Men	29	53%
<b>Age (mean = 40)</b>		
18-24	10	18%
25-54	26	47%
55 +	19	35%
<b>Country of Birth</b>		
Haiti	24	44%
Dominican Republic	31	56%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Haitian	24	44%
Dominican of Haitian descent	21	38%
Dominican	10	18%
<b>Language of Interview</b>		
Spanish	37	67%
Haitian Creole	18	33%
<b>Education Level</b>		
None	9	16%
Some Elementary School	11	20%
Some Middle School	16	29%
Some High School	15	27%
Some College	4	7%

**Table 6. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Haitian Immigrants**

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Self-Identified</b>	<b>Interviewer-</b>	<b>Light/Medium/Dark</b>
	<b>Skin Color</b>	<b>Rated Skin Color</b>	
Fifa	india	4	Dark
Fani	india	4	Dark
Antonia	negra	5	Dark
Mireya	negra	3	Medium
Deloni Bausten	negra	3	Medium
Solange Noel	negra	4	Dark
Irenita	negra	3	Medium
Fifa	negra	4	Dark
Benjamin	negro	4	Dark
Liswa	negro	4	Dark
Busten Goisen	negro	4	Dark
Usmel	negro	5	Dark
Luisne Jean	negro	3	Medium
Eston Pierres	negro	5	Dark
Jeisilis	negro	4	Dark
Denel	negro	4	Dark
Lesine Jean	negro	4	Dark
Ameson	negro	4	Dark
Solon Jube	negro	4	Dark
Cosui	negro	4	Dark
Chantal			
Valentine	negro	3	Medium
Egzondye Jean	negro claro	4	Dark
Fortune Valonle	negro	3	Medium

**Table 7. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Dominicans of Haitian Descent**

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Self-Identified</b>	<b>Interviewer-</b>	<b>Light/Medium/Dark</b>
	<b>Skin Color</b>	<b>Rated Skin Color</b>	
Fausto	blanco	2	Light
Sara	india	4	Dark
Yolanda	indiecita	2	Light
Sidro	indio	3	Medium
Salsuela	indio	3	Medium
Jeremias	indio, moreno	5	Dark
Ani	morena	4	Dark
Sandra	morena	4	Dark
Yemenas	morena	5	Dark
Mateo	moreno	4	Dark
Jimi	moreno	4	Dark
Denis	moreno	4	Dark
Juan	moreno	4	Dark
Marielena	moreno	4	Dark
Daniel	moreno	5	Dark
Marina	negra	4	Dark
Dolores	negra	4	Dark
Yuberkis	negra	5	Dark
Antonio	negro	3	Medium
Francisco	negro	4	Dark
Cristobal	negro	5	Dark
Ping	negro	5	Dark
Sievano	negro	4	Dark

**Table 8. Participants' Skin Color by Nationality - Dominicans**

<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Self-Identified</b>	<b>Interviewer-</b>	<b>Light/Medium/Dark</b>
	<b>Skin Color</b>	<b>Rated Skin Color</b>	
Josefa	blanca	1	Light
Yesenia	blanca	1	Light
Fior	blanca	1	Light
Philadelphia	blanco	1	Light
Miguelina	blanco	1	Light
Yarida	india	3	Medium
Alex	india	2	Light
Omar	indio	3	Medium
Ramon Mejilla	indio	3	Medium
Eddy	indio	2	Light
Mercedes	morena	3	Medium

## Conclusion

Using ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic, I answer three specific questions with this study. First, how do gender and nativity shape depression and anxiety symptoms? Second, how does documentation policy in the Dominican Republic impact mental health inequality? Finally, how does structural racism shape Haitian immigrants' experiences in the Dominican Republic? To answer these questions, I engage with intersectionality theory, stress process theory, and assimilation theory. Results from the first chapter show that although women and immigrants have worse mental health than their counterparts, Haitian men, Haitian woman, Dominican men, and Dominican women face unique stressors that impact their depression and anxiety symptoms. In the second chapter, data reveal the psychosocial implications of documentation policy; and in the final chapter, results emphasize the need to examine the racial context of reception to better understand immigrant incorporation.

Each of these chapters takes an additional step toward more comprehensive reflections of the immigrant experience. Immigrants' lived experiences are jointly constructed by several social factors, and this project centers the roles of gender, documentation status, and race as key components that affect immigrants' daily lives. I also critically examine the ways that documentation policy can exacerbate inequality.

Importantly, documentation policies can *produce* new social locations. In the D.R., for example, revocation of birthright citizenship creates generations of Dominican-born people who will exist on the margins of society indefinitely.

Results from this study should serve as a cautionary tale for the U.S. government and its future immigration policy decisions. In the U.S., Mexican immigrants are the "needed but unwanted" population. The Bracero Program brought millions of Mexican workers to the U.S. under a bilateral contractual agreement between 1942 and 1964. Most worked in agriculture. Today, Mexican immigrants continue to fill an economic need in the U.S. labor market, but face a swirling combination of anti-immigrant sentiment and racism — much like Haitians in the Dominican Republic.

Conservatives in the Dominican Republic reference stereotypically negative anecdotes about Haitians' big families, the crimes they commit, and their collective burden on public resources. Haitians flood to a neighboring country hoping to escape poverty, but they bring all their problems with them. The situation is so bad in Haiti that they come to the Dominican Republic so they can have Dominican babies. These narratives are strikingly similar to the conservative characterization of Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ensures birthright citizenship for anyone born on U.S. soil. Its original purpose was to ensure that the children of freed

slaves were U.S. citizens after the Civil War. A few conservative legislators have proposed a re-interpretation of this clause. They argue that it encourages illegal immigration and provides incentive for "birth tourism" — the practice of entering a country to give birth, which ensures citizenship for the baby. Senators like David Vitter (R-Louisiana) and Steve King (R-Iowa) recently introduced proposals to limit birthright citizenship in the U.S. Although it is easy and tempting to frown upon Dominican policies, the U.S. government should consider the Dominican case as a cautionary tale for their current and future documentation policies.

## Appendix A: Measures for Depression and Anxiety (Spanish)

En los últimos 7 días, ¿cuánto te ha molestado los siguientes problemas?

0 = No, ni un poco 1 = Un poco 2 = Con frecuencia 3 = Mucho 4 = Muchísimo



### Depresión

Falta de apetito	0	1	2	3	4
Sentirse solo	0	1	2	3	4
Sentirse triste	0	1	2	3	4
sentimiento de desesperanza sobre el futuro	0	1	2	3	4
Sentimientos que no vale nada	0	1	2	3	4

### Ansiedad

Sentirse inquieta/o	0	1	2	3	4
Dificultad de dormir	0	1	2	3	4
sentirse tenso o cargado/a	0	1	2	3	4
Sentirse nervioso cuando le dejan solos	0	1	2	3	4
Sentirse baja presion	0	1	2	3	4

English

In the last 7 days, how much have the following problems bothered you?

0 = Not at all 1 = A little 2 = Some 3 = A lot 4 = A whole lot



### Depression

Loss of appetite	0	1	2	3	4
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Feeling lonely	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling sad	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling hopeless about the future	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling that nothing has value	0	1	2	3	4

**Anxiety**

Feeling restless	0	1	2	3	4
Trouble sleeping	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling tense	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling nervous when left alone	0	1	2	3	4
Feeling under pressure	0	1	2	3	4

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## Biography

Trenita Brookshire Childers was born in Chicago, Illinois on February 22, 1983. She received her B.A. in Sociology from Davidson College in 2005 and her M.A. in Sociology from Duke University in 2013. Trenita has published several co-authored articles. Her first article was the result of an NIDA-funded undergraduate internship at Morgan State University. The article, "Substance Use References in the Lyrics of Favorite Songs of African-American Adolescents" appears in the *Journal of Young Investigators* (2003). During her graduate career, Trenita co-authored "Patient weighting of osteoporosis medication attributes across racial and ethnic groups: a study of osteoporosis medication preferences using conjoint analysis" in *Osteoporosis International* (2012) after working as a research assistant with Dr. Deborah Gold (PI). She also published a book chapter with her advisor, Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, entitled "Race Matters in 'Post-Racial' *Obamerica* and How to Climb Out of the Rabbit Hole". This chapter is published in *Re-Positioning Race: Prophetic Research in a Post-Racial Obama Age* (2014) edited by Sandra L. Barnes, Zandria F. Robinson, and Earl Wright II. In 2015, Trenita co-authored an article entitled "Spirituality and Religious Coping in African American Youth with Depressive Illness" as a result of a collaborative research project with Dr. Alfiere Breland-Noble (PI). This article is published in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*. Her final co-authored peer-reviewed journal article entitled

“Socioeconomic Status, Religion and Health in India: An Examination of Chronic and Communicable Diseases” was published in the *Review of Black Political Economy* in 2015 after participating in a Global Inequality Research Initiative with Dr. William Darity. In addition to peer-reviewed publications, Trenita also published an op-ed in 2015 entitled “The Question of Birth Citizenship” in the Raleigh News & Observer, The Providence Journal, and the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.

In addition to pursuing publication opportunities, Trenita has also actively pursued and won multiple fellowships during her graduate career. Below is a list of scholarships, fellowships, and academic honors she has received since obtaining the bachelor’s degree:

- 2016 Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, \$25,000
- 2016 Summer Research Fellowship, Duke Graduate School, \$5,500
- 2015 Katherine Goodman Stern Fellowship, \$22,030
- 2015 Honorable Mention, Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship
- 2014 Dissertation Improvement Grant, National Science Foundation, \$11,970
- 2014 Fulbright U.S. Student Program, U.S. Department of State, \$27,800
- 2014 James B. Duke International Research Travel Fellowship, Duke Graduate School, \$21,580
- 2014 Summer Research Fellowship, Duke Graduate School, \$5,500
- 2014 Conference Travel Award, Duke University, \$500
- 2013 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS) Academic Year Fellowship: Haitian Creole, Duke University, \$22,000
- 2013 Preparing Future Faculty Fellowship, Duke University, \$500
- 2013 Honorable Mention, Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship
- 2013 John Hope Franklin Summer Research Fellowship, Duke University, \$5,000
- 2013 Pre-Dissertation Travel Award, Duke University, \$2,963
- 2012 Honorable Mention, National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship
- 2012 Summer Research Fellowship, Duke Graduate School, \$5,000